MEDIATISED DRAMATURGY

FORMAL, CRITICAL AND PERFORMATIVE RESPONSES TO MEDIATISATION IN BRITISH AND IRISH PLAYS SINCE THE 1990s

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree. I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

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Abstract

This thesis responds to a tendency in contemporary theatre practice and scholarship to overlook play texts when exploring the media---theatre relation. It challenges recent shifts in critical discourse concerning the mediatisation of theatre: the growing artistic and academic emphasis on performance; and misconceptions about postdramatic theatre as a non---textual form and the text's presumed inability to accommodate the new reality of mediatised culture and consciousness. In light of this, the thesis examines the impact of media technologies and culture on a selection of British plays written since the 1990s, exploring how they negotiate a media---saturated culture in both form and content. I introduce the concept of 'mediatised dramaturgy' to describe the shifts in the fabric of plays due to omnipresent mediatisation. I argue that mediatised dramaturgy is present not only in texts that overtly use media forms, but also in aesthetic subtleties that echo the phenomenon of mediatisation without direct reference to the mass media. The thesis also considers the reception of these plays in selected productions in order to gauge British theatre's ability to respond to their dramaturgical challenges.

Chapter 1 examines Martin Crimp's *No One Sees the Video* (1990), Mark Ravenhill's *Faust is Dead* (1996) and Enda Walsh's *Chatroom* (2004) as 'dramatic' plays, arguing that thematisation of mediatisation without formal engagement limits the plays' ambit. Chapter 2 explores the workings of mediatised language in Patrick Marber's *Closer* (1997), Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* (1997) and Sarah Kane's *Crave* (1998) to suggest language use in 'no---longer---dramatic' texts speaks to altered ontological and epistemological conditions of the media---saturated, globalised world. Chapter 3 assesses the impact changing modes of subjectivity and interpersonal relations have had on the presentation of character by analysing Tim Crouch's *My Arm* (2003) and *An Oak Tree* (2005), and Simon Stephens's *Pornography* (2007). This chapter argues that they destabilise the dramatic model of characterisation in order to engage with the heterogeneous and objectified nature of contemporary subjectivity. Lastly, Chapter 4 focuses on Douglas Maxwell's use of videogame in *Helmet* (2002) and the televisual aesthetics of Caryl Churchill's *Heart's Desire* (1997), exploring how different approaches to remediation in plot structure affect the plays' capacity to relate to mediatised socio---cognitive conditions. The thesis demonstrates that plays, on the page and in performance, have undergone significant change, proving that the old medium of text is capable of responding to the mediatised age.

Acknowledgements

We ask [of the computer] not just about where we stand in nature, but about where we stand in the world of artefact. We search for a link between who we are and what we have made, between who we are and what we might create, between who we are and what, through our intimacy with our own creations, we might become.

--- Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self*

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INTRODUCTION

{Y]ou have to think about technology, you have to use it, because in the end it is in your blood. Technology will move in and speak through you, like it or not. Best not to ignore. Tim Etchells[1]

What is a real cause of concern for the theatre, however, is the emerging transition to an interaction of distant partners by means of technology. Hans---Thies Lehmann[2]

The authors frightened by the media, appear to exclude and reject it, but so doing they are no less influenced and transformed by it, almost without their knowledge. [...] hoping to ignore the media [...], we turn to texts, but now the machines have come back, at the very heart of the lines and the words. Patrice Pavis[3]

In the opening epigraphs, theatre practitioner Tim Etchells and theorists Hans---Thies Lehmann and Patrice Pavis point out important aspects of the influence of media technologies on theatre. Etchells highlights the pervasive and embedded influence of the media[4] on theatre, and implies that theatre practice is bound to change due to the impact of media forms on society, culture and individuals. Etchells's remark in his account of the development of Forced Entertainment and contemporary theatre epitomizes the predominant tendency in theatre practice and scholarship to consider the influence of media mainly in relation to performance.[5] Lehmann approaches the media---theatre relationship from a different perspective. He draws attention to the potential influence of media technologies on the ontology of theatre and on the survival and relevance of theatre within a highly technologised culture. These accounts nonetheless also reveal a certain blind---spot: the focus on theatre and performance often 'forgets' the effect media technologies have on plays. Pavis's emphasis on the all---pervading impact of media on plays points out this significant, yet often underexamined, aspect of the relationship between theatre and media: plays, like theatrical performance, are also affected and shaped by media technologies and culture.

This thesis aims to investigate the often---overlooked influence of the media on plays, and looks at how plays in the Western theatre tradition have changed in the late twentieth and

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[1] Tim Etchells, *Certain Fragments* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 95.

[2] Hans---Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. by Karen Jürs---Munby (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 167. [Originally published in German in 1999]

[3] Patrice Pavis, 'Afterword: Contemporary Dramatic Writings and the New Technologies', in *Trans---global readings: Crossing theatrical boundaries*, ed. by Caridad Svich (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003), pp. 187---203, (p. 192).

[4] 'The media' in the frame of this thesis refers to media forms and technologies in general such as television, internet, computer games rather than exclusively to institutionalized mass media forms such as the popular press and television.

[5] In the work of such scholars and theatre companies as Peggy Phelan, Philip Auslander, Michael Kustow and The Wooster Group, Forced Entertainment, and Builders Association the interest in the relationship between media and theatre focuses mainly on theatrical performance.

early twenty-first centuries in form and content as a consequence of and in response to media- saturated culture. The impact of media forms on society will be referred to hereafter as *mediatisation*. Mediatisation, as defined in the boundaries of this study, refers to the ubiquitous influence of the media in the form of social institutions and ideological apparatuses[6] - institutional mechanisms serving the ruling order - on society and individuals in the Western world from the late twentieth century onward. Theories of mediatisation present an extensive subject for study that require thorough analysis and explanation, undertaken in section 3.2.

Mediatisation is fundamentally used in the field of sociology and media studies. In its focus on plays, this study uses the notion of mediatisation either as *mediatisation of plays* or *mediatised dramaturgy* to refer to changes in the form and content of plays in relation to a highly technologised and mediatised age. The rest of this introduction will further explain the terms essential to the study, the motivations behind the thesis, as well as the historical and theoretical background.

1. Conceptualising the Research and Analytical Strategies
1.1. Key Terms

Firstly, it is essential to state what 'the (mass) media' means in the context of my study. 'The media', in a general sense, refers to forms of communication such as television, radio, print media or the internet which disseminate information between sender and receiver. They also function as 'social institutions *in their own right*'[7] influencing other social entities such as family, belief and value systems or education. Furthermore, the media, more often than not, act as ideological apparatuses that influence and shape individual and collective consciousness in line with the dominant ideology. In this thesis, 'media-saturated world' refers to the pervasive presence and influence of the media on almost every sphere of Western society, increasingly so since the late twentieth century. 'Media-saturation' is not simply about the use and presence of multiple media technologies, but also about the inundation of media images and discourses that shape human lives and consciousness.

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[6] See for further information: Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 127-188.

[7] Stig Hjarvard, 'The Mediatization of Society: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Social and Cultural Change', *Nordicom Review*, 29:2 (2008), 105-134, (pp. 113).

As a part of the central notion 'mediatised dramaturgy', it is important to define my use of *dramaturgy*. *Dramaturgy*, a 'slippery term',[8] has multiple meanings such as 'the ceaseless dialogue between people who are working on a play together [or] the soul, the internal structure, of a production'.[9] Here, it refers *solely* to the structure of plays, to the organisation of character, plot, theme and language in the text. Mediatised dramaturgy therefore refers to the ways plays are affected by a mediatised world rather than to theatrical dramaturgies and how they incorporate media technologies within performances.

1.2. Why has the impact of media technologies and culture on plays been overlooked?

One response to this question could be because media aesthetics and discourses are seemingly less pronounced and perceptible in writing than they are on stage. The media in text, Patrice Pavis argues, 'is not, as it is onstage, a foreign body; it actually places itself in an intertextuality in the widest sense of the word'.[10] In a similar way, media influence can be an entrenched, taken--for--granted and even unconscious experience due to the ubiquitous presence of media technologies and images in society and individual lives. Playwrights writing in a media--saturated world might not be aware of its influence on their perceptual faculties and writing techniques. The impact of the media may be embedded in the 'flesh and blood' of texts, as it were, and so become hardly recognisable. It would be a mistake to think that, compared to media influence on the stage, plays are not affected by or unresponsive to changing socio--cultural conditions. This overlooked aspect of theatre calls for further research.

Another reason for the relatively minor interest in the impact of media culture and forms on plays could be due to the changing status of text in theatre. In his seminal work *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006 [1999]), Lehmann theorises the changing position of written text in theatre. He focuses on the move towards performance and on the questioning of the primacy and centrality of the text in European and North American theatre since the 1960s, with the arrival of neo--avant--garde art forms such as the Fluxus movement, happenings and performance art.[11] In questioning the dominant position of plays in the *dramatic* theatre tradition, an issue raised earlier by Antonin Artaud among other historical avant--gardists, Lehmann does not propose a textless theatre. However, his theory and the tendencies in contemporary theatre towards a performance--oriented approach have been misunderstood as

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8 Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance* (Basingstoke UK: Palgrave, 2008), p. 17.

9 Marianne Van Kerkhoven, qtd. in Peter Eckersall, 'Towards an Expanded Dramaturgical Practice: A Report on "The Dramaturgy and Cultural Intervention Project"', *Theatre Research International*, 31:3, 283--297, (pp. 288).

10 Pavis, 'Afterword', p. 192.

11 Karen Jürs--Munby, 'Introduction', in *Postdramatic Theatre*, by Hans--Thies Lehmann (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 4.

such. One of the reasons for this misconception of postdramatic theatre as a textless theatre is Lehmann's own deliberate avoidance of the textual dimension in postdramatic theatre or the creative possibilities new writing may offer to the performance process in his book. This is not, however, because Lehmann excludes text from theatre or fails to notice new textual potential or a new role for text in postdramatic theatre. Rather, it is because he reserves the category of postdramatic theatre for the performance dimension of theatre, without overlooking 'the continuing association and exchange between theatre and text'.[12]

Lehmann argues for neither a theatre without text nor a theatre that refuses to use plays. He considers Heiner Müller, for example, an important playwright in postdramatic theatre and claims that '[i]mportant texts are still being written'.[13] He also refers to Elfriede Jelinek, Peter Handke, Sarah Kane and René Pollesch, among other playwrights, as exemplifying the persistence of text and proposes a new role for it in the processes of postdramatic theatre. Lehmann argues that dramatic theatre is the site where the text is the defining authority of theatrical creation and 'the staging largely consist[s] of the declamation and illustration of written drama'.[14] He then posits a theory of contemporary theatre where the 'text [becomes] just one element in the scenography and general "performance writing" of theatre.'[15] Thus, postdramatic theatre theory and its emphasis on performance does not mean that the text has become obsolete, but is no longer central.

Gerda Poschmann coins the term the 'no longer dramatic theatre text'[16] to indicate the shift in the ways text is written and new kinds and role of written texts in the theatre. Lehmann reads such plays as a new mode of theatrical sign usage[17] and a critique of what he considers the potentially untenable role of dramatic representation in the media---saturated, globalised world (a subject I will discuss in this section). The distinction between 'no---longer--- dramatic' text and *postdramatic theatre* is that the latter refers to theatrical performance rather than the written text *per se*. In 'no---longer---dramatic' texts the '"principle of narration and figuration" and the order of a "fable" (story) are disappearing';[18] rounded and psychologically motivated characters, dialogue form and linearly structured, recognisable dramatic plot dissolve. 'No---longer---dramatic' texts may act as an initial and significant element of the performance text, yet they do not claim domination over other elements of performance. They

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12 Lehmann, Postdramatic Theatre, p. 17.
13 Ibid., p. 17.
14 Ibid., p. 21.
15 Jürs---Munby, 'Introduction', p. 4.
16 Gerda Poschmann, qtd. in/referred to in Karen Jürs---Munby, 'The Resistant Text in Postdramatic Theatre: Performing Elfriede Jelinek's Sprachflächen', *Performance Research*, 14: 1 (2009), 46 – 56, (pp. 46).
17 Lehmann, Postdramatic Theatre, p. 17.
18 Gerda Poschmann, qtd. in Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p. 18.

present text as open material for the theatre and deconstruct the traditional harmony and unity between a play and its performance. Instead, they propose a productive tension between text and performance. 'No---longer---dramatic' texts function as important elements in the theatre, yet actively question or problematize the text's formerly privileged status. These new forms of text are 'not complete until they are given performance.'[19] Moreover, the open form of these texts invites 'the spectators to become active co---writers of the (performance) text'.[20] Therefore, the substantial role of the text no longer corresponds to its erstwhile centrality. Rather, it asks for new directorial, performative and spectatorial approaches as it 'suggests itself as a relativized element for performance from the outset and points to its own indeterminacy and status as uninterpreted material.'[21]

'No---longer---dramatic' texts generally result in postdramatic performances. However, it is important to note that postdramatic theatre does not completely reject dramatic texts and work exclusively with 'no longer dramatic texts'. There are postdramatic attempts to re---interpret traditional dramatic texts in a way that strips the dramatic text off its teleological and logocentric narrative, and treat it as an element of the performance text with no primacy. The Wooster Group's 2001 production *To You, the Birdie! (Phèdre)*, which is broadly based on Racine's *Phèdre*, and *Brace Up* (1991, 2003), based on Chekov's *Three Sisters*, provide examples of postdramatic interpretations of dramatic texts.

Drawing on these ideas, this thesis will demonstrate that plays, like other elements of the theatre, alter in form and status in relation to the pervasive influence of the media on society and consequently theatre. Certain texts written for theatre in a highly technologised---mediatised culture have an important, though relativised, position and are affected by mediatisation as much as the performance. Thus, the mediatisation of plays is a subject ripe for exploration. My analysis, however, is not limited to the plays themselves. Rather, Lehmann's critique of the primacy of text in dramatic theatre is the basis for investigating how the changing structure of plays deconstructs the text's constitutive role. I will thus be considering how selected productions work with the new status of the written material.

Another reason why the changing position of plays has led to misconceptions and thus plays have attracted little interest from theatre scholars is mainly due to a conflation in Lehmann's theory. In his critique of the dramatic theatre Lehmann conflates the primacy of

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[19] Turner and Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance*, p. 35.
[20] Lehmann, Postdramatic Theatre, p. 6.
[21] David, Barnett, 'When is a Play not a Drama? Two Examples of Postdramatic Theatre Texts', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 24:1 (2008), 14--- 23, (pp. 16).

written text in dramatic tradition with 'the logocentric implications of the dramatic playtext'---[22] the philosophical category of the 'dramatic' as a representational design for a unified world. So far I have discussed the tendency of playwrights to undermine the texts' authority over theatrical performance. It is now important to investigate the second aspect of the conflated terms. This is fundamental to the analysis of the changing form and role of plays in relation to the mediatised world and stage, because postdramatic theatre does not only imply undermining the text's primacy. It also implies a theatre that is beyond drama as 'the logos of a totality'[23] and beyond 'the authority of the dramatic paradigm'[24] in the theatre. It is about rethinking the theatre in relation to a 'globalized and multiply mediatized [thus,] less "surveyable" and manageable than ever world'.[25]

Lehmann's conflation of the primacy of text with the dramatic idea of text---cosmos runs in parallel to his definition of the dramatic as 'a design of a world, the author as its creator'.[26] However, as Tomlin argues, Lehmann's conflation may imply that the central role of the text classifies the work within the logocentric bind of the dramatic.[27] This view of Lehmann's arguments could lead, as with Tomlin, to a binary view: 'dramatic' as text---based and 'postdramatic' as non---text---based theatre.[28] This binary categorisation suggests that, if the written text has a central role in the artistic process, it cannot be considered in relation to the postdramatic theatre. However, as discussed earlier, Lehmann does not suggest an exclusively non---text---based theatre, but a theatre in which the play text can be the basis for a performance without dominating the process of realization. In addition, it is clear that a small number of scholars have indeed investigated the role of plays in postdramatic theatre (e.g. Karen Jürs--- Munby; David Barnett); we should thus not necessarily focus our attention on Lehmann exclusively. In line with these definitions, the term 'dramatic play' in this thesis refers to plays that are based on representations of the world as a unified, knowable and therefore representable cosmos.

A postdramatic theatre proposes a different understanding of time and space. Both are radically compressed,[29] a 'speed---space' (*dromosphere*), where the experience of the world is accelerated[30] and shaped by increasingly high---speed media. Postdramatic theatre serves as a

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[22] Liz Tomlin, '"And their stories fell apart even as I was telling them": Poststructuralist performance and the no--- longer---dramatic text', *Performance Research*, 14:1 (2009), 57---64, (pp. 58).
[23] Lehmann, Postdramatic Theatre, p. 40.
[24] Ibid., p. 27.
[25] Jürs---Munby, 'Introduction', 11.
[26] Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p. 53–4.
[27] Tomlin, 'And their stories fell apart even as I was telling them', p. 59.
[28] Ibid., p. 58.
[29] David Harvey, *The Condition ofPostmodernity*, (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1989), p. 240.
[30] Paul Virilio, *Live: Selected Interviews*, ed. by John Armitage (London: SAGE, 2001), p. 71.

new kind of theatrical paradigm that responds to 'the spread and then omnipresence of the *media* in everyday life'[31] and the socio---cultural and perceptual changes this media---saturated environment has brought about. It is a new theatrical discourse mapping the contemporary; 'a theatre that cannot be taken in "at once", that is not easily "surveyable", and thus a theatre that does not make the world "manageable" for us'.[32] In addition, 'no---longer---dramatic' texts put forward a new dramaturgical form and discourse that subvert dramatic representation of the world as a fictive whole and address mediatised culture and consciousness.

Drawing on these claims about the changing mode and role of the text, this thesis investigates how some plays with new dramaturgical tendencies accommodate and respond to the 'unsurveyable present'[33] of the multiply mediatised and globalised world. The thesis focuses on selected English---language plays written since the 1990s, whose dramaturgical structures, consciously or unconsciously, change in relation to the media.

1.3. The Choice of Plays and Method

The rationale behind the choice of the plays from the last two decades is based on the increasing use and influence of media technologies, and, by extension, the parallel manifestation of new modes of textual expression that destabilise the categories of traditional dramatic plays. Predominantly, since the 1990s, the 'transformation of culture into e---culture, of computers into universal carriers, of media into new media'[34] began and generated new ways of perceiving, defining and relating to the world as well as new models of human relations and consciousness. Mass media has become an integral part of individuals' daily lives, actions and perception.

Politically speaking, with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Communist East thereafter, political discourse lost the tension between capitalism and socialism. Instead, finance capitalism, technological advances, globalisation and mediatisation challenge traditional concepts of nationhood, subjectivity, class. This shift is manifest in plays and theatre: '[s]tate---of---the---nation---plays went out of fashion'[35] and new modes of dramaturgical and theatrical expression have emerged in response to the virtual erasure of an alternative discourse to discussing capitalism due to the seeming inevitability of the triumph of

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[31] Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p. 22. (Italics from the original.)
[32] Jürs---Munby, 'Introduction', 11.
[33] Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p. 175.
[34] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Massachusetts, USA: MIT Press, 2001), p. 6.
[35] Aleks Sierz, '"Me and My Mates": the State of English Playwriting, 2003', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 20:1 (2004), 79---83, (pp. 83).

capitalism. As we shall see, certain plays, written since the 1990s, rethink their dramaturgical structure and ideological groundings in relation to the change in socio---cultural and political circumstances, and sublimate political discussion to a discourse on or critique of the mass media. That is, plays have become interested in the media and mediatisation as a political---critical phenomenon and thus present a new way of discussing the dominant, capitalist discourse. This critical interest is evident not simply through 'the direct thematization of the political'[36] but also in dramaturgical structure, in 'the implicit substance and critical value of *mode of representation*.'[37] The thesis considers some examples of such plays and examines how the changing form and discourses of these plays present a critique and response to the mediatised environment and perception.

The thesis also questions how the selected plays and their innovative forms are interpreted on the British stage in order to appreciate the possibilities that the new dramaturgical modes offer. The analysis of the theatre productions aims to demonstrate how different theatrical interpretations affect the relationship between the stage and auditorium, and the theatre's critical capacity to address the media---saturated world outside. The thesis will examine the first or most well known productions of the selected plays. The selection of productions is based on the staging aesthetics they offer and on the availability and accessibility of documentation. First productions present important perspectives on directorial tendencies since the engagement with the plays is without prior examples. However, they may also offer a restricted view because first productions might as easily be naïve rather than innovative or critical. Focusing on British stage productions is to question and demonstrate the changing dynamics and tendencies in British theatre, which is predominantly based in a dramatic theatre tradition, in view of the media age and culture. In analysing specific productions, several methods and resources were used to gather information, and I have consulted theatre archives, books, articles, video recordings and carried out personal interviews with playwrights such as Tim Crouch and Simon Stephens, and directors such as Max Stafford---Clark.

2. Media Influence on Theatre: Stage and Text
2.1. The Media's Influence on Theatrical Performance and its Impact on Theatre Scholarship

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[36] Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p. 178.
[37] Ibid., p. 178.

The stage has been influenced by media technologies and culture increasingly since the 1990s, a result of the omnipresence of information technologies and the mass media in society. Theatre companies and practitioners have become more and more interested in using media technologies on stage and have correspondingly employed media aesthetics, discourses and culture in their productions. They have borrowed formal features from television, film and the internet. Companies such as The Wooster Group, Forced Entertainment, Builders' Association, Rimini Protokoll, and Imitating the Dog, among others, produce multimedial and intermedial performances using film, video and virtual technologies on stage. Other theatre companies, such as Blast Theory, use interactive media to involve audiences through the internet, digital broadcasting and live performances. Online or virtual theatre groups such as The Plaintext Players and The Hamnet Players create online and mixed---reality performances.

The influence of the media on performance manifests itself not only through the direct use of media technologies in performance, but also, perhaps surprisingly, in the *absence* of hi--- tech multimedia on stage, which, as Jürs---Munby explains, 'nevertheless can only be understood by being related to life in a "mediatized" society.'[38] Tim Etchells, artistic director of Forced Entertainment, identifies this less---pronounced media influence on stage by explaining that their work is 'understandable by anybody brought up in a house with the television on.'[39] Both intensively media---dominated stages and barer ones illustrate how theatre performance has increasingly become engaged with new technologies and the contexts they engender.

The mediatisation of the theatre stage has galvanised a deal of scholarly and critical attention regarding the changing aspects of theatre performance. There is an increasingly rich literature and research base dealing with the impact of the media on theatre from diverse angles. One dominant debate among theatre scholars concentrates on the question of 'liveness',[40] namely, how the incorporation of media technologies in stage performances affects the here---and---nowness of theatre, its proximity and immediacy. Peggy Phelan argues that the incorporation of media---generated images and technologies into theatre threatens the theatre's ontology as live performance.[41] Likewise, Michael Kustow identifies theatre in the current media---saturated, 'wired' world as 'theatre@risk', as 'undergoing life---threatening mutations.'[42]

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[38] Karen Jürs---Munby, 'Introduction', p. 10.
[39] Etchells, *Certain Fragments*, p. 95.
[40] There are divergent discourses on and approaches to the question of 'liveness'. Such performance theorists as Michael Kirby, Susan Sontag, Matthew Causey, Michael Kustow, Patrice Pavis, Peggy Phelan and Philip Auslander have written on the subject. Here, I refer to some of these theorists since their differing approaches give an overview of the discussion.
[41] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics ofPerformance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.146.
[42] Michael Kustow, *Theatre@risk* (London: Methuen, 2001), p. xvii.

Philip Auslander, on the other hand, criticises the rather technophobic idea that new media technologies endanger the liveness of the theatre. In his critique, Auslander considers 'the reductive binary opposition of the live and the mediatized',[43] and Jean Baudrillard's 'simulacrum --- the copy without original---'.[44] Consequently, he argues that there are 'no clear--- cut ontological and phenomenological distinctions between live forms and mediatised ones.[45] For Auslander, the live is supplanted by the mediatised double not only physically on stage, but also in the perception of individuals.[46] Even if Auslander is correct and the mediatised increasingly supersedes the live, his argument that there is no difference between the two is questionable. There is, of course, an ontological distinction between a live body on stage and its mediatised double, and mediatisation does not entirely supplant or eradicate the live, the here---and---now of live performance or deaden human perception of it. Matthew Causey argues that 'the ontology of performance (liveness), which exists before and after mediatisation, has been altered within the space of technology.'[47] A threat to theatre's liveness and to its survival in the technologised and mediatised world may occur due to the dominance of interaction between distant partners by means of technology, as Lehmann argues.[48] This may challenge the here---and---now, proximity and participation of live performance.

The International Federation for Theatre's research group on intermediality has also explored the phenomenon in two books.[49] In the first, Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt surmise that 'theatre is a hypermedium that incorporates all arts and media';[50] a medium that 'processes, stores, and transmits'[51] other media forms ranging from written text and actors' bodies to electronic or digital media forms such as video, film, or computer technologies. Thus, as Peter Boenisch argues in the same book, the theatre 'has always relied heavily on re---mediating other media in order to achieve effects.'[52] Media forms in the hypermedium of the theatre are not remediated simply to perform their 'usual' functions. Rather, as Boenisch stresses, all media forms in the theatre 'are *theatrically reproduced* into something beyond their mere (even less: pure) original presence.'[53] The remediation of other media in the live

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[43] Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 3.

[44] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Michigan: Michigan UP, 2003), p. 166.

[45] Auslander, *Liveness*, p. 7.

[46] Ibid., p. 3 – 5.

[47] Matthew Causey, 'Screen Test of the Double: The Uncanny Performer in the Space of Technology', *Theatre Journal*, 51:4 (1999), 383--- 394, (pp. 384).

[48] Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p. 167.

[49] For further information, see: Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt (eds), *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2006); and Sarah Bay---Cheng, et al., (eds), *Mapping Intermediality in Performance* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP: 2010).

[50] Chapple and Kattenbelt (eds), Intermediality in Theatre and Performance, p. 20.

[51] Peter Boenisch, 'Aesthetic Art to Aisthetic Act: Theatre, Media, Intermedial Performance', in *Mapping Intermediality in Performance*, ed. by Sarah Bay---Cheng et al., pp. 103---116, (p. 110).

[52] Boenisch, 'Aesthetic Art to Aisthetic Act', p. 110.

[53] Ibid., p. 114.

medium of theatre sometimes highlights and self---consciously reflects the media in use by showing the *process* of mediation. J. David Bolter and Richard Grusin refer to this as 'hypermediacy', which 'remind[s] the viewer of the medium by drawing attention to itself in a very deliberate way',[54] and allows the audience to reflect self---consciously on the theatrical process and its own mediatedness.

Other questions have been raised about the media's influence on theatrical performance. For example, Maria Delgado and Caridad Svich provide different perspectives on theatre in the media age; Causey and Andrew Lavender's articles examine live performance in relation to digital media.[55] In *Digital Performance* (2007)[56] Steve Dixon gives an extensive account of contemporary trends in theatre and performance art in relation to digital technologies. More specifically, Greg Giesekam looks into the use of film and video on stage,[57] while Gabriella Giannachi explores the impact of virtual technologies on theatre performance[58] and Jennifer Parker--- Starbuck proposes the genre of 'cyborg theatre' relating to the posthuman being.[59]

This brief overview suggests that theorists and scholars have mostly concentrated on the influence of media technologies on theatre with a clear focus on performance. Scholarship has highlighted the changes in theatrical expression linked to the rise of new media technologies and in consequence of the changing social and cultural dynamics. Nevertheless, they rarely relate the same issues to play texts.

2.2. Tracing the Change in Text: Literature on Mediatised Dramaturgy

A general overview of the published research on the impact of media technologies and culture on the dramaturgical structure of plays is difficult because there is limited scholarship dealing with the subject and the published studies focus on manifold aspects. This section provides an account of the research and literature that refers to the subject.

Arnold Aronson's article 'Technology and Dramaturgical Development: Five Observations' (1999) focuses directly on the influence of technology on drama and on the

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[54] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), p. 14.

[55] For further information and articles, see: Maria M. Delgado and Caridad Svich (eds), *Theatre in Crisis?: Performance Manifestos for a New Century* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002). Matthew Causey, 'A Theatre of Monsters: Live Performance in the Age of Digital Media', pp. 179---183. Andy Lavender, 'The Moment of Realized Actuality', pp. 183---191.

[56] Steve Dixon, Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation (Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 2007).

[57] Greg Giesekam, Staging the Screen: The Use of Film and Video in Theatre (London: Palgrave, 2007).

[58] Gabriella Giannachi, *Virtual Theatres: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[59] Jennifer Parker---Starbuck, Cyborg Theatre: Corporeal/Technological Intersections in Multimedia Performance (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

question of whether and how technological developments have 'given birth to new forms of dramatic art.'[60] However, Aronson is not consistent in his terminology. In Aronson's article the terms *drama* and *dramaturgy* do not refer to written text. He tends to use *drama* or *dramatic art* to refer to text and performance together, and *dramaturgy* to allude to the translation from page to stage, rather than to the fabric of the plays. Aronson argues that although technologies have had a profound effect on the development of dramatic art – play and performance – and on stage configurations, they 'engender no new forms of drama.'[61] In relation to this argument, Aronson questions whether the cyber---plays of Laurie Anderson and George Coates, which incorporate computer and internet technologies to generate performances entirely on the Web, 'have any lasting or significant impact on the creation of drama.'[62] In response, Aronson claims that incorporating new inventions into the plot does not necessarily bring about new modes but proposes a 'theatre about the new technology [that] *discusses* rather than *embodies*.'[63] However, he argues, a new drama with innovative modes of expression, generated not simply through the use of media technologies but through a change in the structure of text and performance, may accommodate the highly mediatised world and human consciousness.[64] Aronson illustrates this with reference to the works of Mac Wellman, Suzan Lori---Parks and Tony Kushner in which 'linearity, narrative coherence, even the stability of characters from moment to moment are irrelevant'.[65] For instance, Kushner's play *Angels in America* (1993) '[t]hematically, imagistically, emotionally [...] has nothing to do with the world of computers and cyberspace'.[66] Nevertheless, its multi---character, multiplot, non---linear structure 'reflects the prevailing non---linear, juxtapositional, hypertextual world of cyberculture.'[67] The change in the form of the plays, which this thesis will elaborate in detail, epitomises how new modes of textual as well as theatrical expression indeed emerge in relation to the mediatised culture.

Patrice Pavis examines several significant aspects of the relationship between new media technologies and dramatic writing. He first highlights the predominant tendency to separate the study of texts from that of the media and new technologies. He argues that although the aesthetics and logic of these domains may seem unrelated, they are highly connected since 'the writings "speak" of a world constructed by all of the media, particularly by the new technologies'.[68] He sees this separation as related to the dissolution of the idea of text as the

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60 Arnold Aronson, 'Technology and Dramaturgical Development: Five Observations', *Theatre Research International*, 24: 2 (1999), 188---197, (pp. 188).

61 Aronson, 'Technology and Dramaturgical Development: Five Observations', p. 189.

62 Ibid., p. 193.

63 Ibid., p. 194.

64 Ibid., p. 195.

65 Ibid., p. 195.

66 Ibid., p. 196.

67 Ibid., p. 196.

68 Pavis, 'Afterword', p. 187.

'"authoritarian" subject'[69] in theatre and to the crisis of representation, deepened by the advent of new audio-‐‐visual technologies. In the technologised environment, performance 'has been conceived as visual and spectacular, thus non-‐‐textual, while the dramatic text is seen as a banal subsidiary of the mise en scène'[70] that is no longer 'specifically theatrical and scenic [or] allied to dramaturgy and the art of the actor.'[71] However, Pavis argues, the crisis of representation and the change in the traditional aesthetics of theatre in view of the mediatised world and the incorporation of media into theatre have led to 'a re-‐‐evaluation of the role of texts, and, as a result, a revival of dramatic writing'.[72] Thus, Pavis suggests, it is necessary to look into the changing role and dramaturgical structure of plays, 'to pick out, amongst the machines, videos, technology and other computers, […] some scraps of text.'[73]

To this end, Pavis analyses the relationship between certain French-‐‐language plays such as Bernard-‐‐Marie Koltès's *Dans la solitude des champs de cotton*, Joël Jouanneau's *Allegria* (1999), Eugène Durif's *Via Negativa* (1996) and new technology. Like Aronson, Pavis argues that the relationship of texts to the media and their reactions are 'highly ambivalent',[74] yet they can be found in the intertextual and intermedial form of the plays that incorporates media technologies and aesthetics. Pavis's critical discussion provides a significant and well-‐founded perspective on the change in plays in relation to new media technologies, and opens up a space for further discussion of mediatised dramaturgy. While Pavis focuses on contemporary French theatre, one finds similar formal experiments in English-‐‐language plays such as Douglas Maxwell's *Helmet* (2002), Lucy Prebble's *Sugar Syndrome* (2003) and Simon Stephens's *Pornography* (2007) This thesis will investigate these plays, amongst others, and their innovative forms of expression in relation to the media. I will examine the changes in the fabric of plays in relation to media technologies and culture by scrutinising dramaturgical aspects (language, characterisation and plot composition) without neglecting their critical implications.

In her analysis of the theatre in a media culture, Amy Petersen Jensen investigates how mediatisation, or, as she defines it, 'the adoption of the semantics and the contexts of mass media as a method of creating meaning, has changed the way […] theatre is produced, performed, and perceived.'[75] Jensen's work concentrates mainly on the mediatised stage and

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69 Ibid., p. 191.
70 Ibid., p. 191.
71 Ibid., p. 191.
72 Ibid., p.192.
73 Ibid., p. 191.
74 Ibid., p. 192.
75 Amy Petersen Jensen, *Theatre in a Media Culture: Production, Performance and Perception Since 1970* (North Carolina, USA: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), p. 1.

how the semantics of the technology---driven media and their impact on socio---cultural and perceptual environment influence production, the actor's presence on stage, theatrical space and reception. However, Jensen extends the question regarding the mediatisation of the theatre to plays in one chapter. Her analysis is based on the overt presence of media forms in plays as narrative content. She argues that there are two dominant and explicit media---related themes: 'First, film and television are identified as pervasive entities through which authentic communication is subverted and material capitalism reigns. Second, the mass media are identified as the disseminators of cultural relevance for the disenfranchised.'[76]

Jensen's focus on mediatisation as an explicit thematic motif is limited because it fails to acknowledge the influence of the media on the form of the plays. There are similar theme---oriented approaches to the relationship between the media and plays. Kerstin Schmidt, for example, analyses the plays of Jean---Claude van Itallie in relation to the postmodern mediatised culture, to the 'trivializing power of the omnipresent media on contemporary society's ritualized behaviour patterns, and its unrestrained consumerism.'[77] Kustow's analysis focuses on the thematic content of Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* (1996) and *Faust is Dead* (1997) without, however, discussing whether the structure of the plays address the mediatised world they talk about. This thesis aims to address both the thematic and dramaturgical aspects of plays that propose new formal and critical ways to respond and relate to the mediatised environment and perception. Its four chapters focus on themes, language, characterisation and plot structure, respectively.

David Barnett goes further than a thematic analysis of the impact of media forms and culture on plays by investigating the appropriation of televisual aesthetics in Elfriede Jelinek's play *Stecken, Stab und Stangl* (1996). Barnett questions the ways theatre may 'reflect on modern mass media without having to reproduce them, and how it may exploit its unique performative qualities to act as a critical tool.'[78] Barnett argues that the artist's task is not to reproduce the medium in theatre, an impossible objective, but to 'expose the manner in which any given medium or media affect perception whilst being presented within another.'[79] Jelinek's play and its onstage interpretation[80] critique television and its impact on society and human perception by rethinking the structure of play and performance texts in line with

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[76] Jensen, Theatre in a Media Culture, p. 113.
[77] Kerstin Schmidt, The Theater of Transformation: Postmodernism in American Drama (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), p. 89.
[78] David Barnett, 'Televisualising Racism on Stage. Elfriede Jelinek's *Stecken, Stab und Stangl*' in *Blueprints for No---Man's Land: Connections in Contemporary Austrian Culture*, eds. Janet Stewart and Simon Ward (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005) [*BI British and Irish Studies in German Language and Literature*, Vol 37.], 95---110, (pp. 95).
[79] Ibid., p. 99.
[80] The world première of Jelinek's play took place in Hamburg (12 April 1996).

television's form rather than its content. Barnett's analysis provides a critical perspective of the changing aesthetics as well as the themes of plays and theatre in the face of media---dominated society and perception. Although Barnett focuses on a German---language play, his analysis, as with Pavis's, can be adapted to consider other plays and performances in different languages. This thesis will adopt and adapt some aspects of Barnett's critical approach, particularly its consideration of new modes of expression in theatre with reference to the media as a critical tool to address contemporary culture, society and perception.

There are also critical works that indirectly deal with the influence of the media on plays. For example, Lavender, in 'Turns and Transformations' (1999), talks about an aesthetic shift in theatre---making that brings about new forms of writing along with new ways of rethinking the theatre space.[81] Likewise, Delgado and Svich, indicate that 'technology plays a part in the way in which we can think about the creation of new languages for plays'.[82] Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre*, which he mostly restricts to performance, not only proposes a new multiform discourse for theatre in a media---saturated age, but also implies a change in the role and dramaturgical structure of plays in relation to the prevalent media. As discussed earlier, Lehmann does not suggest that the text disappears from theatre in the historical shift from a textual culture to a mediatised image and sound culture. These implicit or brief references to the change in dramaturgical structure of plays in a mediatised environment played a significant role in the formation of the questions underpinning this thesis.

The focus on plays written in the last two decades does not mean there were no attempts in the Western theatre before the 1990s to reconsider the formal, thematic and critical framework of plays in relation to the increasing influence of the media on society and culture. The media influence on plays can be traced back to the first half of the twentieth century, if not earlier. As Rosette C. Lamont argues, '[t]echnological inventions became the subjects and the protagonists of modern drama'[83] in the Western world at the turn of the century. Guillaume Apollinaire's *The Breasts of Tiresias* (1917) which deals with the issues of genetic engineering and the feminist movement, satirically hinting at the tyranny of journalism, the obtrusive omnipresence of advertisements and the media coverage of the news.[84] In Jean Cocteau's *The Wedding on the Eiffel Tower* (1924), the technological invention of the telegraph becomes the protagonist in the play as 'the Tower itself, a bold and controversial structure and

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[81] Andrew Lavender, 'Turns and Transformations', in Vera Gottlieb and Colin Chambers (eds.) *Theatre in a Cool Climate* (Oxford: Amber Lane Press, 1999), 179---191, p. 180.
[82] Maria M. Delgado and Caridad Svich, 'Theatre in crisis?', p. 8.
[83] Rosette C. Lamont, 'Murderous Enactments: The Media's Presence in the Drama', *Modern Drama*, 28: 1 (1985), pp. 148--- 161, (p. 148).
[84] Lamont, 'Murderous Enactments', p. 148.

a gigantic telegraph antenna, takes center stage as the poet's lead actor in his surrealist comedy ballet.'[85] Moreover, the language of German Expressionism registers media influence through the 'telegramme style', a mode that 'consists of a concise and staccato language in response to the pace of contemporary life'[86] and that is clipped, indicating self---consciousness about the limits and expressive potential of language.

Since the second half of the twentieth century --- the age of the atom and hydrogen bomb, computerised information, electronic surveillance and the development of the World Wide Web – both theatre and plays have increasingly employed or referred to media forms and questioned their socio---cultural implications. In the 1960s and 1970s, plays incorporated, not for the first time, but increasingly, technologies such as film, video and television and critiqued the ways these technologies affected society and individuals in line with the dominant capitalist ideology. For instance, the plays of Jean---Claude van Itallie, particularly *America Hurrah*[87] (1966) and *Eat Cake* (1971), are concerned with the influence of the media on society and how humans perceive the world, and refer to these issues by incorporating media aesthetics into the structure and content of the plays. Inspired by Marshall McLuhan's theories, van Itallie criticised consumer culture and the role of the media in confirming and strengthening this culture. Adrienne Kennedy's *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* (1976) is another example that incorporates film aesthetics into its form and questions media--- imposed identities and Hollywood actor role models. Interest in the media and the media--- induced consumer culture continued in the 1980s. Playwrights such as Ronald Ribman and Janusz Glowacki, among others, dealt with the condition of the individual in a media---saturated and consumer---oriented world. These plays epitomise the emerging tendency for a new kind of vocabulary --- both linguistic and gestural --- in relation to the prevailing presence of the media in society and on stage. For instance, Ribman in *Buck* (1983) and Glowacki in *Cinders* (1985) focus on 'the dilemma of man's subservience to the instruments and systems of his fabrication'.[88]

This short, diverse survey of plays and critical readings could suggest that although some refer to aspects of mediatisation in plays, there is no comprehensive study of the impact of media technologies and culture on the mechanics of dramaturgy. As pointed out, certain studies tend to analyse mediatisation in plays mainly as a part of the narrative content without considering its effects on the form of plays (a subject I will address in Chapter 1). Although others touch on

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85 Ibid., p. 148.
86 Michael Patterson, *The Revolution in German Theatre 1900 ---1933* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1981), p. 22.
87 Jean---Claude van Itallie, *America Hurrah and Other Plays* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1967). The work *America Hurrah* (1966) is composed of three plays: *Interview, TV* and *Motel*.
88 Lamont, 'Murderous Enactments', p. 149.

the potential influence of the media on the fabric of plays and point out the emergence of new languages for plays, they do not elaborate on these points. Thus, the effect of the media on the structure of plays and the critical implications of mediatised dramaturgy has been neglected.

3. Historical Context and Theoretical Background: Mediatisation
3.1. A Historical Overview: A Selective Survey of Modern Mediatisation

Various forms of media such as television or the internet have increasingly penetrated every aspect of everyday life in contemporary society,[89] reshaping human lives, perception and relationships as well as societies worldwide. Today, even the most mundane actions have become unthinkable without media technologies. People connect with each other via e-mail, texting, Facebook or tweeting; they access and share information through the internet; they witness and share the world's events and so forth. In this socio-cultural setting, 'characterized by diverse, intersecting, and still-evolving forms of multimodal, interactive, networked forms of communication',[90] media is so pervasive that its forms are no longer considered as separate from cultural and other social institutions. Media forms are social-cultural institutions and ideological apparatuses that are at the heart of human experience and consciousness. Despite the increased impact of the media since the last decades of the twentieth century in '*modern, highly industrialized, and chiefly western societies*',[91] the media influence can be traced back to the 1950s, the 'golden age' of television and the beginning of the current media-saturated culture.

To begin, although television was invented and television broadcasting began in the 1930s, the use and ownership of televisions in households remained limited even in the late 1940s. However, by the end of the 1950s, the number of households with TVs had considerably increased and they became a widespread mass medium in the Western world. In 1955, 'there were 36 million sets in use in the United States and only 4.8 million in the whole of Europe, with 4.5 million of these in Britain.'[92] In the following years, TV ownership continually increased with television broadcasting stations in over ninety countries by the mid-1960s. Meanwhile, as a result of the rise of mass production after the Second World War encouraging mass consumption, the media, particularly television, became a popular tool for promoting the commercial aims of producers. Since then, television has been a purveyor of mass culture, a

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[89] The focus here is mainly on developed societies or countries in which individuals have easy and continual access and exposure to media technologies.

[90] Sonia Livingstone, 'Foreword: Coming to Terms with "Mediatization"', in *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences*, ed. by Knut Lundby (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. ix-xii, (p. ix).

[91] Hjarvard, 'The Mediatization of Society', p. 113. [Emphasis as in the original.]

[92] Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2009), p. 217.

prevalent medium of the culture industry that, more often than not, shapes people's perceptions, worldviews and relationships; in Theodor W. Adorno's approach to the culture industry it 'infect[s] [...] everything with sameness'[93] and promotes consumer culture. Yet, television was never just a propaganda tool. It is also a communication medium that transmits information around and about the world.

The predominant position of television threatened the medium of film, whose history dates back to late nineteenth century, although it only became a widespread, global media form in the early twentieth century. In response, in the 1950s, the film industry tried to attract audiences through cinematic features and innovations impossible for the small screen by using widescreen and 3D processes. Film continued to develop its appeal owing to the advent of new technologies of the digital revolution in the 1980s. It became increasingly globalized in the following decades due to the all---pervasive Hollywood film industry and the interest of film markets in foreign---language films. Like television, film as a product and means of cultural production has a considerable impact on society, culture and individual lives. With its rising popularity and prevalence since the second half of the twentieth century, the commercial film industry has increasingly marketed trends and role models, bombarding humans with idealised images and promoting celebrity culture. Television programs such as celebrity shows, adverts and even news programs have reinforced this impact on people. Such products of the culture industry tend to trigger the 'wannabe' culture and a consumer landscape inundating human beings with a sense of commodity fetishism, shaping their identities and worldviews in line with the consumption---oriented capitalist culture. Commercial television and the cinema as cultural forms and ideological industries have increasingly influenced human consciousness and identity as well as social institutions such as the family, education and politics since the second half of the twentieth century.

In the last decades of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty---first centuries, society and culture have become ever more influenced by the media due to the increasing pervasiveness of new communication and information technologies, the rise of digital media, and the advent and proliferation of the internet and mobile technologies. These technological advances affect almost every aspect of society, culture and human experience. For example, the oldest medium of human communication, verbal and written language, has undergone a change caused by media influence as individuals integrate the language of the internet and computers into their everyday language. Language has become filled with neologisms,

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[93] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (USA: Stanford UP, 2002), p. 94.

abbreviations, acronyms and emoticons. Moreover, the languages of different cultures and nations have become increasingly anglicised as English increasingly becomes the lingua franca of the internet and international commerce --- subjects I will return to in Chapter 2.

Human cognition has also been influenced by media technologies. While television's quick change of images bombard humans with huge amounts of information, reducing and fragmenting their attention span, internet architecture has extended this influence on perception through multiple hypertexts and hyperlinks. Media technologies and image inundation affect human consciousness in terms of its perception and its modes of constructing reality. The all---pervasive presence and influence of the media has brought about an increase in media images and their growing indistinguishability from the 'real', the original.

In a media---saturated culture, Jean Baudrillard argues, there is a shift from reality to *hyperreality*, to a world of *simulacra*, where simulations of reality by mass media are perceived as more real than the physical and social reality.[94] (I will return to this subject in section 3.2.1.) Although media images exert considerable impact on human perception, consciousness has not 'undergone total metamorphosis and collapsed into helpless zombiedom.'[95] Human beings, as Dixon highlights, 'continue to value other humans above images, nature over media.'[96] Baudrillard's argument presupposes that every human being is exposed to and influenced by the media to the same degree, leading to the idea that media forms dominate every individual's perception of reality to the same extent. Baudrillard overlooks the differences in people's socio---cultural backgrounds, individual experiences, access to media technologies, and so forth. However, what remains pertinent in Baudrillard's ideas is that people's understanding of reality changes in view of the increasingly omnipresent power of the media image. In the context of this thesis, the influence of the media on culture and individuals, and the media saturation of and control over society refer mainly to Western societies in the late twentieth and early twenty---first centuries.

Social and cultural changes from the last decades of the twentieth century caused the academic world to seek concepts and frameworks through which to understand and map the contemporary world and the changes the media have exerted on society. The concept of mediatisation emerges as a result of such efforts. The next section elaborates on this concept, its genealogy, development, definition and characteristics.

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[94] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. by Paul Foss et al. (USA: Semiotext[e], 1983), p. 2.
[95] Steve Dixon, *Digital performance*, p. 142.
[96] Ibid., p. 142.

3.2. Mediatisation: Theoretical Background, Definition and Aspects

Before reviewing definitions and discussions of mediatisation, it is useful to consider the Germanic roots and use of the term *Mediatisierung* to clarify the term and its complex neologism in English. The German use of 'mediatisation' dates back to the nineteenth century when 'the states of the Holy Roman Empire were "mediatized" by Napoleon [as] Napoleon interposed between the miscellany of independent cities, the princes and the archbishops who previously answered only to the Emperor, an intermediate level of territorial authorities.'[97] The term, used in a governmental context, may appear irrelevant to the current use of the notion. However, Sonia Livingstone argues that similar to the way 'the rule of the annexed state keeps his title',[98] the media 'not only get between any and all participants in society but also, crucially, annex a sizeable part of their power by mediatizing --- subordinating --- the previously powerful authorities of government, education, the church, the family'.[99] The increasing power of the media over other societal and cultural institutions is an important aspect of mediatisation.

The contemporary Germanic and Scandinavian use of the term *mediatisierung* simply refers to 'the horizons of social change in relation to media change [and to] the interdependence between the media and other societal subsytems'.[100] Some media scholars and sociologists use other terms such as 'medialization'[101] and 'mediazation'[102] to denote the influence of the media on social and cultural conditions. However, alongside mediatisation, 'mediation' is the most commonly used notion to characterise media influence in the contemporary world. These two notions can be confused or considered to be the same. Nevertheless, media theorists such as Stig Hjarvard, Sonia Livingstone, Gianpietro Mazzoleni and Winfried Schulz suggest mediatisation differs from, though overlaps with, the broader concept of mediation. Briefly, mediation refers to 'any acts of intervening, conveying, or reconciling between different actors, collectives, or institutions.'[103] By contrast, mediatisation refers to a process whereby the media move beyond simply mediating in the sense of 'getting

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[97] Sonia Livingstone, 'On the Mediation of Everything: ICA Presidential Address', *Journal of Communication*, 59 (2009), 1---18, (pp. 6).

[98] Livingstone, 'On the Mediation of Everything', p. 6.

[99] Ibid., p. 6.

[100] Ibid., p. 6.

[101] Swedish media scholar Kent Asp uses the term 'medialization' to point to the impact of the media in political processes. See Kent Asp, 'Medialization, Media Logic and Mediarchy', *Nordicom Review*, 11:2 (1990), 47---50.

[102] Sociologist John B. Thompson explores the media and modernity by focussing on symbolic forms, their modes of production and circulation in social sphere and the cultural transformation they bring about, which Thompson defines as 'mediazation of modern culture'. Here, the term 'mediazation' (without the 'ti') is not significantly different from 'mediatization'. It refers to the similar questions and concepts regarding the impact of the media on society. For further information, see: John B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

[103] Gianpietro Mazzoleni and Winfried Schulz, '"Mediatization" of Politics: A Challenge for Democracy?', *Political Communication*, 16:3 (2010), 247---261, (pp. 249).

in between';[104] whereby the media 'alter the historical possibilities for human communication by reshaping relations not just among media organizations and their publics but among all social institutions --- government, commerce, family, church, and so forth.'[105] Mediatisation, therefore, implies a socio---cultural and perceptual phenomenon, a change and impact exerted on society by the media.

3.2.1. Preliminary Discussions on the Impact of the Media on Society

Before mediatisation was used in media studies and sociology circles in the late twentieth and the twenty---first centuries, cultural theorists and sociologists had, since the early twentieth century, attempted to deal, directly or indirectly, with the impact of the media on society. These attempts are at the foundation of modern mediatisation as a cultural phenomenon and a sociological term. In 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936) Walter Benjamin argues that in the age of mass production, where mass media such as picture magazines, newsreels, photography and film offer reproductions of original artworks as well as everyday reality, 'the criterion of authenticity' or the 'aura' of artistic works as well as the idea of 'uniqueness of every reality' cease to be applicable.[106] Thus, a new kind of perception overcomes the search for the uniqueness of every reality and increasingly urges the need 'to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction.'[107] This new sense of the world and reality increasingly dominated human perception through newer media in the subsequent decades.

Max Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno also focus on mass reproduction and how it changes society and culture. Their idea of the 'culture industry', the production of cultural works for mass reproduction and mass consumption, situates the media as one of its important representatives. They argue that media such as television and film shape society in accordance with consumer capitalism. The media make individuals 'dupes of mass deception',[108] consumers and the culture industry's objects, and so obstruct 'the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves.'[109] Unlike Benjamin, Horkheimer and Adorno consider the impact of the culture industry on

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[104] Livingstone, 'Foreword: Coming to Terms with "Mediatization"', p. ix---x.

[105] Ibid., p. ix---x.

[106] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Media and Cultural Studies*, ed. by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Kellner (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 18---40, (p. 22---23).

[107] Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p. 22.

[108] J. M. Bernstein (ed.), *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 21.

[109] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 106.

society as negative leading to mass deception, to a society that is entirely constructed and manipulated by consumer capitalism.

Following the rise of television culture in the 1950s, Guy Debord proposed the notion of 'the spectacle' in *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) to refer to the dominant model of social system in the twentieth century combining advanced capitalism and the mass media and their colonisation of social life. Debord points to a society where the 'social relationship between people [...] is mediated by images.'[110] Similar to Adorno and Horkheimer, Debord suggests that contemporary consumer culture and increasing commodity fetishism have produced a culture not of need but desire. Debord underlines the ideological role of the media in this culture, whereby the media as the 'most stultifying superficial manifestation'[111] of the spectacle---society cannot be considered as mere information and communication devices; they serve 'the needs of the spectacle's internal dynamics';[112] they provide the audience with pre---arranged images, presented in a way to encourage mass consumption. Debord contends that images in the society of the spectacle dominate 'real' experiences and social relations: 'All that once was directly lived has become mere representation.'[113] The result is the idealisation or the predominance of the image over what it represents and, by extension, the perception of the spectacle as 'real'.[114]

Jean Baudrillard takes the idea of the domination of the sense and experience of reality by its representation in the media further, arguing that people do not live in the society of the spectacle anymore since '[t]here is no longer any medium in the literal sense: it is now intangible, diffuse and diffracted in the real, and it can no longer even be said that the latter is distorted by it.'[115] Baudrillard is not heralding the end of the real or its entire take---over by its image, but questions how reality is perceived when the real and its representation become increasingly indistinguishable. The media, according to Baudrillard, 'controls the mutation of the real into the hyperreal'[116] and shapes individual and collective perception. The role of the media is no longer simply and only the transmission of information, but also 'testing and polling, and finally control[ling]'[117] society during the global process of capitalism. Baudrillard, in this sense, considers the media as a strong instrument of consumer capitalism and

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[110] Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Donald Nicholson---Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), p. 12.
[111] Debord, Society of the Spectacle, p. 19.
[112] Ibid., p. 19.
[113] Ibid., p. 12.
[114] Ibid., p. 11.
[115] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, p. 54.
[116] Ibid., p. 55.
[117] Ibid., p.119.

highlights its ideological role as well as its fundamental impact on human perception and the experience of reality.

3.2.2. The Concept of *Media Logic*

In addition to these attempts to define the changing socio---cultural and perceptual aspects of Western society in view of media influence in the late twentieth century, sociologists David Altheide and Robert Snow's theories have contributed to the conceptualisation of mediatisation. Their understanding of media as a social force in society proposes that the media has 'a particular logic of its own'[118] which shapes social life and other social institutions.[119] Altheide and Snow concentrate on media formats which refer to 'how material is organized, the style in which it is presented, the focus or emphasis on particular characteristics of behaviour, and the grammar of media communication'.[120] As Knut Lundby argues, they 'link media logic to mediatisation, although they apply the term *mediation*.'[121] Altheide and Snow define media logic as 'a way of "seeing" and of interpreting social affairs',[122] and argue that media logic 'consists of a form of communication; the process through which media present and transmit information'[123] and accordingly influence society, culture and individuals. 'Form' in Altheide and Snow's sense, (borrowing from Georg Simmel's definition of form --- 'a process through which reality is rendered *intelligible*'---[124]) is not a structure *per se*, but 'a processual framework *through which* social action occurs.'[125] Media logic comprises a framework that shapes society and culture. Although Altheide and Snow are concerned with the multiple media forms that make up media logic, they propose a coherent, single logic underpinning all media and thus the 'social institutions---transformed---through---media'.[126]

The idea of media logic is important for understanding the processes that shape contemporary social and cultural transformations. Some modern views of media logic come from sociologists and media theorists such as Lundby, Stig Hjarvard and Friedrich Krotz. They adopt the notion of media logic while criticising the idea because, as Lundby puts it 'it is not viable to speak of an overall media logic [and] it is necessary to specify how various media

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[118] D. L. Altheide and R. P. Snow, *Media Logic* (Beverly Hills: SAGE, 1979), p. 9.
[119] Altheide and Snow, *Media Logic*, p. 9, 12.
[120] D. L. Altheide and R. P. Snow, *Media Worlds in the Postjournalism Era* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991), p. 9.
[121] Knut Lundby, 'Media Logic: Looking for Social Interaction' in *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences*, ed. by Knut Lundby (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 101---122, (p. 103).
[122] Altheide and Snow, *Media Logic*, p. 9. (Emphasis as in the original.)
[123] Ibid., p 10.
[124] Ibid., p. 15.
[125] Ibid., p. 15.
[126] Ibid., p. 7.

capabilities are applied in various patterns of social interaction.'[127] Hjarvard critiques the broad generalizations a single media logic implies, and defines media logic as 'a shorthand for the multiplicity of factors structuring media practices, not a singular, unified mechanism.'[128] Like Hjarvard, Andreas Hepp and Krotz point out that the idea of a single general logic behind all media is misleading since, for example, the '"media logic" of TV today is not the same as a decade ago, and the "media logic" of a mobile phone is quite different for a 14---year---old girl compared to a 55---year---old banker.'[129] Therefore, they argue there is no single media logic independent of cultural and societal contexts and history. Similarly, Nick Couldry criticises the linearity and one---sidedness of the idea of single media logic, as the roles the media take on to transform social and cultural spheres are 'too heterogeneous to be reduced to a single "media logic"'[130] and should not be treated 'as if they all operated in one direction, at the same speed, through a parallel mechanism and according to the same calculus of probability.'[131]

These shared perspectives of media logic indicate that contemporary theorists agree that the notion of media logic provides an important basis for understanding the influence media exert on society, yet there is no one single logic or framework with a common source and linear direction of social transformation. However, they do not overlook the concept of a broader media logic that connects 'the institutional and technological modus operandi of the media, including the ways in which media distribute material and symbolic resources'[132] to their ideological role as the apparatus of late capitalism. It is mainly in this sense that this thesis will refer to media logic.

Before considering the concept of mediatisation, it should be noted sociologists have not been the only group concerned with the influence of the media on society. Medium theorists also attempted to define the impact of the media on society from the 1950s and 1960s before the theorisation of this social phenomenon as 'mediatisation'. Harold Innis in the early 1950s, for example, was concerned with different aspects of media influence on modern society.[133] In the 1960s, his student Marshall McLuhan, emphasised the change from the print media to the electronic media, particularly in the television age, and argued that this change fundamentally

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127 Lundby, 'Media Logic: Looking for Social Interaction', p. 117.

128 Stig Hjarvard, qtd. in Lundby, 'Media Logic: Looking for Social Interaction', p. 104.

129 Friedrich Krotz, 'Mediatization: A Concept With Which to Grasp Media and Societal Change', in *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences*, ed. by Knut Lundby (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 21---40, (p. 26).

130 Nick Couldry, 'Mediatization or Mediation? Alternative Understandings of the Emergent Space of Digital Storytelling', *New Media Society*, 10 (2008), 373---391, (pp. 378).

131 Couldry, 'Mediatization or mediation?', p. 378.

132 Hjarvard, 'The Mediatization of Society', p. 105.

133 Harold Innis, *Empire and Communications* (Toronto: Dundurn Press Ltd, 2007). [First edition was published in 1950].

transformed societies, social and cultural relations as well as human life and perception.[134] Despite such instances, medium theory generally remained focused on specific media forms or technology rather than adopting sociologists' historical, process---oriented approach as mediatisation theory also does.

3.2.3. Theorising Mediatisation

The concept of mediatisation, as Knut Lundby argues, 'points to societal changes in *contemporary* [my emphasis] high modern societies and the role of media and mediated communication in these transformations.'[135] However, some media theorists and sociologists such as Friedrich Krotz and John B. Thompson claim that mediatisation refers to 'a more long---lasting process, whereby social and cultural institutions and modes of interaction are changed as a consequence of the growth of the media's influence.'[136] Thompson argues that the origins of mediasation (similar to the processes of mediatisation) date back to early modernity, to the printing press and the media organisations founded after Gutenberg's invention in the second half of the fifteenth century.[137] The invention of the printing press rendered it possible to circulate information to society, over long distances and among large numbers of people, as well as institutionalising the mass media such as newspapers and books as influential forces in society. This technological revolution led to an increase in literacy, undermining the domination of the elite in education, and led to the emergence of a middle class, to the Reformation and the destabilisation of political and religious authorities, as well as of the feudal society. Like Thompson, Krotz suggests a long history for mediatisation, claiming that 'throughout the history of humankind, media have become increasingly relevant for the social construction of reality as people in their communicative actions refer more and more to the media and use them. [...] This is what we refer to as *mediatized*.'[138] For Thompson and Krotz, the media have influenced everyday life, society and culture as a whole for a long time, and the arrival of other media such as radio, film, television and computers has furthered this process.

However, despite the growing impact of the media on society since modernity, mediatisation, as Lundby and other theorists argue, is a concept that characterises the late twentieth and early twenty---first centuries. It refers to the current socio---cultural situation in which 'the media *at once* have attained autonomy as a social institution and are crucially

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[134] Marshall McLuhan, The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of the Typographic Man (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1962).

[135] Lundby, 'Introduction: "Mediatization" as Key', in *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences*, ed. by Knut Lundby (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 1---18, (p. 1).

[136] Hjarvard, 'The Mediatization of Society', p. 114.

[137] John B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 46.

[138] Friedrich Krotz, 'Mediatization: A Concept', p. 22.

interwoven with the functioning of other institutions',[139] and society and individuals have become dependent on the media. Therefore, as Hjarvard suggests, the concept of mediatisation does not characterise every process through which the media affect society and culture. The invention of the printing press 'revolutionized individuals' relationship to the written language and had palpable impacts on both religion and knowledge, but it did not imply a mediatization of either religion or knowledge'.[140] It did not bring about a change in the form or content of social organisations such as education, politics and the family in relation to aspects of media logic. Furthermore, the media did not then operate in their own right, but were mostly separate technologies and cultural phenomena such as newspapers and books, and were instruments in the hands of other social---cultural institutions such as science, politics and commerce. It is '[o]nly with the expansion of mass media in the twentieth century [that] the media [have begun] to be perceived as media in their own right',[141] and to 'exert a particularly predominant influence on other social institutions',[142] and on human knowledge and perception. The presence and use of the media have become so rapidly and immensely widespread that they can potentially transform society, culture and human consciousness.

It is also important to note that while technological evolution constitutes the roots of mediatised society, mediatisation is *not* a technologically determined concept because 'it is not the media as a technology that are causal, but the changes in how people communicate when constructing their inner and exterior realities by referring to media'[143] and also the logic of media that shapes these changes. These aspects are also significant features of mediatisation, elaborated and enhanced through consideration of other fundamental aspects and important definitions given below in order to provide a solid understanding of the concept. In what follows, I shall focus on two major aspects: *direct/indirect mediatisation* and mediatisation as a *metaprocess*.

To begin with, Hjarvard defines mediatisation as

> a double---sided process of high modernity in which the media emerge as an independent institution with a logic of its own that other social institutions have to accommodate to [and also] an integrated part of other institutions like politics, work, family, and religion.[144]

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[139] Hjarvard, 'The Mediatization of Society', p. 110.
[140] Ibid., p. 110.
[141] Ibid., p. 132.
[142] Ibid., p. 110.
[143] Krotz, 'Mediatization: A Concept', p. 25.
[144] Hjarvard, 'The Mediatization of Society', p. 105.

For example, besides being a part of education or being widely used in work environments or political campaigns, the media as a collection of autonomous organisations can determine and shape the content of politics or culture, both of which appeal to the masses by fitting their content and form to the logic of the media. Mediatisation then means the increasing subjection to and dependence on the media. Hjarvard argues that there are two forms of mediatisation: '*direct* (strong) and an *indirect* (weak)'.[145] In direct mediatisation, a non-‐ mediated activity changes into a mediated form as when, for example, personal banking converts to online banking. Indirect mediatisation refers to how the logic of the media, its form, content and politics influence an activity. Hjarvard illustrates this by questioning the underlying rationale behind burger chains, which 'is no longer simply an eating experience; [yet] now entails a considerable exposure to films and cartoon animations'.[146]

The idea of direct and indirect mediatisation can be associated with Winfried Schulz's definition of mediatisation through four processes that characterise the change in human interaction in view of the prevalent media. First, the media *extend* human communication capacities; second, they *substitute for* social actions that which used to be face-‐to-‐face; third, the media *amalgamate* non-‐mediated activities with mediated ones; and lastly, social organisations and individuals *accommodate* media logic.[147] In this context, 'substitution' can be interpreted as direct mediatisation, while 'accommodation' corresponds to indirect mediatisation. The latter group, though not as easily perceptible as the direct form of media influence on society, highlights the extent to which the media have penetrated into the fabric of everyday life, and individual and collective consciousness, even without people realising it. The thesis will expand on both forms of mediatisation for the analysis of new dramaturgical structures with particular focus on implicit media influence since the majority of the plays illustrate instances of indirect mediatisation.

Another important aspect of mediatisation is its connection with other social processes such as globalisation, commercialisation and individualisation. Krotz explains this by defining mediatisation as a *metaprocess*: 'long-‐term and culture-‐crossing changes, processes of processes in a certain sense, which influence the social and cultural development of

[145] Stig Hjarvard, 'From Bricks to Bytes: The Mediatization of a Global Toy Industry', in *European Culture and the Media*, ed. by I. Bondebjerg and P. Golding (Bristol: Intellect, 2004), pp. 43-‐63, (p. 48).
[146] Hjarvard, 'The Mediatization of Society', p. 115.
[147] Winfried Schulz, 'Reconstructing Mediatization as an Analytical Concept', *European Journal of Communication*, 19:1 (2004), 87-‐101, (pp. 88-‐90).

humankind in the long run.'[148] Mediatisation is associated with globalisation mainly because

media technologies extend communication and enable people to connect with others from different places and cultures, and share information in an instant. Mediatisation in relation to globalisation means going beyond physical borders between countries, cultures, languages and viewpoints, and in relation to commercialisation, is the global dissemination of the consumer culture through the cultural products and commercial images and discourses presented by the media. Through mediatisation and the link to commercialisation, the media promote individualisation under the guise of individual autonomy and self---interest. This generates a culture of sameness and docile consumers who adopt media images, lifestyles, stereotypes and so forth. The idea of mediatisation as a metaprocess, operating in relation to other contemporary metaprocesses, emphasises the relationship between mass media and the dominant ideology of late capitalism, between media logic and the logic of capitalism. The idea of mediatisation as a metaprocess, as a social process occurring with other social phenomena relates directly to mediatised dramaturgy since the formal changes in plays contain indices of these social processes.

Drawing on the existing definitions and aspects of mediatisation, the concept in the thesis refers chiefly to the ever---increasing, all---pervasive influence of the media in the form of cultural technologies, social institutions and ideological tools on society and individuals in the Western world from the late twentieth century. Accordingly, the mediatisation of society or mediatised culture refers to the social processes whereby all spheres of the society are becoming saturated with, shaped by and dependent on the logic of the media, dominated by a universalized capitalist ideology. The thesis relates mediatisation to other metaprocesses of late capitalism such as globalisation, commercialisation and individualisation, and elaborates on the fundamental link between mediatisation and these phenomena. It is noteworthy that mediatisation, in general, and in this thesis in particular, does not imply technological determinism, does not refer to a unilateral process that sees technology as the only key factor influencing and changing society. Although mediatisation generates societal and cultural changes, it is still 'a man---made [process]'.[149] Mediatisation is a bilateral process, as while the media bring about social change by offering new possibilities for communication between people, societies and cultures, the needs and goals of people can also form the content and development of media technologies. Therefore, the notion of mediatisation, yet another

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[148] Friedrich Krotz qtd. in and trans. by Andreas Hepp, 'Mediatization, Media Technologies and the "Moulding Forces" of the Media'
<http://www.mediatisiertewelten.de/fileadmin/mediapool/documents/Publikationen/mediatization_hepp.pdf>
[accessed 9 April 2013]
[149] Friedrich Krotz, 'Media Connectivity: Concepts, Conditions, and Consequences', in *Network, Connectivity and Flow: Key Concepts for Media and Cultural Studies*, ed. by A. Hepp, F. Krotz, and S. Moores (New York: Hampton Press, 2008), pp. 13---31, (p. 23).

perspective on the role of the media in societal change, presents the media as significant but not the only leading factor in this transformation.

Besides the techno---determinist misinterpretation of mediatisation, the concept is sometimes falsely considered as denoting 'problematic concomitants or consequences of the development of modern mass media',[150] particularly in relation to the media's subordination to the logic of global capitalism, whereby the role of the media appears to be 'instituting change for the worse.'[151] However, although the ideological role of the media in the late capitalist system is fundamental and the advantages of its impact on society are somewhat questionable, the media also bring about change for the better and have positive effects on society and individual lives. For instance, media connect individuals across the globe, allow information exchanges in fractions of seconds, enabling people to voice their opinions on socio---political issues, among others, and increasing the awareness of the masses about world events. Given these perspectives, it is important to consider the mediatisation of society as a socio---historical process resulting from the *interaction* between society and the media, and consisting of varying logics, aesthetics, content and with various impacts and consequences, rather than limiting mediatisation to technophobic and techno---determinist approaches.

4 Thesis Outline

The concept of 'mediatised dramaturgy' considers the social phenomenon of mediatisation in terms of its impact on the themes, language, characterisation and plot structure of the selected plays written since the 1990s. The thesis investigates whether and how this influence on the fabric of plays promotes new dramaturgical ways to relate to and critically engage with aspects of mediatised culture and perception. It also assesses the repercussions of mediatised plays on British playwriting and theatrical tradition.

The thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter 1 investigates the ways in which certain plays refer and respond to mediatisation thematically without formally engaging with the aspects of the mediatised culture they implicitly or explicitly address. It examines Martin Crimp's *No One Sees the Video* (1990), Mark Ravenhill's *Faust is Dead* (1996) and Enda Walsh's *Chatroom* (2004). The chapter scrutinises the form and content of the plays within their socio--- historical context. It argues that the plays' thematisation of mediatisation, by not taking into consideration the mode of dramaturgical expression, limits their critical capacity to relate to

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[150] Mazzoleni and Schulz, '"Mediatization" of Politics', p. 249.
[151] Livingstone, 'On the Mediation of Everything', p. 5.

the phenomena they critique. The chapter does not limit its investigation to texts. It also looks into how these texts are interpreted on stage to discover whether the stage reinforces or resists and subverts the dramatic form of the plays, and what the implications of both approaches may be. The investigation in Chapter 1 prepares the ground for the discussion of forms of mediatised dramaturgical structure and their impact on the critical scope and implications of the plays in the following chapters.

Chapter 2 focuses on the dramaturgy of language, exploring how or whether the use and form of language in plays change in response to mediatisation, particularly to the influence of the media on language --- the medium through which human beings perceive and relate to the world. The analysis looks at direct and indirect expressions of mediatisation through the language in the plays. The former consists of new modes of linguistic styles, directly originating from specific media (*medialect*). The latter refers to more implicit manifestations of the mediatisation of language in relation to other social processes which cause the linguistic medium to be an increasingly ideological, fragmented and Anglicised construct. The chapter explores these ideas through Patrick Marber's *Closer* (1997), Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* (1997) and Sarah Kane's *Crave* (1998). It questions how far the change in the mode of linguistic expression affects the plays' capacity to work as critical tools, and whether they propose new dramaturgical ways of relating to mediatised society and consciousness. Chapter 2 furthers the analysis of the changing modes of language use in the plays by investigating the ways in which inventive dramaturgical strategies affect the performance of the plays.

Chapter 3 examines mediatised dramaturgy and focuses on characterisation. It investigates the ways in which character presentation in plays has evolved in relation to the human subject's changing sense and experience of the self and interpersonal relations in mediatised culture. The chapter explores the inventive formal approaches to the concept of character in Tim Crouch's texts and productions of *My Arm* (2003) and *An Oak Tree* (2005), and in Simon Stephens's *Pornography* (2007) in its English and German productions. The method and focus of analysis in Chapter 3 differs from that of others only in relation to Crouch's works since it concentrates on Crouch's onstage interpretation of his own texts through a character---actor hybrid, providing a compelling formal response to the changing sense of subjectivity. As the chapter will demonstrate, both Crouch's and Stephens's works question the liberal humanist concept of character and the role of the actor, and provide diverse possibilities for considering, mapping and performing the changing state of human subjectivity in mediatised culture.

Lastly, Chapter 4 further investigates mediatised dramaturgical patterns by focussing on new forms of plot structure that, directly or implicitly, accommodate media aesthetics and aspects of media culture. This chapter draws together the themes of the previous discussions and explores the structure and workings of the general framework of plays. It concludes the research with specific attention to plot structure, to the question of how certain plays reconsider the mode of plot composition, in order to ascertain whether or how changes in the dramaturgical organisation allow texts to address and raise awareness of aspects of mediatised culture and consciousness. The chapter analyses Caryl Churchill's *Heart's Desire* (1997) and its televisual structure, and Douglas Maxwell's *Helmet* (2002) and its use of the computer game format as the basis for its dramaturgical framework. The analysis of these plays demonstrates the fundamentally different mechanics and critical implications of these seemingly similar forms of mediatised plot structure. Subsequently, the investigation of mediatised dramaturgy is again linked to how changes in plot structure affect performance and are interpreted on stage, and what the critical and formal implications of different methods of stagings might be.

CHAPTER 1

Plays Speak About Mass Media: Thematisation of Mediatisation and the Tension between Thematic and Formal Responses to Mediatisation

1 Aim and Context

This chapter examines the ways in which certain plays deal with mediatisation, directly or indirectly, solely as a thematic element without necessarily extending this interest to their dramaturgical aesthetics. It investigates the formal and critical implications of the dissonance between thematic concerns and formal structuring in Martin Crimp's *No One Sees the Video* (1990),[1] Mark Ravenhill's *Faust is Dead* (1996) and Enda Walsh's *Chatroom* (2004). Here and elsewhere in the thesis, I use *formal* in the sense of structure or form as distinguished from the content. The plays share in common a concern with three over‑‑‑arching themes: the relationship between mediatisation and consumer capitalism, individualisation and identity formation, and the mediatisation of perception. *Video* criticises capitalist consumerist ideology, its surveillance technologies and the deceptive individualism of capitalism which categorises people as clusters of consumers. *Faust* and *Chatroom* are concerned with the changing concept and experience of the self and individual identity and with social relations in the mediatised environment. *Faust* is also concerned with hyperreality, the influence of the media on the perception of the world. The analysis of each play investigates both what the play offers thematically and what it overlooks dramaturgically. The chapter argues that the plays' common lack of interest in formally engaging with their themes influence their critical capacity to relate to contemporary culture. The chapter also examines whether the theatrical production of each play can illuminate qualities repressed in the play or if the stage has remained unresponsive to the tension between the thematic content and dramaturgical form. The findings of this chapter prepare the ground for the discussion of the structures and implications of forms of mediatised dramaturgy in the subsequent chapters.

1.1. Mediatisation since the 1990s

The plays in this chapter, written since the 1990s, are not the first examples of texts for theatre that thematically deal with media technologies and their influence on society. An initial interest in technology as a theme can be traced back to the early twentieth century, as

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[1] The shortened title, *Video*, will be used throughout Chapter 1.

discussed in section 2.2. of the Introduction. However, it was not until the 1990s that mediatisation became prominent as subject matter in play texts, particularly in the British tradition.

The 1990s marked significant social---political events such as the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the fall of the Berlin Wall, which altered the economic and political power balance globally as well as nationally. These events reinforced the rise and spread of capitalism, challenging traditional notions of nationhood, social relations and subjectivity. Developments in technology and media communication contributed to the expansion of capitalism on a global scale. As ideological apparatuses, the media in the Western world – the focus of this thesis --- responded to the rise of capitalism by normalising it, by spreading and naturalising it in the places it did not exist and fostering it in the places it existed in the 1990s. For example, the increasing encroachment of television into individuals' lives and its development as an international commercial form and an advertising vehicle reinforced the progress of finance capitalism as a global system.

The development and increasing prevalence of media technologies since the 1990s have also reinforced the growing individualisation and influence of consumer culture. 'Individualisation', in this context, refers to the idea of each individual as an independent and unique being with an interest in his/her own welfare, interests, choices, success and happiness. However, as Zygmunt Bauman argues, individualisation is actually a matter of 'fate' rather than of choice, fate determined by capitalist ideology.[2] Individualisation refers to a manipulative label based on the capitalist idea of standardising individuals and turning them into consumers under the pretence of giving individuals choices, objectives and actions. Thus, individualisation actually leads to 'deindividuation', the destabilisation of the idea of the human subject, what Ulrich Beck calls an 'individuated subject', as Bauman identifies, a 'self--- sustained and self---propelled individual'.[3] The development and widespread use of media technologies have amplified the impact of individualisation and consumerism through advertisements, commercial films and television, and so forth. Incrementally, since the 1990s, changes in the mode of human subjectivity and the rising prevalence of the media in almost every sphere of society have contributed to the emergence of today's mediatised culture. Such changes, as I shall demonstrate shortly, have attracted playwrights' attention and generated artistic and critical responses.

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[2] Zygmunt Bauman, 'Foreword by Zygmunt Bauman: Individually Together' in *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*, by Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck---Gernsheim (London: SAGE, 2001), pp. xiv---xix, (p. xvi).
[3] Bauman, 'Foreword', p. xvi.

The 1990s also marked the beginning of the 'information age' in its most public sense. In 1991, the World Wide Web project started to emerge in the popular consciousness. Email technology and instant messaging grew in popularity through Hotmail and MSN Messenger. Mobile phone technology rapidly improved in such a way that phones became much smaller and more user---friendly; these increasingly marketable technologies transformed the devices from a businessman's tool into 'everyone's gadget'. Television radically expanded its reach through the cable and satellite revolutions of the late 1980s, and the rapid proliferation of channels. 24---hour news coverage became popular during the Gulf War, providing people in different parts of the world with information, images and news on a continuous basis. Arguably, the constant inundation of information, news and images not only informs individuals about the global situation, but has also had a profound impact on human consciousness and perception. In this view, attention spans have been shortened, perception fragmented, the world viewed as smaller (an effect amplified by improvements in air travel and the increasing affordability of transport since the 1990s). Also, as media technologies became an increasingly integral part of human life and relations since the 1990s, people started communicating more frequently and globally. This changed the nature of human relations. As will be discussed, human beings have been able to communicate, network and socialise more widely and instantly, yet this has not necessarily resulted in stronger relational bonds.

In addition to the plays considered in this chapter, other plays in British drama have directly or indirectly focussed on aspects of mediatised society or referred to it through motifs such as mobile phones, internet porn or settings in internet chat rooms. Lucy Prebble's *The Sugar Syndrome* (2003) tells the story of a troubled teenager, Dani, who meets a paedophile, Tim, in an online chat room. The third scene in Patrick Marber's *Closer* (1997) takes place in a virtual space where two male characters --- Dan, pretending to be Anna, and Larry --- have internet sex. Dennis Kelly's *Love and Money* (2006) opens with a scene showing the email correspondence between two characters, while Arthur Kopit's *Y2K* (2000) refers to internet technology and computers in relation to identity theft when a couple's privacy is invaded by a teenage computer hacker. Simon Stephens's *Motortown* (2006) and *Wastwater* (2011) refer to mobile phones and the pervasiveness of communication technologies in contemporary society. Another predominant theme is the relationship between the internet and pornography. For instance, in Antony Neilson's *Stitching* (2002), a couple download pornographic pictures from the internet, and at the end of Tim Crouch's *The Author* (2009), the author, watches online child pornography. Caryl Churchill's play, *Love and Information* (2012) critiques mediatised

culture by focussing on the link between the individual's insatiable desire for knowledge and the dissolution of human relationships in the age of information---overload.

The following section examines how Crimp, Ravenhill and Walsh respond to mediatisation through the thematic content in their plays without formally engaging with the themes. Here, I will argue that despite the plays' apposite themes, their formal adherence to more conventional categories of dramatic theatre frustrates their thematic attempts to critically respond and relate to contemporary culture. This section is divided into two sub---sections: the first focuses on the relationship between mass media and capitalist ideology in Crimp's *Video*, and the second analyses the changing experience of selfhood and identity in relation to mediatised culture in *Faust* and *Chatroom*. My analysis of *Faust* takes into account media influence on human perception. I will also consider onstage responses to the thematic content and dramaturgical form of the play texts.

2 Plays of Discord: The Question of Formal Response

2.1. Mediatisation as a Consumerist Capitalist Story: *No One Sees the Video*

> *Look, a little window into the consumer's soul! We'll just slip through this little window and market these young souls into oblivion!*[4]

As explained in the Introduction, mediatisation is fundamentally linked to other late---capitalist social processes such as commercialisation and individualisation. The media play a significant role in reinforcing consumer culture and the notion of individual autonomy and free will whilst marketing products at larger, faceless groups. The relationship between the media and the logic of capitalism provides the inspiration for contemporary playwrights such as Crimp who, particularly in *No One See the Video, The Treatment* and *Attempts on Her Life*, thematises the consumer logic of the media and its effects on individual lives. We should not forget, however, that the consumer logic of the media is not a defining feature of all media forms or products. There are instances where the deployment of the media manifests an anti---consumer or anti---capitalist attitude (the organisation and dissemination of social/civil movements exemplified by Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring via social networks, or satirical newspapers such as *Private Eye* that critique the dominant socio---political, cultural system). This section (2.1.) focuses on *Video* and briefly refers to *The Treatment* since they similarly deal with the subject matter through their thematic content, whilst *Attempts on Her Life*, discussed in Chapter 2, engages with it formally.

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[4] John Seabrook qtd. in Michael Kustow, *Theatre@risk* (London: Methuen, 2001), p. 191.

2.1.1. *No One Sees the Video*: A Play on Consumer Culture and Media Surveillance

Promoted as 'a new play which casts a cold eye on the world of market research',[5] Martin Crimp's *Video* opened in November 1990 at the Royal Court's Theatre Upstairs. In the play, Elizabeth (Liz), who has just been deserted by her husband and needs to take care of herself and her daughter Jo, participates in a consumer---product survey. This draws her into the world of marketing research, a world of pretence and manipulation that promises success and prosperity through commodities. Under the guidance of Colin, who works for the market research company, Liz starts working as a researcher. Liz quickly adapts herself to this shiny world where happiness is guaranteed to those who consume and encourage consumption. Colin, apparently a passionate market researcher who lures Liz to the business, is also critical not only of the job, but also of the consumer culture and the social values it promotes.

Crimp defines *Video* as a 'post---consumer play',[6] namely, a play that refers to a time and culture, as Sierz explains, where consumerism has become a widely accepted norm, where the constructed equivalence between consumption and happiness is no longer questioned.[7] The play is concerned with a world where consumption is considered a way to happiness and social appreciation, shopping has become the main area for interpersonal communication and people are categorised by what they buy. It is a world in which consumers are objectified by the capitalist system under the pretense of individualisation, and thus autonomous individuality is shown to be a construct. It offers a critique of consumer capitalism and a satire on market research, critically focusing on the role of media surveillance and manipulation in the capitalist process of determining individuals' lives and choices.

Crimp incorporates the theme of media surveillance and manipulation into the content of consumerism and market research by deploying the camcorder/video camera as the dominant motif in the play's title and story. The camcorder in *Video* is a surveillance device, a tool to investigate customers in order to determine ways to manipulate and shape their worldviews, identities, relationships and means of living. The first encounter between Colin and Liz demonstrates this function. Colin uses the camcorder whilst putting market research survey questions to Liz. He assures her that the research is confidential and the recording is for the good of the customers rather than information for companies or agents, repeatedly

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[5] Aleks Sierz, *The Theatre of Martin Crimp* (London: A & C Black Publishers, 2006), p. 30.

[6] Martin Crimp qtd. in Sierz, *The Theatre of Martin Crimp*, p. 34.

[7] Sierz, The Theatre of Martin Crimp, p. 35.

emphasising: 'No one sees the videotape'[8] and 'this [market research] is not advertising, this is not selling'.[9] However, as the play progresses, Colin's assurance turns out to be misleading as it becomes evident that the camera is not an innocent tool for efficient work, nor is the videotape kept anonymous or protected as confidential material. Rather, the videotape is used to provide 'opportunities to see ideas, values, products, in short, a consumerist worldview.'[10] Liz, who goes on to work for Colin's company, uses the same phrase whilst interviewing a consumer, yet she implies that the assurance statement is merely a means to get information from individuals rather than a fact: 'I ought to tell you right now that this is not selling, this is not advertising.'[11]

Crimp furthers his critique of market research and media surveillance for the sake of consumerism by relating it to the influence of the consumer worldview and the media on human identity. A prominent aspect of the market research interviews is that the researchers initially speak to the consumers in a way that values their individuality, as they ask for customers' individual opinions. However, in fact, they are not actually interested in the consumers' personal attributes such as their life stories or opinions, but in their consumption habits. Liz's comment on her interview with a girl called Sally foregrounds this clearly: 'So I tell her [...] I do want her views, but what I want are her views about the product, views about the blend. Not views about the *world*'.[12] This attitude is also evident in the way market researchers define consumers. Under the scrutiny of the camera and in market research discourse, people are identified through letter codes as in 'AB women'[13] or 'C2D women'[14] rather than through their individual names and personal characteristics. These codes are authentic indices of social status that are used extensively for classification of consumers in market research. They are categorisations that reduce and flatten people's individuality into standard types and generalisations.

Critically, the categorisation of people as figures rather than unique individuals speaks to the process of individualisation and thus to deindividuation. Crimp's treatment of market research initially seems to value the individual by privileging his/her privacy and confidentiality. However, in the play it soon transpires that the researchers see the interviewees as commodities, standardising them into stereotypes according to their socio--- economic position. Individual consumers are objectified and labelled to streamline the

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8 Martin Crimp, *Plays: Two* (*No One Sees the Video* and *Attempts on Her Life*) (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p. 26. All references to *No One Sees the Video* and *Attempts on Her Life* are taken from this edition. Subsequently the shortened title *Video* and *Attempts* will be followed by a page number in the footnotes.
9 Crimp, *Video*, p. 27.
10 Frank J. Lechner and John Boli (eds), *The Globalization Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), p. 75.
11 Crimp, *Video*, p. 54.
12 Ibid., p. 85.
13 Ibid., p. 33.
14 Ibid., p. 85--- 86.

consumer system and, of course, to sell and produce more. This suggests that under the conditions of consumer capitalism, the idea of autonomous individuality is a construct. Rather, human beings and their subjectivity seem to be fundamentally shaped by the ideology and its support structures. By thematising the embedded link between the social processes of consumerism, media surveillance and individualisation, Crimp critically represents the other side of the so---called prosperous, individual---oriented, technologically improved world. What lies behind the surface of *Video* and everyday reality is indeed a culture of surveillance and media manipulation, a culture of sameness, standardised identities and docile consumers rather than self---propelled individuals.

Crimp's critique, however, does not suggest individuals no longer have any agency over their thoughts, actions or choices, that they are mere objects or tools of the consumerist worldview. Rather, *Video* highlights the considerable influence of consumerist ideology and its tools without overlooking the fact that individuals do still have some control over their decisions and ideas. Crimp's characters represent the contemporary human as a self---conscious subject who is also substantially shaped by consumerism, and aware of this shaping. However, they do not resist or attempt to change this situation. For instance, Liz appears as a self--- reflexive character who is consciously critical of consumer culture. However, given that Crimp critiques the consumerist manipulation of individuals, the individuality of the characters is always limited by the culture of commercialisation and consumer society. This becomes evident when Liz, who initially criticises Colin and market research as 'creating a void,'[15] starts a career in the same field and ironically adopts the same manipulative consumerist discourse and attitude. Her subjectivity and critical opinions therefore become dominated by the consumerist worldview.

Crimp also presents the lived contradiction of 'being' in a highly commercialised and mediatised society through the character of Colin. Colin seems to advocate the values of market research to consumers in his work, but he is also aware of the manipulative power of the media and wishes to liberate himself from its influence: 'I tell you something: no one is going to tell me what to think. [...] Nor a newspaper. (Thank you.) Nor a television. [...] I don't want to be told, I want to decide.'[16] Colin continues his critique and defines the world he lives in and works for as the 'void' and states that the consumerist system deprives people of existential meaning under the guise of individual interest and benefit:

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[15] Ibid., p. 36.
[16] Ibid., p. 16.

Colin: '[t]here is no meaning to my life [...] We have lost a dimension and in its place we are confronted by a capital V void which cannot be filled [...] Because there are benefits and we are surrounded by them.'[17]

Nevertheless, despite his dissatisfaction with the system, Colin does not seek to change anything about it or his position in it. His incapacity for resistance is potentially based on a disbelief in the ability to effectively challenge social conditions and change them. The pervasiveness of capitalism and its tools, extensively shaping society and perception, create a false consciousness promoting capitalist values to control the masses and the potential for revolutionary change. Therefore, awareness does not necessarily result in resistance under the conditions of systematic desensitisation. Colin's awareness therefore remains a passive state, implying a larger sense of social inability to resist that is promoted by consumer capitalism and its controlling mechanisms. *Video* represents individuals in a consumer society as trapped in a vortex from which they want to escape, yet are simultaneously apathetic to. Crimp presents this state of limbo in an ominous manner by hinting at the idea of 'void' which could be taken to represent the existential state of living as a consumer within consumer society. In his later work, particularly *Attempts*, Crimp's critique continues to question the human condition in the mediatised culture. The idea of the human as a self---determined, unique individual transforms into the idea of the human as a socially, symbolically and ideologically determined construct (see Chapter 2).

Crimp's work also critiques the individual's consenting role in surveillance and mass media in consumer culture, a theme which is certainly current today in the data---mining practices of Google and Facebook, for example. This can be seen in the scene where Liz interviews a customer called Sally who continuously indicates her desire to be on the screen, via the market research videotape or via surveillance cameras in shops or stations: '[W]ill this [the interview] be on TV?'; 'I really like --- when you're on the tube – I really like going down the end of the platform where you can see yourself in the camera.';[18] 'The other thing is electrical stores, [...] where they put a camera in the window and what you can do is see yourself in the video actually in the shop.'[19] Sally's unthinking desire for the screen speaks to Crimp's wider critique of an unquestioning acceptance of media surveillance. Crimp's work raises crucial questions about the ramifications of coercive Big Brother rhetoric: where the video camera in market research is 'for the good of the consumer' and 'research quality', and the surveillance camera in the street is to 'ensure public safety', and so forth.

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[17] Ibid., p. 73---74.
[18] Crimp, *Video*, p. 48.
[19] Ibid., p. 49.

Sally's desire to see herself on the screen also relates to the cultivation of a 'culture of narcissism',[20] 'a self---absorbed, greedy and frivolous society the intimate heart of which has been transformed by relentless consumerism.'[21] This culture of narcissism is promoted fundamentally by the media and its capitalist discourse of self---interest and self---improvement. The role of the media in the development of this culture is most evident in advertising language: '"Because you're worth it", "Be good to yourself", "You owe it to yourself" etc. etc.'[22] However, rather than generating a sense of self---awareness, this self---absorption creates 'a thinness in self---understanding'.[23] In this context, Sally's keenness on seeing herself on the screens addresses the changing sense of 'self' that is constructed and regulated by consumer culture and its 'deep---rooted institutional narcissism'.[24] The scene and characterisation critically suggest that media---induced self---interest and sense of individuality are means to maintain capitalist ideology rather than the promotion of individuated human beings.

2.1.2. *Video:* The Tension between Content and Dramaturgical Form

Following the discussion of significant aspects of the thematic response to mediatisation in *Video*, this section examines whether or to what extent the play engages formally with its content of criticism. The play is structured in a linear, chronological fashion through numbered scenes (e.g. I. 1, I. 2) in three acts; each scene's title reflects the setting of the scene --- Pub, Street and the Masonic Hall. However, despite the linear numbering, the scenes are formed as a *montage* of short, clipped scenes or snapshots, giving a sense of recorded fragments from videotape or film. Montage technique was originated in film and theorized by Sergei Eisenstein. In drama and theatre it refers to 'a dramaturgical form in which textual or stage sequences are assembled in a series of autonomous moments.'[25] Brecht used montage as one means to break down the *fabula*, the dramatic illusion, understood as a unified and continuous narrative. Although the montage format undermines the unified and continuous representation of action, it does not mean that there is no narrative or coherence. On the contrary, montage 'is structured around a particular movement or direction given to the action'.[26] That is, there is an underlying common narrative and critical context that connects fragments of scenes, but they are not presented in the traditional dramatic pattern of exposition, climax and dénouement.

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[20] Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1979), p. 97.
[21] Tina Besley, Michael A. Peters, *Subjectivity & Truth: Foucault, Education, and the Culture of Self* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 9.
[22] Richard Hoggard, *Mass Media in a Mass Society* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 86.
[23] Besley and Peters, *Subjectivity & Truth*, p. 9.
[24] Hoggard, Mass Media in a Mass Society, p. 88.
[25] Patrice Pavis, *Dictionary of Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1998), p. 220
[26] Pavis, Dictionary of Theatre, p. 220.

Crimp uses montage in a somewhat Brechtian manner in connection with the thematic motif of videotape. In a similar way to montage in film, the scenes in the play, more often than not, seem to stand alone as autonomous units, neither sequentially nor rigidly related to the previous or the following ones. For example, the opening scene takes place on the street where Karen asks Liz to do the survey and is followed by the pub scene where John and Colin meet, followed by a jump cut to the third scene where Liz and Colin meet. The scenes do not necessarily open with an introductory conversation between the characters or a direct reference to the previous scene. Nevertheless, all the scenes, though broken into units and seemingly separated, are fundamentally and coherently connected to each other through the narrative about Liz, Colin and Jo. Characterisation is consistent, time structured, and a unifying thematic content runs through the plot. The montage format in *Video* reinforces traditional dramatic representation of the world as a coherent totality that is epistemologically stable, knowable and thus representable. Unlike, say, Michael Haneke's *Hidden* (2005), where the spectator is continually asking whether a scene plays in real time or is pre---recorded, Crimp's play offers no unsettling ambiguity. It thus does not aesthetically engage with the increasing multiplicity and fragmentation of consciousness in view of information---overload or the deindividuation and social alienation of people in an interconnected, globalised world. As a result, although *Video* raises valid questions concerning modern culture, its conventionally dramatic form is limited in its ability to accommodate the social reality it thematises.

Another important dramaturgical element to consider is the language in *Video*, which is coherently and consistently presented as a meaningful whole through structured dialogues, so that characters consecutively respond to each other through an identifiable everyday language. The concept of the individual speaker thus largely remains intact. There are instances in the play when the language---character congruity becomes problematic because of the discourse of ready---made market research clichés that Colin, Liz and Karen (another researcher) deliver, (e.g. 'In your own words';[27] 'this is not advertising, this is not selling.'[28]). This critically refers to the manipulation of language by systems external to the human subject and challenges a notion of the self---determining individual. Yet, simultaneously, characters are consistently presented as individuals and not, say, as types. This dramaturgical feature reinforces the idea of language as the creation of an individual person; it does not question the relationship between a subject's supposed autonomous agency and the influence of socially and politically predetermined systems on them. Thus, the dramatic mode of language use eliminates a

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[27] Crimp, *Video*, p. 23.
[28] Ibid., p. 27.

potential formal response to the changing sense of subjectivity resulting from media and ideological influence on identity and consciousness.

The dramaturgical structure of *Video* does not adequately enact its criticism of the mediatised world and the mediatised consumer through the mode of characterisation. As discussed earlier, the market researchers refer to the consumers in categories (A, AB) that are indices of their socio---economic status rather than treating them as individual human beings. This flattening or standardisation of individuality does not necessarily reverberate in the dramaturgy of character. Crimp's characters are individuals with consistent personal traits and individual names rather than the deindividuated consumers turned into pieces of information or categories at the hands of the consumer culture thematised in the play. The play is a character---based drama, a dramatic account of individuals with particular stories, weaknesses, capacities and of their transformation. The dramaturgy of character does not necessarily reflect on limited parameters of Liz's individuality or Colin's incapacity to act as a self--- determining person. The form, in other words, does not engage with the question of the increasing constructedness of the modern subject that the play constantly refers to. This indicates that the play's critique is at odds with its dramatic model. This tension limits *Video*'s critical capacity to map and respond to the social---political matters it questions. The play is out of step with the changing cultural and perceptual conditions of the human subject in the mediatised world.

As mentioned earlier, Crimp's interest in the relationship between consumer capitalism and mediatisation as subject matter continues in *The Treatment* (1993). In this play, Crimp offers a critical glimpse into the workings of the culture industry,[29] a satire on 'showbiz' and its more pernicious aspects, and a critique of the exploitive 'treatment' of real people and stories as commodities. Here, Crimp's interest in the media shifts from video to the film industry, yet, like *Video*, *The Treatment* follows traditional dramatic categories in its dramaturgical structure.

The Treatment is about Anne, a woman whose real---life story of domestic abuse at the hands of her husband is turned into a commercial scenario by an exploitative showbusiness/film industry in present---day New York. Film producers Jennifer and Andrew offer to buy Anne's story to adapt it into a film. However, the filmmakers do not simply want to make her story into a film, but to manipulate and commodify it by changing it into a

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[29] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (USA: Stanford UP, 2002), p. 94---95.

scandalous film to attract spectators. The play then recounts how Anne's individuality is flattened as her real---life experience is devalued and turned into a commodity for a paying audience. Dramaturgically speaking, *The Treatment* is structured as a series of vignettes that form a unified, developing story with a clear political perspective on the culture industry. Similarly to *Video*, the play is based on a recognisable plot, unified characterisation and structured time and dialogue. It represents the world as a stable totality and knowable cosmos, and human beings as autonomous individuals with agency. As in *Video*, here the use of models of dramatic plays fails to match the flattening effect of the media and consumer culture on individuality. The critical response to the contemporary environment and mindset remains superficial.

Crimp's formal and discursive interest in satire in both plays reinforces the tension between form and content because satire, by its nature, produces direct social criticism with clear references to a 'real' world from a definite viewpoint. This generates stability and certainty, characteristics that do not correspond to the continually changing, epistemologically unstable conditions of the mediatised world. Consequently, the satirical thrust of Crimp's plays, along with their traditional dramatic form, vitiates their attempts to critically relate to modern social and perceptual reality. This is not to suggest that the plays' thematic content avoids addressing today's world. The themes clearly deliver critical insights about aspects of the current socio---cultural context. However, their conventional dramatic form portrays the world as a knowable, stable whole which no longer corresponds to the epistemological and ontological conditions of a multiply mediatised, postmodern culture. The dramatic representation of the contemporary moment comforts the reader/audience through familiarity and certainty, and keeps them in the same state of false consciousness that capitalism has desensitised them to. Therefore, the plays do not mount formally experimental challenges which would sensitise the reader/audience to the social reality and mediatised culture that the plays critically thematise. Crimp revisits questions about mediatisation and consumer capitalism in *Attempts* in which he moves from a thematic to a more formal response to mediatisation. *Attempts* and its compelling dramaturgical structure will be explored in detail in Chapter 2.

2.1.3. *No One Sees the Video* in Performance

To understand the implications of *Video*'s focus on mediatisation only as subject matter, this chapter will now investigate how the thematic content of the play is interpreted in theatrical

performance and explore whether documented performance might deal with the qualities repressed in the plays' more conventional forms.

The first production of *Video* was directed by Lindsay Posner at the Royal Court Theatre. *Video*, as Aleks Sierz explains, 'had a bare set [...] with a simple, hygienic white cyclorama'.[30] The white---walled circular setting surrounding the characters is usually represented the entrapment of the characters, particularly Colin. The stage was also bare with media technologies only used to depict the scenes where consumers' interviews were recorded and where Colin looks at the freeze---framed image of Liz during an interview on the TV. The performance opened with short scenes with 'the air of [television] revue sketches'[31] television where the 'brightly vacuous researcher [buttonholed] Elizabeth with the enamelled chirpiness of an air hostess.'[32] The incorporation of televisual and media---related discourses into the performance was compounded by the use of marketing terms. These linguistic tools or styles served to complement the dramatic representation of the marketing business and the consumer world in general.

In addition to the televisual style, Posner occasionally accelerated the narrative speed through rapid presentation of scenes rather than staging the linearly structured storyline at an even pace. This staging technique evokes fast---forwarding, or similar electronic mechanisms, and also critically speaks to the fast---paced lives of individuals in a consumer world living with the incessant rapid---fire of media images. These rapidly presented scenes suspended the traditionally structured theatrical representation and drew the audience's attention to the critical undertones hidden behind the everydayness of these scenes. The mode of theatrical expression, presenting recognisable characters and plot in an unfamiliar form, allowed the audience to see the play and the world it thematises in a new light. The form of staging foregrounded the implicit, and perhaps unconscious, reference to omnipresent mediatisation and its impact on human perception and lives. This theatrical pattern critically related Crimp's play to contemporary culture and consciousness, and opened a new vista on the play.

However, apart from this staging strategy Posner did not push the limits of Crimp's dramatic structure regarding the character---actor relationship. Following Crimp's traditional characterisation model and use of personalised dialogue with its coherent connection between the characters and language, Posner considered the actors as agents standing in for the

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[30] Sierz, The Theatre of Martin Crimp, p. 32.
[31] Martin Hoyle, 'Review on *No One Sees the Video*' (*The Times*), *Theatre Record*, 24 (1990), p. 1600.
[32] Hoyle, 'Review on *No One Sees the Video*', p. 1600.

characters, 'becoming' them. Posner's three---dimensional representation of the dramatic personae is better understood from the reviewers' detailed depiction of the characters:

> Colin is not a happy man. He launches into mad monologues, veers between robot---like friendliness and sudden rage, hankers alternately after Liz and her schoolgirl daughter Jo. (There is a neurotic wife in the background.) And Liz is soon showing some of the symptoms. She becomes estranged from Jo; even when she takes a young man back to her hotel bedroom for a night of pleasure, she cannot help ruining everything by being hysterically defensive about her job.[33]

The congruity between the actors and characters suggested by this review provides a sense of the characters as individual, particular subjects rather than as reflections of real---life subjects whose identity is increasingly shaped by the consumer system. In effect, what the audience saw on stage were individuals with personal features, weaknesses, desires and autonomy rather than subjects stripped of their individuality, standardised identities or categories according to their consumption tendencies. This suggests the production did not extend *Video*'s thematic ambitions into something more fluid and epistemologically unstable, but rather preserved received wisdom regarding human agency.

This does not mean Posner's production was unsuccessful. On the contrary, it was vivid, moving and presented an effective picture of the culture of consumerism through a satire on market research. The production was acclaimed mainly for its thematic content and satirical questioning. Nevertheless, the aesthetics of staging remained in the bounds of traditional dramatic form and, accordingly, limited the stage's critical capacity to relate to the mediatised, capitalist world and consumer culture. Posner's interpretation of *Video* provided the audience with an easily recognisable plot and definitive picture of characters and the world. It was somewhat sentimental; focusing on the emotional moments and misery of the characters rather than pushing their stories through innovative theatrical strategies to call their relation to the contemporary social circumstances and subjectivity into question. This form of staging, consequently, led the audience to empathise with the characters and their environment rather than question the critical implications of the play for the world they live in. It placed the audience in a comfortable position with limited opportunities for critical engagement by presenting them with an identifiable narrative, characters and definite interpretation. The production, like the play text, raised apposite questions concerning contemporary culture, yet it structured the representation of this culture as a stable whole, which failed to accommodate and correspond to the realities of outside world. This does not make either the play or the production thematically less convincing, but it does render them less responsive to the issues

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[33] John Gross, 'Review on *No One Sees the Video*' (The Sunday Telegraph), Theatre Record, 24 (1990), p. 1599.

the play tackles. It limits the critical potential of the play to sensitise the audience to their social---cultural environment and to see the world in a new way.

Like the staging of *Video*, the production of *The Treatment*, also directed by Posner, put forward a similar aesthetic response to the play. The language was presented in an unstylized fashion, and plot and setting were recognisable. The stage represented the sterile consumerist world of the play, as Nicholas de Jongh commented: 'Julian McGowan's revolving stage set, with its neon---lit panels and Manhattan chic, and Paddy Cunneen's thunderous musical score contribute to the impact of Crimp's view of an America decadent and exploiting.'[34] Like in *Video*, Posner's character presentation depicted the dramatis personae as individuals with particularity and sovereignty rather than anonymous objects for the consumer gaze. In a traditionally dramatic manner, the form of Posner's interpretation imbued the late---capitalist world with unity, certainty and stability.

Posner's productions are based largely on translating the text onto the theatrical stage, on reproducing the stories without necessarily rethinking the mode of theatrical expression to reflect the plays' themes. This would not seem unusual considering the increasing commercialisation of British theatre, where formal experiment is, more often than not, inhibited by financial concerns, short rehearsal periods and casts assembled from actors who have not necessarily worked with each other over time. To elaborate briefly, since the 1980s the British theatre system has been increasingly commercialised. 'Now,' Aleks Sierz states, 'subsidy makes up less than fifty per cent of the income of subsidized theatres'.[35] This, as a result, has had an aesthetic impact: 'the repertoire gradually [has] narrowed and the space for artistic experiment [has] contracted.'[36] The mainstream theatre – commercial West End theatres and such major subsidised theatres as Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and the National Theatre – tends to produce an aesthetically conservative theatre culture. This culture does not entirely allow for inventive works, challenging the entrenched aesthetics of British theatre such as unified plot and identifiable characters. In other words, financial concerns of most British theatres, particularly the mainstream stage, have tended to present a major impediment to innovative experiments in British theatre and playwriting. For example, despite the fact that there emerged plenty of playwrights in the 1990s, the National Theatre has not staged or premiered many of the works apart from some of the plays by Martin Crimp, Simon Stephens

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34 Nicholas de Jongh, 'Review on *The Treatment*' (*The Evening Standard*), *Theatre Record*, 13 (1993), p. 431.
35 Aleks Sierz, '"Art flourishes in times of struggle": Creativity, Funding and New Writing', *Contemporary Theatre Review* 13:1 (2003), 33---45 (pp. 37).
36 Martin Middeke, et al., (eds.), 'Intorduction', in *The Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary British Playwrights* (London: Methuen, 2011), p. ix.

and Patrick Marber among a few others.[37] Here, it is important to note that there is no any inventive experimental work in British theatre. Despite the limited state subsidy, theatre companies such as Forced Entertainment, Station House Opera, Frantic Assembly, Blast Theory as well as new writing theatres such as the Royal Court Theatre and The Bush Theatre among others have taken creative risks and produced experimental, collaborative pieces. That said, it would be somewhat fallacious to argue that Posner's productions at the Royal Court Theatre were not innovative precisely due to limited subsidy funds. However, given that most of the subsidised companies or theatres have gradually become 'dependent for about 30---40 per cent of their income on the box---office'[38] due to commercialisation, a possible relationship between Posner's productions and the theatre's subsidy is worth mentioning. One can only speculate on the precise reasons why Posner adhered to traditional aesthetics. However, while the form of her production might well be her artistic choice, it is also very likely that the underfunded condition of commercialised British theatre had an impact on the creative process.

The limited openness to formal innovation on the mainstream British stage could also be related to the writer---centred approach in British theatre tradition, which tends to give limited space to directorial engagement and input.[39] There are criticisms of such traditional tendencies. For instance, Lehmann's idea of postdramatic theatre offers a response to the dominant status of the text in theatre, suggesting a theatre 'beyond drama'[40] yet not 'without any relation to it.'[41] As discussed in the Introduction, postdramatic theatre considers the play as an element in the theatrical process rather than the central determining factor. However, Posner's interpretations of Crimp's plays do not present a stylistically bold, challenging form or balance the tension between form and content. Rather, like the plays themselves, their performances remain limited in their critical scope and endeavour to map aspects of our media---saturated consumer culture. This criticism does not suggest there should always be unity and coherence between form and content. Rather, it suggests that contemporary plays and theatrical performances, directly thematising the social reality of the mediatised

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[37] Some productions at the National Theatre: Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* (1997) was re---staged by Katie Mitchell in 2007; Partick Marber's *Closer* was staged in 1997; Simon Stephens's *Harper Reagan* was premiered in 2007.

[38] Middeke, et al (eds.), 'Intorduction', p. ix. Also, according to an email correspondence with Anna Sampson, the Development Manager at the Royal Court Theatre (5 August 2013) it is confirmed that less than %50 of their funding comes from the UK government, %25 of their income comes through charitable means, and around %30 comes from ticket sales, revenue support.

[39] This is for the most part the tendency in mainstream British tradition. Yet, there are numerous examples in British theatre such as Katie Mitchell's productions of Martin Crimp's and Simon Stephens's plays that move away from and beyond the playwright's text.

[40] Hans---Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. by Karen Jürs---Munby (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 26 and 44.

[41] Lehmann, Postdramatic Theatre, p. 44.

environment and mindset, could offer a more effective and stimulating critical response. This, the chapter argues, is possible if the dramaturgical and theatrical form also engages with the changing dynamics of mediatised society, culture and consciousness.

2.2. 'Being' in a Mediatised Culture: Thematising Changing Notions of Subjectivity and Consciousness in *Faust and Chatroom*

> *We ask the questions, 'What kind of country is it that is populated by "perfect people" talking about cigarettes, toilet paper, spaghetti sauce, detergents, and the thousands of other products that we consume?' and 'Who are these "consumers"?' A night watching TV convinces us that they are 'perfect people' --- and if these are the images of our aspirations, God help us.*[42]

In section 2.1., what came to the fore in the plays' thematic contents is the influence of the consumerist mass media on human identity. The human subject is objectified by the market research in *Video* and his/her uniqueness is flattened in *The Treatment* to create a marketable product. Drawing on the impact of the consumerist media on subjectivity, this section further considers this theme in relation to Mark Ravenhill's *Faust is Dead* and Enda Walsh's *Chatroom*, focussing on the changing sense of selfhood and identity resulting from mediatisation in postmodern society. *Faust* is concerned with the disoriented postmodern subject's struggles to establish his/her selfhood in the multiply mediatised world. *Chatroom* concentrates on the influence of media culture on identity construction and the disoriented, postmodern subject's search for identity and meaning in life. Besides dealing with similar subjects and raising related questions about the changing sense of selfhood, these plays have common ground in their tension between form and content. It is important to note that *Faust* deals with another central theme concerning human subjectivity and consciousness in contemporary culture: hyperreality. This key motif also requires analysis in order to fully appreciate the play's thematic contents and investigate whether or how its dramaturgical form engages with them. As in the previous section, the analysis here initially focuses on the plays' main themes and then investigates their dramaturgical structures to argue how thematising mediatisation without dramaturgically processing it restricts the plays' critical capacity to respond to and raise awareness about central issues of contemporary culture. As before, following the investigation of each play, the analysis will focus on the stage productions and explore how theatrical interpretations respond to the thematic challenges.

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[42] During the Open Theater's 1964 workshops, the ensemble probed methods by which the media controls human lives. Joseph Chaikin developed a series of exercises called 'perfect people improvisations' that were designed to explore the effects of the media's influence on the American society. In an interview with Richard Schechner, Chaikin explained the purpose of these improvisations. Chaikin qtd. in Gene A. Plunka, Jean---Claude van Itallie and the Off---Broadway Theater (London: Associated University Presses, 1999), p. 78.

2.2.1. *Faust* and the Postmodern Self

Mark Ravenhill's *Faust* is a meditation on media---saturated postmodern society and the human condition in this environment. Ravenhill sets *Faust* in the context of postmodernism with particular focus on the subject's 'sense of displacement brought by globalised ahistorical unreality'[43] and on the changing mode of perception and sense of selfhood in relation to all---pervasive media. The play is a character---based drama centred on three characters Alain, Pete and Donny. Ravenhill also has a Chorus to present a number of parables and commentaries reinforcing the critical concerns of the play: the idolisation of celebrities as role models, identity construction, media addiction in contemporary culture and changing perception of reality. The narrative is set in present day, west---coast America. The plotline and characters are consistent and unified, and the language is realistic.

The play reinterprets the Faustian conflict between the pursuit of pleasures and the quest for knowledge/power through Alain and Pete's relationship. Alain is an intellectual, a thinly veiled conflation of Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard, who promotes his new book on the 'death of man' and 'the end of history' on a television talk show and argues that, in the recent past, '[r]eality finished and simulation began.'[44] In the characterisation of Alain, Ravenhill misrepresents Baudrillard since Baudrillard does not argue for the end of reality, yet suggests that the real still exists but in a radically altered form. This misrepresentation forms a part of Ravenhill's attack concerning the dependence of human beings on the image to understand and relate to their environment. However, it also presents a limited view on Baudrillard's idea and the contemporary moment. Pete is the son of a Bill Gates---like software tycoon, who steals his father's software program 'Chaos' with the aim of making his own profit out of it. Pete is an opportunist consumer of interpersonal experiences without bonding. For example, while Alain seeks emotional attachment ['I want to be with you.'[45]] after sex, Pete tries to get rid of Alain: 'that's over … I'm bored.'[46] Pete is a character who has lost his sense of reality and his place in the world. He continually seeks connection to reality but, ironically, needs to see the world through the camcorder to feel that it is real.

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[43] Clare Wallace, 'Responsibility and Postmodernity: Mark Ravenhill and 1990s British Drama' *Theory and Practice in English Studies: Proceedings from the Eighth Conference of British, American and Canadian Studies*, 4 (2005), 160---175 (pp. 272).

[44] Mark Ravenhill, *Plays: 1* (*Faust is Dead*) (London: Methuen, 1996), p. 132. All references to *Faust is Dead* are taken from this edition. Subsequently the shortened title *Faust* will be followed by a page number in the footnotes.

[45] Ravenhill, *Faust*, p. 118.

[46] Ibid., p. 118.

There is a continuous Faustian power struggle between Alain and Pete: while Alain---Mephistopheles --- has experience and knowledge to offer Pete, Pete---Faust is searching for experience to consume and willing to do anything to have this experience. From another perspective, as Caridad Svich argues, both characters function as aspects of Mephistopheles and Faust with 'the socio---political framework of the text serving as the ultimate comment on the Faustian bargain the world has made for itself in the name of progress.'[47] In other words, the Faust myth reinforces the play's critique of contemporary capitalist society and its manipulative power under the pretense of progress and civilisation. This Faustian conflict between Alain and Pete is reinforced with the introduction of a Gretchen---like character, Donny. Donny is a teenage boy who, due to a traumatic childhood and estrangement from his mother, has been self---harming and sharing his acts of injury on the internet as a way to gain affirmation. When Donny---Gretchen meets Pete---Faust, he becomes tempted by Pete---Faust, who challenges Donny on his website dedicated to cutting. Like Gretchen, Donny refuses to escape from the outcome of his deeds and cuts his throat. Donny's death, as we shall see, is a planned act that later turns him into sensational TV show material.

Besides its references to postmodern thinkers and ideas, *Faust* has explicit references to contemporary media---saturated culture. Alain is interviewed by television celebrity David Letterman, Pete constantly records his experiences with his camera, Donny posts his self---destructive act on the web, and the chorus refers to the media coverage of the riots after the Rodney King trial, which Pete has also video---recorded. By placing the characters in the consumerist vortex of urban, media---saturated America, Ravenhill refers to the postmodern culture of pervasive mediatisation particularly in relation to the human condition and subjectivity as well as to changing perceptions of reality. To elaborate, in the opening scene, Foucault---esque Alain is a guest on David Letterman's TV show along with the pop icon Madonna. Here, Letterman asks Alain to explain his theory of the 'end of man' whilst simultaneously mocking him in an attitude not unusual in such talkshows:

> David Letterman: So... you're here, you're in America. And you've written a book. And you've called it *The Death of Man*...[...] I have to tell you right now I feel pretty much alive.
> Alain: Oh yes, of course.
> David Letterman: And it seems to me that you seem pretty much alive as well.
> Alain: Yes, but I'm talking about man as an idea.
> David Letterman: Uh uh/ uh huh, yeah yeah. [...] Madonna, have you read the book?
> Madonna: Not yet, David. [...] I've been pretty busy, David / you know that.[48]

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[47] Caridad Svich, 'Commerce and Morality in the Theatre of Mark Ravenhill', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 13:1 (2003), 81–95 (pp. 85).

[48] Ravenhill, *Faust*, p. 97---98.

This scene satirises Alain since he is, at once, a philosopher critical of the artificiality of the consumer media culture and a guest on Letterman's TV show next to Madonna, a prominent representative of popular culture and commercialism. Besides his problematic consent to appearing on the reality show, Alain does not defend his ideas and resist Letterman's belittling attitude when he is given space to speak. He thus preserves an on---screen 'otherworldliness' stereotypically associated with intellectuals. As a questioning intellectual, Alain is expected to rail against the trivialising commercial media. Yet he does not promote an alternative discourse to it or a change in media culture. Rather, as this scene suggests, he conforms to the consumer culture he purports to critique.

Moreover, this scene and the character of Alain highlight the widespread inertia embedded in contemporary mediatised society in which human beings are aware and sometimes critical of the media impact on their everyday lives, yet do not attempt to change their socio---cultural conditions. Individualism, promoted by the capitalist order and often uncritically reproduced by the media, has a role in this political apathy. As people have become increasingly more interested in their individual success and gains, which the capitalist system and its tools seem to support, they have become gradually more indifferent to others and social events. Whilst awareness is no longer an issue in an information---rich, capitalist culture, reluctance to resist and change is. The TV show scene and the character of Alain suggest a critique of this indifference and conformism.

Alain is also a contradictory character because, although he argues for the end of 'enlightened'[49] (Enlightenment) man in a Foucauldian sense, he still acts as an individual subject. For all his 'discourse' Alain is still an autonomous individual with agency rather than what he claims the contemporary subject is: 'no longer the subject'[50] but an 'object of forces'.[51] He is a self---determining and plausible character who chooses to attend the TV show and not to resist being a part of the commercial media. Alain is a self---contradictory individual who does not reflect on the idea of postmodern self or the end of the Enlightenment human. I will return to this subject in relation to form in section 2.2.3.

Following the appearance of Madonna on Letterman's show, there is a reference in the fifth scene by the Chorus to musician Kurt Cobain. Ostensibly, Cobain was critical of popular culture and consumer capitalism. For example, in his letter to MTV he refers to the channel as

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[49] Ravenhill, *Faust*, p. 121.
[50] Ibid., p. 138.
[51] Ibid., p. 138.

'Empty TV [...] the entity of all Corporate Gods'.[52] Also, on Nirvana's album cover for *Nevermind* is a picture of a baby ostensibly swimming after a dollar bill supporting the band's statement that 'they would never get hooked by consumer capitalism.'[53] Nevertheless, Cobain and Nirvana's anti---establishment criticisms did not prevent them from becoming marketable products of popular culture. Cobain himself became a cultural product whose life *and* death spawned documentaries, books, records and so on. Thus, like Madonna, Cobain became a mediatised role model, a stylish media figure with a 'cool' rebellious manner which overshadowed the anti---capitalist political views he advocated.

In this scene, the Chorus identifies a singer called Stevie as a reincarnation, a copy of Kurt Cobain: 'I look at Stevie and I see Kurt. It's like Kurt's... spirit...yeah, yeah teen spirit if you will...that his spirit is coming back to us through Stevie'.[54] This analogy between the young musician and Kurt Cobain implies more than a physical likeness; rather, it refers to the increasingly pervasive influence of popular celebrities and lifestyles, particularly on young people, due to the MTV culture since the 1980s. The scene thematises the influence of the media on identity construction and emphasises the commodifying attitude of the media in turning celebrities into objects of desire. This Chorus scene foreshadows the end of the play where Donny's self---affirmation turns him into a sensational media product.

Ravenhill furthers his critique of the postmodern human condition through Pete and Donny. These two characters are not only disoriented but also dependent on the mediated image. They are entangled in an omnipresent mediatization[55] whilst trying to redefine their places and identities in the 'real' world. Both characters depend on the media to relate to 'reality' and practice self---mutilation as a gateway to meaningful experience, the means to 'the one thing that's for real'.[56]

Pete suffers from a sense of displacement and detachment, yet he can relate to and make sense of reality and his position in the world mainly through his camera. Throughout the play, Pete displays a desire for and dependence on the mediated image as he attempts to record every instance on his camcorder. For instance, in scene ten, when looking out across the desert, Pete says in response to Alain's satisfaction with the beautiful view: 'I kind of prefer it on TV. I prefer it with a frame around it, you know? [...] *He takes out the camcorder, looks*

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[52] Kurt Cobain's letter is published online, and can be accessed at: http://www.thedailyswarm.com/headlines/read---kurt---cobains---unsent---letter---mtv---if---you---it---you---can---buy---it/

[53] Christine Henseler and Randolph D. Pope (eds.), *Generation X Rocks: Contemporary Peninsular Fiction, Film and Rock Culture* (Tennessee, USA: Vanderbilt UP, 2007), p. 159.

[54] Ravenhill, *Faust*, p. 102.

[55] Johan Callens, 'Staging the Televised (Nation)' *Theatre Research International*, 28: 1 (2003), 61---78, (pp. 63).

[56] Ravenhill, *Faust*, p. 126.

through it. [...] This always works for me. Some guys it's Prozac but with me...'[57] Shortly afterwards, during his sexual encounter with Alain, Pete tries to make the experience look and sound like a TV documentary, by describing the scene using a TV commentator's voice whilst recording it: 'Lost under the stars surrounded by the splendour of nature and the mysterious awesomeness of Death Valley, the kid is initiated into the strange world of the homosexual.'[58] Pete's vision of the world, others and also himself is thus chiefly constructed through the mediated image. Pete's characterisation maps an important aspect of the contemporary human condition. It addresses the increasing influence of the media on consciousness, selfhood and subject's relation to outside reality and other humans. Through Pete the play relates to today's media---dominated culture where people spend most of their time in front of a computer or television screen, or connecting to other people through media technologies. Pete's consistent attempt to see his real---life experiences through a camera frame or a televised scene also links to the theme of hyperreality which I will discuss in section 2.2.2.

Like Pete, Donny feels disconnected from the world and, similar to Pete's use of his camera, he uses the web to connect to and experience reality. Unlike Pete, Donny is critical of his media---dominated life and his loss of a sense of reality. He looks for ways to regain a sense of direct connection to the outside world. This is evident in his desire for human relationships beyond his communication with people on the internet, which has become a staple for him: 'Had enough of just communicating with all you guys in a virtual kind of way. Had enough of it all just being pictures.'[59] Donny's self---harm is also, in itself, an attempt to experience reality, as Johan Callens has argued: 'the hurt causes and requires insensitivity, which in turn requires a reviving of feelings'.[60] However, despite his efforts, what renders the experience more 'real' for Donny is its mediation through the internet. It 'is not just a fling at a cheap thrill, but a last---ditch search for something real'[61] in a mediatised, hyperreal world. Thus, like Pete, Donny constitutes a sense of reality and positions himself in this reality through a mediated experience. The character of Donny therefore extends and reinforces the theme of the increasing influence of the media on consciousness and subjectivity.

Ravenhill takes this theme further as Donny decides to make his actions '[t]otally real'[62] by cutting his own throat in front of Alain and Pete whilst broadcasting it publicly on the

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[57] Ibid., p. 113.
[58] Ibid., p. 114.
[59] Ravenhill, *Faust*, p. 134.
[60] Johan Callens, 'Sorting Out Ontologies in Mark Ravenhill's *Faust* (*Faust is Dead*)' in *Mediatized Drama/Dramatized Media*, ed. by Eckart Voigts---Virchow (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2000), pp. 167---177, (p. 170).
[61] Kustow, *Theatre@risk*, p. 211.
[62] Ravenhill, *Faust*, p. 134.

internet. Ravenhill's striking scene is intriguing not only because of the violence but also, more interestingly, because Donny intends his final action to become a sensational case of reality TV, 'Death on the Net',[63] a commodity, an object of consumption. Donny's search for reality turns him into a product as his final act on the web attracts the attention of the media conglomerates. They want to turn Donny's experience into a product for TV, as the Chorus indicates: 'every TV show, every talk show. Ricki and Oprah both got the same show: "Death on the Net". And Stevie already has a song about it. Which he has performed unplugged and is now showing three times an hour on MTV.'[64] Donny becomes a spectacle himself and then a reproducible version of his own experience and existence. Although his suicide supposedly takes him out of the virtual world and makes him 'real', his attempt to go 'live' ironically draws him back into the vicious circle of simulation. Donny's entanglement as a media commodity in omnipresent mediatisation critically speaks to the objectification of human beings by the media and media culture, and to the trivialisation of human lives in media content.

The emphasis on the media's objectification and construction of identity relates to the question of individual autonomy that Foucault---like Alain argues to have ended in contemporary postmodern culture. When considered in relation to Alain's ideas, the characters Pete and Donny embody his theory and illustrate the end of man as a fully autonomous individual. Pete and Donny represent the shift from the Enlightenment individual into postmodern subjectivity in the media---dominated, hyperreal culture. In what follows, I elaborate on the theme of hyperreality and the subject's changing sense of reality and place in the world in order then to illustrate the non---correspondence between form and content.

2.2.2. Mediatisation of Reality: Thematic Reflections on Hyperreality in *Faust*

As mentioned in the previous section, the media alter the ways individuals perceive themselves, the world and reality by inundating them with images of perfect simulations of real---life events. The abundance of media images and their resemblance to what they represent renders the differences between the real and its representation indistinguishable. As noted in the Introduction, Jean Baudrillard explains this change in the perception of reality through notions of hyperreality and simulation. Baudrillard understands the disappearance of the distinction between representation and reality as a consequence of 'simulation', resulting in a new type of understanding of reality where the real is constituted by media---generated images

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[63] Ibid., p. 134.
[64] Ibid., p. 134---5.

and codes. Baudrillard explains this idea of 'hyperreality' through Marshall McLuhan's renowned proposition 'the medium is the message':[65]

> [T]here is not only the implosion of the message in the medium; in the same movement there is the implosion of the medium itself in the real, *the implosion of the medium and the real* in a sort of nebulous hyperreality where even the definition and the distinct action of the medium are no longer distinguishable.[66]

Baudrillard suggests there is no solid, stable ground for the real or clear---cut separation between reality and representation in the mediatised society. But there is an absorption of one state of the real into another, an extensive flow of facsimiles, dominating the world and creating a new model of reality, *hyperreality*, 'a real retouched in a "hallucinatory resemblance" with itself.'[67] Thus, in Baudrillard's hyperreal world, simulation or media---generated imagery becomes what constitutes reality and shapes the ways individuals perceive and relate to the world, other human beings and themselves. The media have become the lens, the filter through which individuals connect to their environment and perceive reality.

In line with its thematic concern with consumer, media---saturated culture and postmodernity, *Faust* also reflects on changes in the perception of reality due to mediatisation. Ravenhill's play 'revolves around the problematics of any ontological founding in what Baudrillard has called the age of simulation.'[68] It is set in a Baudrillardian world of simulation where the Faustian quest of the characters for reality and connection to the 'real' world becomes an experience of hyperreality and mediatisation. Ravenhill illustrates this most overtly through the video camera, television and internet as surrogates of reality. There are several instances in the play that underline how the media and the media image shape the perception of reality.

Ravenhill structures some of the scenes as anecdotes, commentaries and parables delivered by the Chorus. Several Chorus scenes focus on the theme of hyperreal society and critically foreground how the conception of reality from a personal, historical or socio---political level is constituted through the lens of the media---induced image. For instance, in the seventh scene, the chorus refers to the 1992 L.A riots and presents 'excerpts from the "rioting" following

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[65] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge, 2001 [originally published in 1964]), p. 8.

[66] Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities Or, The End of the Social and Other Essays*, trans. by Paul Foss (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), p.100---101.

[67] Chris Barker, *Cultural studies: Theory and Practice* (London: SAGE Pub., 2008), p. 343.

[68] Callens, 'Staging the Televised (Nation)', p. 62.

the Rodney King trial, which Pete supposedly witnessed and video---recorded.'[69] The L.A riots broke out when four Los Angeles Police Department officers were acquitted of all assault charges despite the discovery of a video recording of their violence against Rodney King, an African---American from Pasadena, LA. The court's decision and the video footage increased public sensitivity to racism and led to rioting against the perceived and endemic racial inequality and injustice represented by the King case. The video footage of King being beaten by the police officers was repeatedly shown on television. Subsequently, similar riots took place in other U.S cities. The constant broadcasting of the riots, as Johan Callens suggests, not only gives 'the events the shape of a developing narrative',[70] but also 'shifted television's role of observer to that of participant and instigator'.[71] Moreover, in a similar way that perception and memory of real events such as the Gulf War or 9/11 are constituted by media images, the 'reality' of the LA riots is presented by the mediatised image of the uprising.

The reference to the riots has a critical position in the play. The Chorus alludes to the mediatisation of the real event and its perception as the basis of reality: 'It's happening just like they [media] said. Whole city is blowing apart.'[72] Simulation constitutes reality: the scene implies the images of the riots presented by the media are indistinguishable from the actual events. The media---generated images are a guarantor of the event's reality while they gain the status of visual cliché through overexposure. As the Chorus continues its narrative, this theme becomes emphasised through the dependence of people on the media and mediated image. The Chorus remarks that people stole VCRs during the chaos produced by the riots, rather than the food they needed to survive.[73] This is followed by Pete asking: 'What is the point of food in the house when you have nothing to watch while you're eating it.'[74] What *Faust* thematises here moves beyond mere interest in the media as sources of entertainment or information. It critically refers to a more fundamental dependence of humans on the media and mediated image as the source of reality.

As discussed earlier (2.2.1), the mediatisation of reality and the individual's dependence on the media image are evident in the characterisations of Pete and Donny. Pete and Donny relate to the world and define their place in it mainly through the mediated images of outside reality. Through these characters, Ravenhill reinforces his critique of mediatised culture and consciousness. He maps the changing experience of reality and foregrounds how human

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[69] Ibid., p. 63. Also see Ravenhill, *Faust,* p. 107: Pete: 'Got it all on tape. Guys looting shops, guys burning cars, guys burning guys.'
[70] Callens, 'Staging the Televised (Nation)', p. 64.
[71] Ibid., p. 64.
[72] Ravenhill, *Faust,* p. 107.
[73] Ibid., p. 107.
[74] Ibid., p. 107.

beings, swamped by data and surrounded by screens, consider the media---generated image as the 'real'. Ravenhill's critique does not simplistically or deterministically suggest that a sense of reality and relationship to the world are completely mediatised, or that there is no reality beyond and without the media. Instead, he draws attention to an omnipresent mediatisation, generating a culture of simulation that blurs the boundaries between reality and its representation, and alters perceptions of reality--- not by excluding the real --- but by expanding its borders. Thus, reality outside the mediatised image still exists, as Pete and Alain arrange to meet Donny in person to witness his self---harm in 'real time'. However, this experience happens in a continual conversation with its representation through the camera, as the first thing Alain does before Donny arrives is to start the camcorder to record the event. In addition to their meeting in person rather than on the internet, Donny's death is for real as well as Pete and Alain's unmediated experience of it. However, what then validates this as physical reality is its reproduction through Pete's camcorder, its broadcasting via the web and its commodification by reality shows. It is therefore through the image of the actual event that its perception, its reality, is constituted.

2.2.3. *Faust*: Form in relation to Content

Faust, as Wallace argues, is 'less involved with theatrical postmodernism as practice, than with postmodernity as a subject.'[75] That is, although *Faust* is replete with thematic references to popular culture, critical theory and postmodernism, its structure retains the conventional dramatic categories of plot and character. The play's dramaturgical structure, as we shall see, falls short of relating to its thematic concern with the postmodern hyperreality and the changing experience of subjectivity and perception. I will argue that this non---correspondence between form and content restricts the play's critical scope and effect, and renders its thematic concern and criticism problematic.

Faust has nineteen chronologically and thematically connected scenes apart from the Chorus scenes, which provide commentaries. The temporal---spatial setting is realistic; it reflects present---day America with direct or implied references to 'real---life people' such as Madonna and Letterman. The language, dialogue and storyline are naturalistic and coherent. That is, the narrative style reinforces the naturalistic view of the contemporary world through linearly structured scenes, and identifiable setting and characters. Ravenhill's well---made plot portrays the world as a unified totality with clear distinctions between the real and its

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[75] Wallace, 'Responsibility and Postmodernity', p. 270.

representation. The narrative levels --- the real---life events and media---induced moments --- are clearly separated in the stage directions and the context of the dialogue.

For instance, when Pete meets Donny in an online chat room, this is introduced clearly as a virtual experience by the stage directions (e.g. '*Pete is on the Net, tapping at the keys.*'[76]). The scene underlines the difference between the mediatised environment and the reality that Alain and Pete inhabit through the use of capital letters in the dialogue to indicate the internet chat room:

> **Pete:** [...] Just some fucking actress, Donny, huh? Just some fucking fake. Fuck you. I hate that. That really gets to me. I have to tell him. I'm gonna tell him.
> **Pete** *types and* **Donny** *types his responses.*
> **Pete**: <DONNY, YOU ARE A FUCKING ACTRESS, YOU THERE, DONNY?>
> **Donny**: <SURE, I'M HERE.>[77]

The clear distinction between the real and the mediatised situates these two states as binaries, as two distinct experiences of reality, the real and the virtual. The realistic imagery, characterisation and setting of the world as a stable whole with a clear sense of reality distinct from its image suggest that the 'real' exists separately from its representation. This distinct layering anchors the play to a definite concept of reality rather than constituting the form of the play in relation to non---referential hyperreality. That is, virtuality is not dramaturgically presented as integral to reality. Rather, Ravenhill creates a portrait of a unified world, whilst talking about a world where reality and its image blur. In this respect, the dramaturgical structure is predicated on an ultimate reality and does not offer a problematisation of it. Thus, the play's form contradicts its thematic interest in the postmodern context and its concern with the implosion of reality in a mediatised environment. Furthermore, it overlooks the common features of virtual experience such as hypertextuality, fragmentariness, multiplicity or multiple presences, which define aspects of the mediatised consciousness that Ravenhill thematises. Hence, *Faust* as a formally conservative drama impairs its critical capacity to relate to the world it criticises or to encourage its readers/audience to 'think more critically about The Way We Live Now than they might have done before.'[78]

Faust's critique of the human condition, changing sense and experience of selfhood is profoundly affected by its dramaturgy of characterisation. To begin with, the pop culture icon, Madonna, and TV presenter, David Letterman, are dramatic stereotypes presented with little

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[76] Ravenhill, *Faust*, p. 122. (Italic from the original.)
[77] Ibid., p. 125.
[78] Mark Ravenhill, 'Me, my iBook, and writing in America', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 16:1 (2006), 131--- 138, (pp. 132.)

attention to their individual identities. They are rather depicted as epitomising the role models or figures that dominate TV screens and contemporary culture. These stereotypes represent contemporary popular culture and are shorthand for larger themes in a unified, coherent and linearly structured dramatic narrative.

Additionally, the three main characters --- Alain, Pete and Donny --- are presented through an implicit description of their distinctive personal traits: the cynical attitude of Alain, the 'trashy' life of Pete, and the problematic childhood of Donny. Ravenhill provides background information about these characters' ages, sexual preferences, childhood traumas or past experiences: Alain's decision to quit his academic job to 'live a little',[79] or Pete's hatred towards his father. Each character is a three---dimensional, recognisable representation of an individual human being 'who appear[s] and behave[s] in a certain way and who carries within him [sic.] a certain ethos'.[80] Ravenhill's characterisation is clearly not as specific and detailed as the naturalistic dramas of Ibsen or Chekhov. However, likewise, it portrays the human subject as a consistent and unified individual, as the autonomous centre of his/her own actions and consciousness. Moreover, Ravenhill makes sure every character has an individual voice and that a coherent relationship exists between characters and language. Language is personalised and there is no dissonance between character and language. Given these aspects of characterisation in *Faust*, Ravenhill's character presentation does not correspond to the postmodern, disoriented and disconnected subject whose identity and consciousness are largely influenced by the commercial media. Rather, the Aristotelian form of character presents the audience with individuals within a defined self---situated place in a world of certainty and totality.

Thus, although *Faust* deals with postmodern mediatised culture thematically, it does not 'capture the *truth* [my emphasis] of this new world we live in'[81] or sensitise the reader/audience to their environment and their position in this culture. As a text, *Faust* asks timely questions and presents a strong thematic content with striking visual imagery. However, lack of stylistic reconsiderations interrupt this critical interest from generating a new vocabulary of form to rethink theatrical experience in terms of the mediatised environment and consciousness, and to consider the word in a new light. *Faust* provides a counter example to plays that accommodate contemporary consciousness and social reality through formal strategies, and

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[79] Ravenhill, *Faust*, p. 99.
[80] Bert O. States, 'The Anatomy of Dramatic Character', *Theatre Journal*, 37: 1 (1985), 87--- 101, (pp. 91).
[81] Mark Ravenhill, 'A touch of evil', *The Guardian*, 22 March 2003
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2003/mar/22/theatre.artsfeatures> [accessed 10 April 2013]

that undermine 'the perfection of reproduction'[82] as a projection of absolute perception of reality. Such instances are discussed in the following chapters. In the next section, I investigate the onstage interpretation of *Faust* and its themes whilst exploring the implications of the discord between form and content on theatrical performance.

2.2.4. *Faust* on Stage

Ravenhill's *Faust* reflects on the changing perception of reality due to mediatisation. The play's concern with the mediatised world as a hyperreal environment was realised on--stage in 1997 at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre by the Actors' Touring Company (ATC) under the direction of Nick Philippou. As the reviews indicate, the director pursued Ravenhill's thematic focus and his suggestions for the use of technology on stage. Johan Callens states: 'Nick Philippou followed the advice of the playwright himself, whose prefatory note to the published text singles out the desirability to flesh out the bare "outline" of the script with "video sequences, the physical skills of the performers, music and light".'[83] The production thus generated a multimedial and high--tech stage interpretation of the play offering a corrective to the limited formal engagement of the text.

In the ATC's production, Pippa Nissen designed the stage with moveable screens with a monitor at the back wall of the stage and two large screens showing the walls of the play's hospital and motel settings.[84] Onto these screens real--time images of the stage action were projected, shot by video--artist Alain Pelletier, who also acted the role of Alain, and pre--recorded images from the David Letterman show, the L.A riots and Death Valley.[85] It was what Chris Megson called a 'claustrophobic set with mediatized images on bodies and screens.'[86] The performance opened with the 'grotesquely upbeat chat show'[87] scene projected on a TV screen. The TV screens continuously showed different scenes in relation to the onstage action. For instance, in the scene where the Chorus --- presented as a young citizen of Los Angeles at the time of the 1992 riots – recounted his/her mother telling him/her off for stealing a VCR instead of food, the TV set at the back of the stage mediated the live action. The onstage Chorus was complemented by the mediated one on TV, a video--chorus of 'American teenagers

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[82] Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p. 116.

[83] Callens, 'Staging the Televised (Nation)', p. 62.

[84] For more information, see Alison Mercer's review in *The Stage*, 20 March 1997, and Kate Basset's in the *Daily Telegraph*, 6 March 1997.

[85] Nicholas de Jongh, 'Review on *Faust is Dead*' (*The Evening Standard*), *Theatre Record*, 17 (1997), p. 235.

[86] Chris Megson, "The Spectacle is Everywhere': Tracing the Situationist Legacy in British Playwriting Since 1968', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 14: 2 (2004), 17-- 28, (pp. 26).

[87] Kate Bassett, 'Review on *Faust is Dead*' (*The Daily Telegraph*), *Theatre Record*, 17: 5 (1997), p. 237.

[that] keep reminding us of the confusion of the coming generation.'[88] This technologised setting along with the co--existence of the live and the mediatised, and the 'real' and the fictional (e.g. Alain Pelletier and Alain the character), reinforced the play's thematic concern with hyperreality. The staging techniques offered a striking reference to how far the boundaries between the live and the mediatised have blurred. This representation of the everyday bombardment of media images and the culture of simulation situated the audience in a defamiliarising and critically provocative experience.

Furthermore, Pete's dependence on his camcorder, what Johan Callens calls 'a roving mechanical eye',[89] and his inability to grasp reality without the mediatised image were created on the stage through prerecorded footage, as in the projected image of the desert, or through real--time footage like the sex scene. The onstage presentation of what Pete's 'roving mechanical eye' sees besides the live presence of the character speaks to the experience of the mediatised sense of reality. Rather than portraying the 'real' as a unified whole with clear--cut boundaries differentiating it from its representation, the staging technique tended to subvert the distinctions between the 'real' and the 'mediatised'. Thus, the production amplified Ravenhill's thematic focus on hyperreality and presented the auditorium with a view on this changing sense of reality. The use of prerecorded and live footage of Pete's experiences in the production formed a link between the theatrical world and the audience's experience of a media--dominated environment. Moreover, as ATC's production – especially when the footage was live – laid the mechanics of theatrical representation bare in a Brechtian manner, it led to a form of spectator awareness more heightened than the traditional mode of empathetic identification with the on--stage action.

The ATC's approach to *Faust* was more 'concerned with Ravenhill's idea of what it means and feels to be adrift at the closing of the 20th century than in composing his ideas within an easily understood dramatic form.'[90] The media--saturated setting on the stage depicted the hyperreal world that Alain, Pete and Donny try to fit into. The setting amplified the play's reference to hyperreality by blurring the boundaries between the real and its representation through 'shifting realities of the external world, the mind, the stage, TV or home video, and cyberspace.'[91] The dissolution of these boundaries and the presentation of a 'different, more mediated, level of reality'[92] challenged the conventional representation of the world as a

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[88] Sarah Hemming, 'Review on *Faust is Dead*' (*Financial Times*), *Theatre Record*, 17: 5 (1997), p. 235.
[89] Callens, 'Sorting Out Ontologies', p. 170.
[90] de Jongh, 'Review on *Faust*', p. 235.
[91] Callens, 'Sorting Out Ontologies', p. 167.
[92] Nick Philippou qtd. in Hadley Bree 'Reality Just Arrived: Mark Ravenhill's *Faust is Dead*', in *International Faust Studies--Continuum Reception Studies*, ed. by Lorna Fitzsimmons (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 259 --275, (p. 264).

unified, complete totality, and placed the audience in an epistemologically indefinite situation. The indeterminacy and instability in the mode of the representation sensitized the audience to the theatrical action and the world it thematically and in form portrayed and criticised.

The ATC production hence illuminated and 'corrected' the dramaturgical deficiencies of the play text by employing mass media technologies that responded to the theme of hyperreality. This solution to the tension between the thematic content of *Faust* and its form produced a theatrical performance that addressed mediatised society while relating to the dynamics and vicissitudes of this culture. ATC's production, unlike Posner's interpretations of Crimp's plays, is an example of the postmodern liberation of text from author. It also relates to the postdramatic emancipation of text from being the focal point. In this production, the text's role shifts from determining theatrical production to being an element in the performance process, open to different engagement and readings in the auditorium.

Ravenhill's note at the beginning of the play text indicates interesting points with regards to the production. It highlights that Ravenhill as the author approves of this kind of experimental approach to the playscript rather than adhering to the text---centred attitude in British theatre. Nevertheless, what is intriguing and even ironic here is the fact that, although the playscript was written and revised during and after the production and the author was welcoming about new directorial approaches, the play is still formally based on the aesthetics of the dramatic play. In other words, dramaturgically Ravenhill's text does not reflect the inventive experiments of the staging process or encourage innovative approaches for future performances. Rather, despite the challenging stage production and the postmodern thematic content, Ravenhill still retained the play in line with the idea of theatre as a representation of a unified fictive cosmos 'whose closure was guaranteed through drama and its corresponding theatre aesthetic.'[93] As a consequence, this dramatic conservatism restricts *Faust*'s capacity *as a text* to accommodate and respond to postmodern, mediatised culture.

2.2.5. *Chatroom*: On Media and Identity Construction

Chatroom is a play about a group of teenagers chatting on the internet. It offers a critical exploration of the influence of the omnipresent media and the culture industry on the perception and construction of identity and human relations. The play focuses on online social networking which is here chiefly considered as an instrument for self---revelation, the disclosure of intimate feelings and ideas, manipulation and bullying. Although the play engages with

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[93] Lehmann, Postdramatic Theatre, p. 31.

these matters in the context of contemporary youth culture, the question of subjectivity, identity formation and interpersonal relations in a mediatised society, more broadly, form its central concerns.

Chatroom focuses on the online conversations of six teenagers – Laura, Jim, Eva, Jack, Emily and William – in different chatrooms on the internet. Like the characters in *Faust*, the young people experience feelings of displacement and disillusionment. Some, such as William and Eva, are concerned that the culture they live in is turning them into a 'sleepwalking'[94] generation, while others such as Jim are depressed due to childhood traumas, and feel lonely sitting in front of their computer screens. These characters question their position in a highly mediatised, commercialised culture and look for meaning in their lives, wishing to 'accomplish something important'[95] or, as William says, to stop being 'clichés'.[96] As the story progresses, the four characters, who have been chatting online, meet Jim in the virtual world, a depressed teenager thinking of committing suicide in order to punish his mother and two brutal brothers for their maltreatment of him after his father left. Following this meeting, Enda Walsh's narrative becomes increasingly sinister. Jim becomes a target for the other characters' search for a meaningful 'cause'; he is the means through which they hope to make their otherwise senseless, clichéd lives important. William and Eva decide to persuade Jim to commit suicide and broadcast it online to make a statement for 'all those "trapped" average teenagers'.[97] They promise Jim that he will become a 'hero',[98] a 'legend'.[99] Laura, on the other hand, helps Jim to change his mind about committing suicide and is critical of the others' cold---hearted, manipulative attitude on the internet: 'Jim's faceless to you – but it's just like murder.'[100]

The play opens with the Oompa Loompa song from the film *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, adapted from Roald Dahl's children's book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. The song forms one of the moral elements in the book and comments didactically on the various follies of the children. In *Chatroom*, the song serves a similar purpose, emphasising the shaping influence of the parental and larger social contexts on young people. By integrating this song into the play, Walsh introduces a sense of morality into the apparently amoral world of commercialised culture. Also, this intertextual and didactic reference suggests that art (including the play itself) might contribute to the transformation of this amoral state.

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[94] Enda Walsh, *Chatroom*, (London: Samuel French, 2004), p. 15.
[95] Walsh, *Chatroom*, p. 15.
[96] Ibid., p. 13.
[97] Ibid., p. 35.
[98] Ibid., p. 33.
[99] Ibid., p. 33.
[100] Ibid., p. 35.

It then progresses into the scene in which Jack and William chat in the 'Harry Potter Chatroom'. The reference to *Harry Potter* in comparison to the opening 'morality song' suggests a contrast because *Harry Potter* is a commercialised franchise whose morality seems to retreat behind its money---making agenda and ability. In accordance with this purposeful intertextual juxtaposition, the characters talk about children being told unreal stories in books and films and how this restricts their imagination and dreams. William argues that J.K. Rowling works for a literary industry that aims to deaden children's perceptual faculties and questioning of the world around them by simplifying life as fantasy. He states, cynically, 'They don't want children thinking for themselves. They see children as a threat. They want to keep everything "fantasy."'[101] Here, Walsh signals the power of the media and the culture industry at the heart of the 'products' for children and how the industry, under the disguise of joyful and instructive literature, induces certain ways of seeing, thinking and being.

Walsh expands his critique of the influence of the media and the culture industry on identity in the scene where Eva and Emily talk about their icon, Britney Spears, in the chat room named after the singer. They describe how the pop icon influenced their adolescence, describing Spears as 'a part of [their] puberty',[102] their self---discovery and self---identification processes, and ironically emphasise how she betrayed their innocence, when she stopped being 'herself' and became a product for the consumer's gaze:

> Emily: Yeah [...] I remember having my first period and listening to *I'm Not a Girl, Not Yet a Woman* and thinking, "Thanks Britney. My sentiments exactly!"
> Eva: She felt like a spokeswoman. [...] But as I watched *Hit Me Baby One More Time* and all that sexual stuff with her tongue and just how cropped that crop---top was [...] I got really angry over that betrayal. It's no longer Britney who's talking to us but some pervert record producer who's got this vision.[103]

The characters consider the celebrity figure not only as a role model, but as a manifestation of their feelings and experiences, as their 'spokeswoman'. Britney Spears, in a sense, is 'one of them'. Their sense of betrayal by a media figure who does not actually exist in their real, everyday lives, rests on a strong identification with and idealisation of this media---constructed persona. Such a strong dedication to a fabricated image clouds the perception of their own position in relation to what they criticise. Although they question the manipulation of Spears by the media industry, they fail to notice that Spears has always already been a media commodity. Also, the characters seem to prefer remaining blind to the fact that, in taking the

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[101] Ibid., p. 4.
[102] Ibid. p. 5.
[103] Ibid. p. 5.

screen idol as a role model, they become products of the same culture and manipulated by the same media tycoons.

The ironic correlation between the celebrity as a commodity and the characters as her copycats foregrounds how individual identity in the media---driven culture is increasingly more about standardised and socially---culturally constituted positions than autonomous agency. Walsh's critique does not suggest that individual identity has become impossible to attain --- the characters have clear individual traits, weaknesses, behaviour patterns and so forth. Rather, it indicates the extent to which individual agency has been incrementally eroded by the ever---growing global media. This scene underlines Walsh's critique of the media culture as an increasingly influential force creating a standardised model of identity, or in Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer's words, a culture of sameness.[104]

What is striking in the scenes I have discussed, is the characters' inability to resist what they criticise. The characters' apparent unwillingness to change how they relate to their socio---cultural conditions relates to a larger sense of political impotence. There is a tendency in the commercial media to blunt the possibility for action and to create a sense of conformism in society in order to sustain the existing order. The characters in *Chatroom* accommodate the socio---political apathy, suggesting that it is not self and social awareness that is an issue in an information---rich society, but the possibility for action and change. However, the play in its thematic content does not offer a direction that would generate critical alertness and create an urge to resist and change. Rather, *Chatroom* merely reflects and acknowledges this aspect of contemporary society.

Setting the play in various chatrooms rather than in the offline ('real') world, Walsh critiques relationships in the contemporary multiply mediatised, globally connected world, where individuals use media technologies to communicate and socialise with each other, rather than meeting in 'real' space. Walsh's characters continually interact. Ironically, the constant communication does not necessarily bring about intimate relationships. Rather, the characters remain insulated behind their screens, detached from one another. Walsh's characters establish what Zygmunt Bauman defines as 'virtual proximity', a superficial connection that is fast, easily consumable and temporary, rather than long---lasting bonds.[105] Particularly in the case of William and Eva, the characters in *Chatroom* manifest a detached and indifferent attitude towards others, most evident in William and Eva's perception of and

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[104] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic ofEnlightenment*, p. 94.
[105] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love: On the Frailty ofHuman Bonds*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003), p. 62

response to Jim. To them, Jim is a faceless, detached and perhaps unreal presence on the screen, little different from other screen---images. Like Donny in *Faust,* whom Pete sees as an object of pleasure and an experience to consume, Jim is William and Eva's 'cause',[106] their object of pleasure to play with and control. It is this attitude that allows William and Eva to countenance encouraging Jim to commit suicide as a justifiable, acceptable act.

The indifference and mutual objectification of these characters towards each other speaks to the dissolution of human relations in the globally connected yet physically estranged world. This is not to suggest that humans do not relate to or care about each other anymore. The play also accounts for relationships such as those between Laura and Jim who bond with each other. Rather, *Chatroom* critically accommodates the transformation of human relationships as a result of the 'speeding up' of everyday life and worldwide inter---connectedness, and the increasing prevalence of instantaneous 'virtual proximity'[107] in social relations that is easy to start and end.

Despite this predominantly negative representation of contemporary society and the role of the media in its construction, *Chatroom* ends on a positive note. In the last scene, Jim narrates his visit to McDonalds whilst recording his journey to the restaurant and all that happens there. Here, he gets into a cowboy outfit similar to the one he was wearing on the day his father left. Jim turns his iPod on and stands on the table until a security guard takes him down. This ritual act, combining his past and present rather than an act of suicide, culminates in Jim and Laura's muted, light conversation about bunny rabbits. Jim's choice of life over death and the close friendship he builds with Laura suggest a hopeful future. Nevertheless, the images of McDonalds, the iPod and the camera refer us back to the mediatisation and commercialisation pervading the play and, by extension, the outside world.

Chatroom's thematic content accommodates aspects of contemporary social reality, namely, how the media and culture industry extensively shape subjectivity and identity, and influence interpersonal relations. The next section explores the dramaturgical structure of the play to see whether it offers formal innovation in relation to the subjects, the world and the mindset it thematises.

2.2.6. *Chatroom*: Exploring the Dramaturgical Form

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[106] Walsh, *Chatroom,* p. 23.
[107] Bauman, *Liquid Love,* p. 62

Enda Walsh structures the play in line with conventional dramatic form, based on a linear and unified plot line, coherent narrative and dialogue, and consistent characterisation. The play takes place in several virtual chatrooms in 2004;[108] the story line is chronological and the scenes are coherently linked. The series of scenes from different chatrooms are presented one after the other and they are tightly, thematically linked. The well---structured and recognisable plot portrays the world as a unified and manageable whole and generates a sense of coherency. According to the argument of this chapter, this dramatic structure, like in *Faust*, tends to correspond to the mediatised world to a very limited extent, although the play critiques contemporary culture rather effectively through its themes. This tension is because the social reality that the play thematises speaks to a world where human beings experience disorientation and alienation and their identities are largely influenced by the media and the culture industry. This is a world where such old certainties as autonomous subjectivity and a subject's definite, self---determined position in society and in relation to others have changed. Thus, the conventional dramatic representation of the world seems no longer able to represent and respond to the new realities of the contemporary moment. It is important to note that the play's adherence to certain dramatic conventions does not mean that it entirely fails to offer a critique of contemporary culture. Rather, my point, within the argument of this chapter, is that while its thematic content responds to certain issues regarding the mediatised culture, its form for the most part fails to reflect and relate to the world and human condition in question. *Chatroom*, like *Faust*, is innovative and up---to---date in its content more than in its dramaturgical structure.

Additionally, characterisation is based on the dramatic model of unified, psychologically motivated, recognisable characters. The dramatic personae have specific names and easily identifiable personal traits, weaknesses, and historical backgrounds. For example, William is a cynical character who questions the hidden agenda of the culture industry and the impact of cultural products on teenagers and children. Jim, by contrast, is a troubled teenager because he was abandoned by his father. The characters represent individual human beings with personal features, histories and motives rather than subjects with increasingly standardised or clichéd identities, as William suggests,[109] and their individuality is limited. Given this, it would not be irrelevant to argue within the boundaries of this study that the dramaturgy of character does not accommodate the standardising influence of the consumerist media and culture industry on individuals or address its outcome, the culture of sameness and anonymity that Walsh criticises.

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[108] Walsh, *Chatroom*. The stage directions are given on the front page.
[109] Walsh, *Chatroom*, p. 13.

Moreover, there is complete convergence between the characters and their language, which is realistic and everyday. Language is presented as an individual tool, a means of self-‑‑expression that emanates from a specific person. This emphasises the characters' individual identity and control over their thoughts and words rather than undermining individuality through a predetermined, socially constituted, clichéd language or discourse. The dramatis personae communicate with each other through well-‑‑structured dialogues where meaning is complete and unified, and characters are connected and responsive to one another, not detached and indifferent. As a result, the dramaturgy of characterisation indicates that even though *Chatroom* takes account of how new media technologies have reconceptualised subjecthood and human relations, it deals with these issues merely thematically, and does not carry the critique into the play's form. Nevertheless, this analysis certainly does not suggest that the play has to adjust all its elements to the reality of the mediatised culture to be able to respond to it. Therefore, adhering to certain conventions such as dramatic dialogue and characterisation does not render the play completely unable to critique the contemporary moment. Rather, as this chapter argues, the play's overall tendency to generate a dramatic representation of the social reality and human state renders its critical capacity to reflect and respond to the media culture limited.

In addressing a contemporary understanding of the human condition merely through thematic content without formally engaging with it, *Chatroom* stops short of responding to the circumstances it critiques. The play is limited in its capacity to raise critical awareness and to move beyond the reader's/audience's accustomed sense of unified world. It simply acknowledges or recounts aspects of the predominant social conditions in a critical manner. Dramaturgically speaking, *Chatroom* seems to be the outcome of the same culture that generates the teenage characters it thematises; they criticise their socio-‑‑cultural environment, yet fail to resist it or offer a counter-‑‑narrative.

2.2.7. *Chatroom* in Performance

Enda Walsh's *Chatroom* was directed by Donald Gallagher and staged by the Cork Boomerang Theatre Company at the National Theatre in 2005. As described, the play is set in the virtual environment of chatrooms except for the closing scene where Jim goes to McDonalds for his 'final act'. Rather than creating a cyber setting on the stage, where the written conversations

between the actors could be projected onto screens, as in Patrick Marber's *Closer* (1997),[110] Gallagher's six actors were seated on chairs in a bare, minimalist set. There was a screen behind the actors showing screensaver[111] images and the pre---recorded film of the closing scene. Throughout the performance, the actors/characters communicated verbally without technological mediation.

The actors sat next to and talked to each other, but without looking at each other. That is, the chatroom context was indicated directly through the dialogues rather than suggested by means of media technologies on stage. This staging strategy functioned more than merely to suggest that these personae were not physically occupying the same space and were in a virtual environment where they could not see one another. On a more critical level, the way the actors performed and were situated generated a sense of alienation and indifference under the guise of constant communication. This referred to one of Walsh's central themes: the dissolution of human relations in the technologically connected age. Although the characters are connected through virtual proximity, they are in fact insulated and alienated from one another. Here, theatrical expression and the bare set reinforced the play's thematic concern with human isolation and apathy; the mode of staging and setting reflected these motifs and visualised the sense of disconnectedness of the mediatised age.

Apart from this, the production did not offer any other staging strategy to offset the dramatic mode of representation that the play offers; it did not further what the play thematically and dramaturgically suggests. Instead, similarly to Posner's productions of Crimp's plays, the production of *Chatroom* tended to translate the playwright's dramatic structure to the stage along with its conventional dramatic form. For example, Gallagher adhered to the three---dimensional characterisation in the play that portrays the dramatis personae as unified and coherent individuals with agency over their thoughts, actions and identities. Following the conventions of the dramatic theatre, Gallagher asked the actors to bring the characters to life in the manner of Stanislavsky, to speak their individual language and adopt their personal attitudes. Moreover, the director adhered to the dramatic dialogue form Walsh used in the play, which tended to overlook the hypertextual, multiple and sometimes fragmented form of online chat, the internet and of the mediatised mindset. The language appeared as no one else's but the characters'.

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[110] In the third scene of Marber's play, the actors are in a chatroom. They merely write down their conversations on the computers they have in front of them which then are projected onto the big screen behind them. Thus, they do not speak or verbally communicate with each other; their connection is mediated.
[111] Nicholas de Jongh, 'Review on *Chatroom*' (*The Evening Standard*), *Theatre Record*, 14 (2005), p. 925.

As discussed earlier, the mode of characterisation in *Chatroom* tends to the mode of being that the play thematises: the increasing influence of the media on subjectivity and identity. Likewise, on stage the psychologically motivated, consistent and definitive character presentation and language use belied the theme of subjectivity and identity as social---cultural, discursive constructs. Also, the theatrical representation of the world as certainty and stability reflected the play's well---made plot structure, and thus reinforced the contradiction between form and content on stage. Consequently, the mode of theatrical expression did not necessarily move beyond the aesthetics of dramatic representation that is no longer able to picture the new realities of contemporary society. Thus, the stage interpretation tended to flatten the critique of mediatised culture and human condition in this environment. Here, the adherence to the dramatic model does not simply suggest that there was no critique of the contemporary moment on the stage. Rather, this analysis suggests that the theatre's capacity to critically deal with and relate to mediatised culture and consciousness was fairly limited.

Consequently, within the frame of this chapter the analysis indicates that despite the apposite thematic content, the play and its production are, to a great extent, unable to accommodate and respond to the contemporary social reality that they critically thematise. The dramatic representation of the world as a unified, knowable place for the most part fails to reflect and relate to the postmodern epistemological and ontological uncertainties. It does not speak to the conditions of the contemporary subject, whose everyday life, perception and subjectivity are intensely shaped by the media. A formally innovative and critically responsive approach to text and performance would suggest a corrective to this dramaturgically, theatrically and therefore critically limited engagement with the themes concerning mediatised culture.

3. Conclusion: When Mediatisation Remains Subject Matter

The plays discussed share thematic concerns focussing on different yet related aspects of mediatised society such as consumerism, the changing notion of the self, human relations, and hyperreality. The plays take a similar approach to mediatisation: they focus on aspects of the mediatised culture mostly as subject matter and barely consider dramaturgical structure in relation to the changing circumstances of mediatised society and perception. The contradiction between form and content positions the plays in the interpretive and representational boundaries of dramatic representation, acknowledging social reality from a definitive angle rather than opening the plays to new vistas and multiple readings befitting a more postmodern epistemology. The plays, despite their up---to---date themes, do not propose a

critical response fitting and reflecting the ideology of consumer capitalism and omnipresent mediatisation. This mode of dramaturgical engagement with contemporary culture and consciousness for the most part fails to engage with the mode of reader's/audience's perception or the instability and uncertainty of the modern world. Rather, I argue, although the plays' themes suggest otherwise, their dramaturgical form tends to portray the world as a stable, ordered cosmos that is perceptually manageable and artistically representable. Thus, the plays remain in the same state as represented by some of the characters – the state of inertia or conformism, incapable of resistance. Considering the plays' dramaturgical orthodoxy as opposed to their contemporary subject matter, one might wonder whether such formal experiment is beyond the playwrights' competences, comprehension or experiences. While we can only speculate on the material causes that might underlie such dramaturgical conservatism, it is likely that the playwrights have been rooted in a character---based theatrical tradition and tend to produce dramatic texts (at least while writing these plays) in line with the norms and limitations of this tradition.

The entrenched models of dramatic plays that have predominated since the late nineteenth century form the basis of the formal language of many contemporary British plays. But these models also present a challenge for playwrights wishing to experiment with form and move outside ingrained dramaturgical norms. The playwrights discussed here might have been too rooted in this structurally conservative system (at least while writing these plays) to reconsider the stylistics of their works along with their thematic content. However, later in their careers, Crimp and Walsh have produced plays (e.g. *Attempts on Her Life*, *The Walworth Farce*) that move beyond the borders of dramatic theatre. That said, Ravenhill's plays remain largely founded on character---based drama, reinforced with 'social observation, witty dialogue and touches of sentimentality'.[112]

The interest of mainstream British theatre in traditional dramatic form tends to foster such dramaturgical conservatism. The aesthetics of character---based dramatic tradition, involving recognisable plots, structured time, and unified characters, have dominated the experience of British theatre scene – for producers, directors, playwrights, actors and audience alike. This tradition has considerably shaped the fundamentals of theatrical form and taste that is in evidence in most of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and National Theatre productions and in those of commercial West End theatres, as well as in the majority of the plays written for the mainstream stage by such playwrights as Howard Brenton, Alan Bennett and David Hare. Such tendency towards unchallenging, traditional ways of theatre making and

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[112] Aleks Sierz, *In---Yer---Face Theatre: British Drama Today* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p. 152.

playwriting might be due to the issue of capital in a largely underfunded theatrical system besides artistic taste and public expectation. The increasing commercialisation of British theatre since the 1980s, Aleks Sierz argues, 'clearly has had an influence on the choice of play being produced. Staging too many experimental or difficult plays can bankrupt a theatre'.[113] Therefore, dramaturgically innovative plays tend to be considered financially risky, and thus are not necessarily attractive to the majority of mainstream theatres. As Sierz illustrates: 'Of the dozens of young writers who emerged in the 1990s, only Mark Ravenhill and Patrick Marber have been staged in the large Lyttelton space, while the huge Olivier rarely witnesses new plays.'[114] Ben Payne also emphasises the mainstream theatre's limited interest in alternative plays: 'People like Michael Punter, who write humanely about ideas, don't get many productions.'[115] Instead, the well---known, saleable classics by Shakespeare, Chekov, Shaw, Miller, Molière and so forth are repeatedly re---staged, generating what Susan Bennett calls a 'repertory standardisation'.[116] Playwrights such as David Hare, Mark Ravenhill and Simon Stephens have stated their concerns about this, arguing that 'comfortable, safe theatre was in danger of pushing more challenging new work off the stage for good.'[117] There are examples of this: Stephens's *Pornography* opened in Germany due to the difficulties Stephens had in finding a theatre in Britain willing to stage the play, and it took some time to be staged in the UK.[118] The commercial preference for traditional models has limited the emergence of formally challenging plays. It is therefore likely that Crimp's, Ravenhill's and Walsh's dramaturgical structures might at least in part be related to the limitations that the commercialised British theatre system has exerted on the creative process.

Despite their timely and insightful thematic content, formally conservative plays remain incongruous with the mediatised culture in which perception of the world and thus its representation fundamentally differ from the models that Chekhov or Ibsen based their dramaturgies on. They have a limited capacity to respond to the themes they raise and to make the reader/audience see contemporary culture and their position in it in a new light. As David Barnett argues: 'British theatre for the most part perpetuates dramaturgies that seem increasingly out of step with a globalized society in which the individual is radically different

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[113] Aleks Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today* (London: Methuen, 2011), p. 29.

[114] Aleks Sierz, '"Art flourishes in times of struggle": Creativity, Funding and New Writing', *Contemporary Theatre Review* 13:1 (2003), 33---45 (pp. 43).

[115] Ben Payne qtd. in Aleks Sierz, '"Art flourishes in times of struggle"', p. 43.

[116] Susan Bennett, Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 111.

[117] Vanessa Thorpe, 'Avant garde theatre: has Britain lost its nerve?', *The Guardian*, 26 February 2012 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2012/feb/26/avant---garde---theatre---britain---lost---nerve> [accessed 10 February 2013]

[118] For further information, see: David Barnett, '"I've been told [...] that the play is far too German": The Interplay of Institution and Dramaturgy in Shaping British Reactions to German Theatre', in *Cultural Impact in the German Context: Studies in Transmission, Reception, and Influence*, ed. by Rebecca Braun and Lyn Marvin (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2010), pp. 150---66.

from the one from whom Stanislavski derived his acting theories.'[119] However, this does not render the plays' critique meaningless. They represent significant aspects of contemporary culture and show, as Ravenhill aims, 'the virtual markets of images and information spinning around us and threatening to drag us into perpetual postmodern giddiness.'[120] Yet, the hub of this critique is the thematic content of the plays rather than their form, making the scope of critical response and its ability to provoke questions difficult. It shows the limits of the conventional representational form of dramatic theatre's ability to relate or respond to mediatised culture. The problematisation of representation and dramatic form calls for new dramaturgical means of engagement with the changing aspects of society, culture and perception.

The limited capacity of the plays' forms to respond to the critical issues they thematically deal with can be reconsidered in performance. An inventive theatrical approach to the text might challenge the play's dramatic mode of representation that has become problematic in view of the new reality of contemporary culture. For example, a postdramatic production of these plays could potentially address the lack of aesthetic engagement with the themes by restructuring the mode of theatrical expression in response to the socio---cultural and perceptual implications of mediatised culture. However, as the analyses of the productions indicate, the stage interpretations of Crimp's and Walsh's plays are chiefly translations of the texts onto the stage, with no or only limited innovation in form or changes to the dramaturgical structure of the play texts. In these productions, the audiences are presented with 'interpreted' material on stage and thus a sense of epistemological certainty and clarity that would not allow much space to them to create their own assumptions of the pieces. The audience could be sensitised more fundamentally to the issues the plays raised if the productions had left their theatrical language and action more open and less restricted by interpretive directions.

The Actors' Touring Company's production of *Faust* did approach the text as an element in the production process rather than its core. The production contained postdramatic elements, most significantly the space it generated by destabilising the borders between the 'real', the live, the imagined, the mediatised. The hi---tech setting reinforced the uncertainty that the play offers through multiple, shifting and intermingling presentations of realities, of the outside world, cyberspace, television and the stage. The sense of indeterminacy

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[119] David Barnett, '"I've been told […] that the play is far too German": The Interplay of Institution and Dramaturgy in Shaping British Reactions to German Theatre', in *Cultural Impact in the German Context: Studies in Transmission, Reception, and Influence*, ed. by Rebecca Braun and Lyn Marvin (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2010), pp. 150---166, (p. 161).

[120] Ravenhill qtd. in Wallace, 'Responsibility and Postmodernity, p. 270.

accommodates postmodern hyperreality and hence the changing mode of consciousness that the play is involved with as subject matter. It presents the audience with a new perspective on 'reality' and the ways the theatre relates to it. This encouraged the audience to critically question the limits of their knowledge of the world they live in and how far their perception is filtered by the media, without leading them to a specific political reading. The ATC production reprocessed the dramaturgical deficiencies and offered a corrective to them by employing media technologies and aesthetics that responded to the theme of hyperreality and the human condition in late capitalist, mediatised culture.

One is left to conclude that if the theatre (play texts), to quote Matthew Causey, 'wishes to be responsive to contemporary mediatized culture, [it] needs to engage the technologies that have helped to occasion that culture.'[121] Therefore, although mediatisation as a theme offers intriguing references to current social reality, the lack of dramaturgical innovation in relation to the changing mode of perception and socio---cultural circumstances restricts the plays' critical breadth. This chapter has put forward two central questions requiring further investigation: how can contemporary play texts reconfigure their dramaturgical structure to respond to mediatised culture and consciousness, and what innovative approaches to form in plays can expand their critical scope and influence their effect and interpretations in theatrical performances? This will serve as a base for the following chapters, for the investigation of new approaches to form through language, character and plot composition in plays since the 1990s when media technologies and culture have become increasingly pervasive and embedded in everyday lives and consciousness. The thesis therefore expands the scope of its critical lens from the thematisation of mediatisation to developments in form in play texts. Chapter 2 focuses on language and discourse in plays to explore how or whether the mode of language use accommodates and responds to the impact of the media on human identity, perception and relationships.

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[121] Matthew Causey, 'A Theatre of Monsters: Live Performance in the Age of Digital Media', in *Theatre in Crisis?: Performance manifestos for a new century*, ed. by Maria M. Delgado and Caridad Svich (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002), pp. 179---183, (p. 182).

CHAPTER 2

Dramaturgical Reflections on the Mediatisation of Language

1. Aim, Context and Background to the Analysis

This chapter discusses mediatised dramaturgy by focusing on the changing mode of language use in selected plays. It examines how these plays respond to the mediatisation of language --- the influence of media technologies and culture as well as related social processes on the ways people communicate, perceive and relate to the world and other people through language. The chapter investigates whether or how the play as a form addresses mediatised culture and consciousness through its linguistic structures. There are two central patterns of change in the dramaturgy of language in relation to mediatisation which result from the direct and indirect influence of the media on language. The former refers to new modes of linguistic styles that openly originate from specific media (medialect;[1] see 2.1.). The latter comprises implicit manifestations of mediatisation in language in association with other modern social processes such as consumer capitalism, individualisation, information culture and globalisation. These social---cultural processes, which the media relate to or promote, constitute language as an ideological, fragmented and anglicised construct. (I return to these aspects in sections 3 and 4) The chapter analyses and illustrates modes of dramaturgical engagement with these aspects of mediatised language and consciousness in Patrick Marber's *Closer* (1997), Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* (1997),[2] and Sarah Kane's *Crave* (1998). It examines the critical implications of inventive formal approaches to language and discourse. It questions whether the changes in language use offer new ways of mapping mediatised society and affect the plays' critical capacity. The chapter then extends the scope of the analysis by discussing how such strategies might affect performance.

Attempts, *Closer* and *Crave* engage with different facets of mediatised culture and language through their specific approaches to the dramaturgy of language. This analysis will demonstrate not only the diversity of dramaturgical responses, but also a variety of critical implications and functions. *Closer* addresses the direct influence of the media on language by incorporating 'netspeak' and chat language which it relates to the theme of disconnection and human isolation in the modern world. The analysis of the use of this medialect in *Closer*

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[1] Stig Hjarvard, 'The Globalization of Language. How the Media Contribute to the Spread of English and the Emergence of Medialects', *Nordicom Review*, 1---2 (2004), 75 – 97, (pp. 75)

[2] The shortened title, *Attempts*, will be used throughout this chapter.

functions as a negative example demonstrating that the structure of language used in relation to the media does not necessarily render the play critically capable of relating to a mediatised society. *Closer* brings a different perspective to the dramaturgical limitations presented in Chapter I and contrasts with the inventive formal approaches to language that I will discuss with reference to *Attempts* and *Crave*.

Crimp's and Kane's plays demonstrate ways that plays can formally and thematically accommodate how human subjectivity, perception and relations have changed in the media---saturated environment of information overload, consumerism and globalisation. The plays are concerned with the indirect influence of media technologies and logic on language in relation to other social processes: the commercialisation, fragmentation and globalisation/anglicisation of language. *Attempts* deals with the mediatisation of language by questioning human agency with respect to language and the particularity of language within the pervasive consumerist logic of the media. It also addresses the status of language as a tool of globalisation. *Crave* focuses on the fragmented nature of mediatised language as a critical response to the fragmentation of human perception in the age of data overload, fast---paced technology and lifestyles. It also addresses the increasing inability to communicate ironically in the extensively connected media age.

This chapter also explores how the restructuring of language affects the directorial and performance process by considering the effects of the dramaturgical experiments with language on performance. It analyses major productions and premiers of the plays on the British stage: the first productions of *Closer* by Patrick Marber in 1997, *Crave* by Vicky Featherstone in 1998, as well as Tim Albery's 1997 premiere and Katie Mitchell's 2007 interpretation of *Attempts*. The underlying objective in examining two productions of *Attempts* is to provide a comparative view of the possibilities offered by a radically unfixed dramaturgy.

Note that 'language in the theatre' does not necessarily mean the 'language of theatre', which semiotically refers to all the sign systems at work in the theatre. Rather, it refers to the language through which the characters and actors speak and perceive the world. However, the linguistic medium is part of the language of theatre, an element of the sign system along with props, sets, costumes, lighting and so forth. The analysis of language here focuses on its form and content, and its critical implications. The notion of discourse refers to a socio---cultural and ideological construction of reality through language. In order to examine media---driven variations in language and the plays' and theatre's responses, it is necessary to define the

'mediatisation of language' and identify some general aspects of the dramaturgy of language in theatre before the media age.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1. Mediatisation of Language

Media are dominating presenters of language in our society at large.[3]

Written and spoken language is a primary means of human communication, not simply and only a medium for social interaction and expression of ideas, but also the central medium through which individuals construct their ideas of the world. Language serves as an ideational mechanism generating representations of the world,[4] reflecting and fashioning reality. Through language human beings constitute relations, identities and realities, as Hans---Georg Gadamer underlines, '[l]anguage is not just one of man's possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a *world* at all.'[5] Additionally, language is a changing continuum that dynamically exists in, and alters in relation to, socio---cultural, ideological and historical circumstances. In this sense language is mediatised[6] in today's media---saturated environment, shaped by mass media technologies and by the discourses and mentalities that global capitalism and the media culture may engender. The mediatisation of language, however, is not a new phenomenon. The advent of print in the 15th century influenced language use, just as the arrival of broadcasting media in the 1920s brought about new linguistic styles and discourses.[7] The impact of recent mass media on language use is more striking due to the intensity, speed and prevalence of the change wrought on language and on individuals' perceptual faculties due to globalising mass media technologies.

In 2001, for example, the *Guardian* newspaper launched a text poetry competition inviting people who 'had 160 characters inside them waiting to come out in the form of a poem.'[8] The winning poet reflexively wrote: 'txtin iz messin, / mi headn'me englis, / try2rite

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[3] Allan Bell, *The Language of News Media* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 1.

[4] Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (London: Arnold/Hodder Headline Group, 1995), p. 17.

[5] Hans---Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 440.

[6] There is a difference between mediatised language and media language. While the former refers to everyday language, whose form, discourse and content change in view of mass media technologies and media---saturated culture, the latter alludes to a rather more medium---specific or characteristic language and discourse particular to mass media use. These are, of course, not disconnected. On the contrary, there is a close interaction between the two since media language as a part of media technologies and culture affects daily language. Here I will focus on the mediatisation of language and occasionally relate it to media language.

[7] David Crystal, *Language and the Internet* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), p. 26.

[8] Keegan, Victor, '160 characters in search of an author', *The Guardian*, 7 November 2002 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2002/nov/07/textpoetrycompetition2002.poetry1> [accessed 10 May 2011]

essays, / they all come out txtis.'[9] In 2010, Christopher Poole, founder of the anarchic internet image message board 4Chan, testified during the trial of the man accused of hacking into US politician Sarah Palin's e---mail account. In court, Poole was asked to explain a catalogue of Internet slang terms, a language that was impenetrable to the lawyers.[10] As these and other cases illustrate, the impact of mass media on language can be seen in new linguistic styles, forms and discourses. As J. David Bolter and Richard Grusin argue,[11] the mediatisation of language has been overshadowed by an interest in the workings of the mass media and their interactions with each other. This attitude 'isolate[s] language as a cultural force'[12] and leads to the failure to 'appreciate how language interacts with other media, other technologies, and other cultural artifacts.'[13] Consequently, this lack of interest has opened the way for certain critical responses.

David Crystal sees the internet as triggering a linguistic revolution and argues that the World Wide Web has affected and become a part of language through its global scale and intensity of use.[14] Media theorist Stig Hjarvard takes this idea further, arguing that a medium--- specific approach to language is essential in today's highly mediatised, globalised world, distinct from dialect, the geographical positioning of language and sociolect concern with the speaker's social position.[15] As briefly introduced earlier, Hjarvard proposes the concept of medialect --- 'linguistic variants that arise out of specific media.'[16] To elaborate, different forms of mass media give rise to different language use. Also, as media remediate each other, linguistic features of one medialect may 'spread to other medialects as well as to traditional written and spoken communication.'[17] For instance, abbreviations (2day, CU, B4), phonetic spellings (bcoz, luv), emotional noises (hehehe for 'laugh') and the creative iconicity (<3 for 'heart', itself a visual representation of 'love') of text messaging are used in emails and chat rooms.

To consider language as mediatised is not necessarily to consider it in terms of direct contact with media technologies or the overt presence of media influence on language. Mediatisation of language also refers to the less explicit, yet more prevalent, effect on language that emerges in relation to the changing socio---cultural and perceptual conditions of the

[9] This piece is taken from the website: http://books.guardian.co.uk/textpoetry [accessed: 10 May 2011]
[10] Kleinman, Zoe, 'How the internet is changing language', in *BBC News*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology--10971949> [accessed 10 May 2011]
[11] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999).
[12] Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, p. 57.
[13] Ibid., p. 57.
[14] Crystal, Language and the Internet, p. 5.
[15] Hjarvard, 'The Globalization of Language', p. 94.
[16] Ibid., p. 75.
[17] Ibid., p. 95.

contemporary world, where language becomes increasingly intertextual, polyglossic, deindividualised and fragmented. These implicit aspects of the mediatisation of language are further analysed in relation to the plays, concentrating on three main aspects of mediatised language: mediatised language as a de---individualised and ideologised language, as the fragmented language of the age of information overload and fast---paced life, and as the anglicised global language in a polyglossic environment.

To appreciate how the plays address these changes in the use, form and understanding of language requires a brief view of varieties of language use in plays before the media fundamentally influenced the dramaturgical structure.

2.2. An Overview: Language in Drama Before Mediatisation

This section presents some typical features of language use in dramatic theatre tradition, based on the representation of the world as a coherent, meaningful totality. Language, like other elements in traditional dramatic plays, serves to reflect the world as a whole and individualised through particular characters' speech, making a congruous relationship between language and character, and portraying characters as the source of language and meaning. Language constitutes a definitive point of origin and of reference generally based on a linear signification process that structures meaning through a coherent relationship between the representation and that which is represented. Foreign language use in dramatic plays is generally through foreign phrases incorporated clearly and coherently into the language and content of the play to enhance the dramatic illusion and not to undermine it.

These aspects of language in dramatic plays, however, do not necessarily mean that language in theatre has always been linear, unified, and unidirectional with definitive meaning, or that language use has never been problematic. Shakespeare shifts registers from the prosaic to the poetic, where poetic language does not just refer to the speaking character or represent a realistic, communicative language. It is obvious that people tend not to deliver long poetic monologues in day---to---day life. Language here is not transparent, not simply a medium for communication or a tool to generate a perfect representation of reality in the theatre. Another significant example of inconsequential use of language in the dramatic tradition may be found in Anton Chekhov's plays where characters often talk past, rather than to each other as if they do not hear one another; sometimes they do not directly say what they mean.

Nevertheless, the representational role of language has been central in dramatic theatre. The use of language as a means to create a life---like representation of the world can be seen in the naturalist dramas of Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov and George Bernard Shaw where language is part of the realistic characterisation that corresponds to the dialects and sociolects that existed and illustrated the society of the period. Shaw's concern with class---division in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century caused him to formulate a language that reflected the social landscape and concerns of the working classes. In plays such as *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1894) and *Pygmalion* (1912), Shaw used working class discourse, with its phonetic oddities and particular vocabulary to reflect the historical---social reality. Similar to Shaw's use of sociolect, John Millington Synge employed the Anglo---Irish dialect of the Irish peasantry in the late nineteenth century to reinforce his figurative portrayal of rural life and issues of the time.

Language in drama can also be a poetic medium, a décor to render theatrical work expressive and even virtuosic. For instance, Greek dramatists were interested in well---made speeches and revelled in oratory, and Renaissance monologues use poetic, metaphorical and colourful language. Such language use focuses mainly on the aesthetic aspects of language and its role of imparting and elaborating on points of the narrative. It does not necessarily disrupt dramatic representation since language is used within the limits of its interpretative role in dramatic theatre. In some dramatic works, poetic language becomes commonplace and thus works hand in hand with representational dramaturgy rather than challenging the dramatic illusion. In the Elizabethan theatre, as Keir Elam argues, poetry is so embedded in the dramatic tradition that '[a] very austere use of language, might, indeed, have been far more conspicuous than the staple rhetoric.'[18] Hence, language as a poetic tool in the dramatic tradition, more often than not, functions in line with the representational agenda.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the rise of relativistic perspectives on socially and culturally---entrenched beliefs and normative truths made certainty, or the idea of absolute truth, problematic. Karl Marx's social relativism[19] interrogated the socio---cultural, economic and political dominance of the ruling classes over the lower classes; Friedrich W. Nietzsche[20] dealt with moral relativism, and Albert Einstein focussed on physical relativism. Ferdinand de Saussure,[21] in turn, put forward the idea of linguistic relativism – arguing that there is no

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[18] Keir Elam, 'Language in Theater', *A Review of Theory and Literary Criticism*, 6 (1977), 139---61, (pp. 151).
[19] For further information, see Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* (Washington: Regnery Pub., 2000). (First published between 1867 ---1894). Also, see Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (First published in 1848).
[20] For further information, see: Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality: A Polemic*, trans. by M. Clark and A. J. Swensen (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Pub. Inc., 1998). (First published in 1887).
[21] For further information, see: Ferdinand de Saussure, *Writings in General Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006).

single, ultimate meaning, but a multiplicity of meanings for any given signifier. The dissolution of certainties continued into the twentieth century, particularly in light of socio---cultural changes, and advances in the media and technology.

Various playwrights[22] have problematised the limitations of language in dramatic theatre in relation to their critical concerns with the changing social landscape and the representational nature of the dramatic theatre. Of these, two of the most prominent and influential playwrights are Samuel Beckett and Bertolt Brecht, whose works and theories have had a major impact on twentieth and twenty---first century playwrights such as Heiner Müller, Harold Pinter, Sarah Kane, Caryl Churchill, Peter Handke, Elfriede Jelinek and so forth. Although Beckett's use of language is fundamentally different from Brecht's, both propose inventive formal perspectives on language fostered in the late 20th and early 21st centuries in response to an increasingly mediatised culture. Beckett's and Brecht's approaches to language use in plays and theatre questioned the limitations of language in existing dramatic contexts and furthered previous alternative language uses that did not conform to such limitations.[23] Their use of language, albeit in different ways, took issue with the use of language as an apparently transparent medium and tool for perfecting the dramatic illusion.

Beckett, writing for the theatre in the wake of the traumatic experience of the Second World War, felt language as a meaningful and logical entity in dramatic contexts failed to effectively communicate and make sense of the realities of the post---war world. Beckett argued language in this sense was 'a veil that must be torn apart in order to get at things (or the Nothingness) behind it. Grammar and Style. To me they seem to have become as irrelevant as a Victorian bathing suit or the imperturbability of a true gentleman. A mask.'[24] Beckett aimed to 'find a means of decomposing and moving beyond language',[25] namely, beyond traditional language use and forms to represent the nothingness that people experience to reconnect to the real when belief in truth was shaken. The core of Beckett's approach to language use is based on his deliberate estrangement of language, in 'the creation of words *against* the wreck

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[22] Some of the most prominent of these playwrights are Jean Genet, Eugène Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Bertolt Brecht, Heiner Müller and Harold Pinter. There are, of course, numerous others.

[23] Since Ancient Greek drama there have been examples of language use in drama and theatre that do not treat language merely as a neutral vessel of meaning or communication. For example, in some Greek drama, Shakespeare's and Chekhov's plays language was not the realistic, everyday language but a poetic, inconsequential and allegorical one. Beckett and Brecht furthered such examples not merely by proposing new alternatives to realistic, representational language, but also by problematising it to expand the possibilities of drama and theatre, and their critical perspective on the socio---cultural conditions.

[24] Samuel Beckett qtd. in Steven Connor *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory, and Text* (Aurora, USA: Basil Blackwell, 2007), p. 19.

[25] Jonathan Boulter, *Beckett: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 20.

of words'.[26] He moved language away from everyday speech, from its syntactic, logical form towards a minimal, form, an 'internal and abstract purity that never was.'[27] Beckett's characters experience linguistic alienation, a sense of the unreliability of language and instability of meaning due to their sense of alienation in the world they live in, while being, at the same time, bound to language as their mode of expression. Their language is asyntactical; realistic dialogue and traditional grammatical structures with logical links are destabilised. Beckett's experiments with language move from the fully embodied form of language by specific characters in *Waiting for Godot* to nameless speakers in *Act Without Words II*, and to a completely anonymous language with shattered syntax and fractured grammar in his later plays *Not I*, *Ohio Impromptu* or *Rockaby*. Language does not serve 'as a vehicle for direct communication [between characters] or as a screen through which one can see darkly the psychic movements of a character.'[28] It is not a tool that generates and transmits a meaningful and recognisable picture of the world. Instead, it is a critical tool to expose language itself to present the world as 'an unending universe where time and space are circular, as opposed to the linearity of classical language, perspective, and spatiotemporal concepts.'[29]

Brecht, whose theatrical approach is based on the *Verfremdungseffekt*, on the negation of the commonplace to increase critical consciousness about social matters, used language as a device to make the familiar strange, show the world in a different way, reveal the circumstances hidden behind the apparently self---evident. Brecht used language as a tool for expanding the possibilities of theatre for social criticism. He destabilised the kinds of language used in most dramatic contexts by integrating unusual language conventions, using quotation devices to distinguish actors from characters, addressing the audience directly and separating scenes by songs, written titles or newspaper---style headlines.[30] Brecht's language is the everyday language of common people in structured dialogue form. However, Brecht's realistic language was not to create a form of perfection of the dramatic illusion but a socially realistic context to continually foreground the artifice of the fictional world, the workings of the imagined, theatrical world. Brecht stripped language of 'its self---evident, familiar, obvious quality and create[d] a sense of astonishment and curiosity about [it].'[31] This form of language use exists in

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[26] Andrew Kennedy, Six Dramatists in Search of a Language: Studies in Dramatic Language (London: Cambridge UP, 1975), p. 135.

[27] Kennedy, Six Dramatists in Search of a Language, p. 135.

[28] Michael Worton, 'Waiting for Godot and Endgame: theatre as text' in The Cambridge Companion to Beckett, ed. by John Pilling (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), pp. 67---87, (p. 68).

[29] Jane Alison Hale, The Broken Window: Beckett's Dramatic Perspective (Indiana, USA: Purdue Research Foundation, 1987), p. 157.

[30] Yvonne Banning, 'Language in the Theatre: Mediating Realities in an Audience', South African Theatre Journal, 4: 1 (1990), 12---37, (pp. 25---6).

[31] Peter Brooker, 'Key words in Brecht's theory and practice of theatre' in The Cambridge Companion to Brecht, ed. by Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), pp. 185--- 201,(p. 191).

most of his plays such as *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *The Life of Galileo*,[32] highlights the artifice of theatre and defamiliarises onstage action, and consequently increases the audience's consciousness not only of the artifice of the theatrical event they were watching, but also of their place and role in a concrete social narrative. The language in Brecht's works can therefore be considered a meditation on social issues, a means to generate heightened social awareness and critically show the need for change.

Beckett's non---linear, fragmented, less referential use of language and Brecht's approach to language as a means to create critical awareness in the audience paved the way for further innovative and critical approaches to language in the twenty---first century drama and theatre. The following sections elaborate these techniques and investigate how the restructuring of language works and what its dramaturgical, perceptual and performative implications are.

3. The Impact of Direct Mediatisation of Language on the Dramaturgy of Language
3.1. The Use of Medialect in *Closer*

> *If the bard were alive today, he'd probably write, '2B or not 2B'.*[33]

This section focuses on the direct and consciously accepted influence of mass media on language by investigating the ways Patrick Marber deploys netspeak in *Closer*, how the medialect functions dramaturgically and critically, and how it is interpreted in performance. The analysis of *Closer* explores how incorporating medialect into the form of the play works and whether it helps the play relate to and raise awareness about the social realities of the networked society Marber seeks to critique.

Marber's *Closer*, as Graham Saunders[34] and Aleks Sierz indicate, is 'inspired by "well---made plays" and "well---constructed novels"'.[35] It follows a conventional structure with a chronological dramatic narrative with a consistent plot, structured time, naturalistic language and dialogue, and a lifelike setting. The play centres on the romantic turmoil between four characters in the London of the 1990s: a photographer (Anna), a stripper (Alice), a dermatologist (Larry) and an obituary writer (Dan). Alice falls in love with Dan; Dan falls in love with Anna, who takes Dan's picture for the cover of the book he has written about Alice.

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[32] Banning, 'Language in the Theatre', p. 25---6.
[33] Crispin Thurlow, 'Fabricating Youth: New Media Discourse and The Technologization of Young People', in *Language in the Media: Representations, Identities, Ideologies*, ed. by Sally A. Johnson, Astrid Ensslin (London: Continuum, 2007), pp. 213---233, (p. 221).
[34] For more information, see: Graham Saunders, *Patrick Marber's Closer* (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 32.
[35] Aleks Sierz, *In---Yer---Face Theatre: British Drama Today* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p. 191---2.

The dynamic of this love triangle changes when Larry meets Anna, initially through an internet chat room, a scene I elaborate on shortly. The relationship between the four characters then becomes more complex and leads to a circle of betrayal. At the end of the play, it becomes evident that none of the characters attain the intimacy or truth that they desire. Underneath these complex, intertwined and ostensibly superficial relationships lies the issue of the increasing inability of humans to establish bonds with others in contemporary culture.

As the title suggests, *Closer* deals with themes of human isolation, dissolution of interpersonal relations and the need for humans to connect. Arguably, these themes could be presented as timeless and universal. However, Marber incorporates elements that highlight the increasing dominance of such concerns in relation to contemporary society. Marber, like Ravenhill, identifies this world through an implicit Baudrillardian framework as a place where reality, real identities (e.g. Alice), real human relationships and bonds are replaced by their representations, where, as Larry emphatically indicates, 'Everything is a Version of Something Else.'[36] Marber reinforces this contemporary and 'darkly savage'[37] thematic content through the use of a cyberspace setting in the third scene where Dan and Larry talk to each other via a cyber sex chat room when Dan pretends to be Anna, 'a sex---obsessed woman, a "cum---hungry bitch" with "epic tits" who titillates the man at the other terminal, finally faking an ecstatic textual orgasm of jumbled letters and "oh---oh---oh"s.'[38] The fake identity and relationship formed in this virtual environment --- which Larry seems to perceive as real --- relate to the play's central critique, the dissolution of truthfulness and closeness in relationships and in the way humans define themselves.

Although *Closer* is largely a well---made realistic play due to the formal decisions mentioned already, the mode of characterisation does not necessarily always correspond to the dramatic model of psychologically---motivated characterisation. There is, particularly in the characterisation of Alice, a sense of mutability and uncertainty, or as Graham Saunders identifies, 'a form of slippage.'[39] This is mainly because she keeps reinventing parts of her identity and her biography through stories about the scar on her leg. In one version the scar is caused by a truck that hit her, in another, it was the result of a car accident in which her parents died. It is also because --- as it becomes clear in the last scene --- she constructs her identity by taking her name from a memorial in a park. The reader/audience is taken into Alice's self---constructed identities, and this eventually reveals Alice's self---reflexive position in

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[36] Patrick Marber, *Closer* (New York: Grove Press, 1999), p. 63.
[37] Saunders, *Patrick Marber's Closer*, p. 1.
[38] Steve Dixon, Digital performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance art, and Installation (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), p. 469.
[39] Saunders, *Patrick Marber's Closer*, p. 21.

the play. Her death therefore is a metadramatic element, emphasising the constructedness not only of the character, but also of human identity shaped by its environment. Despite the destabilisation of conventional patterns of characterisation, overarchingly *Closer* is based on a contained, 'dramatic' idea of the world: Alice is the exception and not the rule.

To my knowledge, *Closer* is the first play to remediate the aesthetics of chat language, yet not the only one to use chat rooms as setting and thematic content. Later plays such as Enda Walsh's *Chatroom* (2005) and Lucy Prebble's *The Sugar Syndrome* (2003) both situate their narrative in a virtual environment and focus on themes that reflect on aspects of today's mediatised world. For instance, the teenage characters in *Chatroom* talk about the constructedness of individual identity, while *The Sugar Syndrome* questions the condition of human beings in the mediatised world. The chat room in these plays appears mainly as a thematic, not a formal element. The characters use everyday conversational language and do not incorporate medialect or reconsider their dramaturgical structure in relation to the media aesthetics or socio---cultural and perceptual changes in the mediatised world. Rather, they talk about the mediatised world without formally engaging with it or registering its impact on dramatic representation. *Closer*, on the other hand, incorporates netspeak into its naturalistic linguistic style. However, its formal engagement with the mediatised context, as in Walsh and Prebble's cases, does not disrupt the dramatic illusion or logic. Rather, it serves to reinforce the unity of the dramatic narrative, and by extension, the representation of social reality with tenable order.

To elaborate, *Closer*'s third scene --- which Christopher Innes identifies as 'aggressively contemporary'[40] --- incorporates key aspects of chat language such as abbreviations ('Nice 2 meet U'[41]; 'RU4 real?'[42]), the loosening of grammatical rules ('Youre v.forward'[43]; 'Life without riskisdeath.'[44]) and an icon ('rose shape'[45]). The language mainly consists of short, abrupt sentences, phrases or even just letters (Y instead of 'Yes'[46]), reflecting the high---speed communication brought about by the new technologies. The dialogue is structured in a linear manner, that is, the lines of the speakers consistently correspond to each other without disruption, as one would expect. The conversation between Dan and Larry ends with the icon of a rose that Dan sends Larry, formed by using letters and symbols commonly used in chat language.

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[40] Christopher Innes qtd. in Saunders, *Patrick Marber's Closer*, p. 2.
[41] Marber, *Closer*, p. 23.
[42] Ibid., p. 26.
[43] Ibid., p. 23.
[44] Ibid., p. 27.
[45] Ibid., p. 27.
[46] Ibid., p. 27.

The deliberate and overt use of medialect in this scene should be considered in relation to the rest of the play. As mentioned earlier, *Closer* is a well--made dramatic play with recognisable plot and characterisation. This observation becomes evident when one considers the coherently structured narrative, consistent and three--dimensional characterisation (apart from Alice, as discussed earlier), the lifelike setting and the chronological order, enriched with flashbacks and flash--forwards. Broadly speaking, the way Marber deploys language in the play corresponds to traditional dramatic narrative in which language is used as a tool to give information, further dramatic illusion and fill the gaps of the storyline at crucial instances, emphasising the traditional dramatic devices of tension and conflict. Marber's language is everyday language, coherently presented by most of the characters through a linear dialogue apart from the self--characterisation of Alice. The individuality of the characters and the linearity of language render them identifiable and suggest a stable relationship between the text and the character. This emphasises the particularity of language and the autonomy of each character over language and action. Thus, language in the play is used, fundamentally, as a representational tool that conveys the story and represents the characters' psychology.

When the conventional, well--made structure of the play is considered, it may seem that the integration of the medialect disrupts the narrative by making the familiar language strange and consequently may increase the reader's/audience's awareness of the workings of the play's structure and critical framework. However, although the chatroom scene introduces an unusual language and setting, it does not necessarily disrupt the dramatic illusion or challenge the representational role of language in the rest of the play or foreground language as a theatrical and a social construct. On the contrary, the use of medialect positions the language as a neutral vessel of meaning that reinforces the dramatic illusion since it represents someone typing in a chat room within the limits of the frame of a coherent narrative dramaturgy. The use of medialect, therefore, supports rather than challenges the aesthetics of the play, in form and content. It adds to the dramatic representation of synthetic human relations and the desire for real intimacy without accommodating in its form the ways in which the human condition and relations have altered due to the media--driven form of human life. Marber's use of netspeak, despite its promising inventive appearance, does not challenge the dramatic form or offer a new formal vocabulary that maps the social circumstances of the mediatised culture.

Marber occasionally extends the use of medialect to other scenes in the playscript through using capital letters --- ('Larry: WHAT D'YOU HAVE TO DO TO GET A BIT OF

INTIMACY AROUND HERE?'[47]) – and underling phrases – (<u>'Don't say it,</u> don't fucking say, "You're too good for me." I *am* – <u>but don't say</u> it.'[48]) These linguistic patterns, though originating from written language, imply a connection with the linguistic style used in chat rooms, SMS messaging or Microsoft Word documents, particularly when considered in relation to the abovementioned scene and the contemporary setting of the play. The recognition of the connection between the language and media technologies (capital letters stand for extreme emotions and underlined phrases show emphasis in internet or text languages) depends on the reader's experience of these media. Similar to the use of medialect in the third scene, the use of capital letters and underlined phrases do not disrupt the linearity and consistency of the dramatic storyline. They function as implied stage directions within the text, making the presentation of the dialogue conform to the tone of the dramatic narrative. Such stylistic diversity is therefore a tool to enhance dramatic illusion rather than a means to fashion a new form in response to the changing mode of social relations.

Does one, however, encounter the unconscious mediatisation of language and perception in *Closer*? The language in *Closer* displays some qualities that could be understood in relation to the media age and to the unconscious or unnoticed mediatisation of language. For example, the frequent use of short, abrupt sentences evokes an aspect of the indirect mediatisation of language, an indication of the fast---paced lives and short attention spans of individuals in today's high---speed, information---intense world through language. Although these implicit aspects of language use might indicate an indirect reference to the mediatised world and perception, their comfortable position within the conventional linear narrative prevents them from generating a disruptive, challenging effect. Rather, these aspects of language use function in line with the representational form, dramatic logic and unity. This overlooked aspect of the language in *Closer* may be an unintentional critical indication of how the effect of mass media on language, consciousness and in general on human life has become so pervasive that humans fail to notice its influence. As will be discussed in section 3.2., such structures could indeed be brought out in performance, although this would require active intervention from the director and a rigorous conceptual framework for the production.

Consequently, the use of medialect functions predominantly in line with the categories and logic of dramatic plays and misleadingly reflects mediatised society as a coherent totality. The rationale behind the form of language is representational rather than disruptive, as Marber indicates: 'I never intended to shock with the language. It is simply the case that I felt the

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[47] Marber, *Closer*, p. 73.
[48] Ibid., p. 58.

people in the play would speak as they do.'[49] Marber's language use, no matter how innovative it appears to be, does not engender dramaturgical innovation. It does not reconsider the form of representation in relation to the changing mode of perception, human condition and social relations in the widely connected but not strongly bonded world. Hence, the dramaturgical structure in *Closer*, like the form in Crimp's, Walsh's and Ravenhill's plays in Chapter 1, stops short of addressing the changes the media have brought into human lives. This does not render Marber's play irrelevant or out‐‐‐of‐‐‐touch, but it underlines its limited critical capacity to address the mediatised world and consciousness. Therefore, Marber's uncritical use of netspeak relates to people's unquestioning acceptance of the media influence on their language and perception. Marber's use of medialect thus proposes an unperceptive representation of an unthinking attitude rather than a questioning critique of it.

3.2. Staging the Medialect

Mediatised language in *Closer* requires specific presentation of the scene in performance. The play asks two actors to sit in front of two different computers and type their responses to each other, which appear on a large screen.[50] When the play premiered at the Royal National Theatre (London) in 1997, the scene was staged in accordance with Patrick Marber's directions. No words were uttered by the actors on stage; the entire exchange between the two characters was presented as linear dialogue on a screen.

Marber gives clear directions about the chatroom scene for directors, even suggesting that, if the budget does not allow for a projected version of the scene,[51] the actors speak the scene whilst typing. Although these explicit stage directions and the traditional dramaturgy of the scene and play limit directorial interpretation, there is the possibility that the new context of the scene can encourage directors to deviate from Marber's instructions and realise its peculiarities in performance. The conversation could have real and virtual settings or present the language merely through a screen or speakers. It could disembody the language and disrupt the dramatic illusion to increase audience's critical awareness that the characters are viewing the world anew through an instrumentalized language. However, as the director of his own playscript Marber repeated his well‐‐‐made play's structure in performance. That is, the stage production followed the dramatic mode of the play; the action and narrative were based primarily on the unified representation of outside reality. The performance presented a coherent plot, structured time and setting.

[49] Patrick Marber qtd. in Sierz, *In‐‐‐Yer‐‐‐Face Theatre*, p. 190.
[50] Marber, *Closer*, p. 23.
[51] Ibid., p. 118.

The language in *Closer*, unspoken but projected on a screen, is a coherent projected version of a dramatic dialogue represented in a different way on stage. The onstage action reinforced the dramatic illusion the play offers rather than challenging it, offering nothing but the representation of two people chatting online. Emma B. Lloyd, assistant stage manager of the original Royal National Theatre production, explained how Marber and she engineered further illusionism in performance:

> [W]e had to get a special computer written with the whole script on the programme. So though it looks real, the actors are only pretending to type. [...] I watch them carefully and when they touch the first key for a sentence I activate a quick key which makes the whole thing appear on the big screen.[52]

The stage interpretation of the scene underpinned the production's realistic aesthetic, rather than questioning the use of medialect and its critical implications in relation to human connections in a mediatised culture. Marber's use and staging of medialect within a conventional dramatic framework suggests a limited critical concern with the mediatised society and culture. As Charles Spencer comments: 'my only real complaint is that the play's structure seems a touch too neat for its subject matter.'[53] Although Marber's use of medialect does not generate a dramaturgical challenge, it does prompt questions about how plays may restructure language in response to mediatised society. The dramaturg Marianne van Kerkhoven highlights more unconventional attempts in contemporary theatre to reconsider language in line with the changing mode of perception and human condition within mediatised culture. She relates these new strategies to chaos theory, reflecting on the contemporary world through 'ambiguity, polyvalence and simultaneity'.[54] The following section investigates different aspects of these attempts to restructure language in text and performance in response to the indirect influence of the media on language.

4. Dramaturgical Responses to the Indirect Mediatisation of Language: *Attempts* and *Crave*

This section analyses how *Attempts* and *Crave* reflect the indirect influence of media technologies, logic and culture on language, on how human beings perceive, define and experience the world. It examines language use in relation to social processes of consumerism,

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[52] Emma B. Lloyd in Lyn Gardner's article 'Sex in a Chilling Climate', *The Guardian*, 3 January 1998, here qtd in Saunders, *Patrick Marber's Closer*, p. 36.

[53] Charles Spencer, 'Review on *Closer*' (*The Daily Telegraph*), *Theatre Record*, 11: 17 (1997), p. 676.

[54] Marianne van Kerkhoven qtd. in Hans---Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. by Karen Jürs---Munby (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 83.

individualisation and globalisation. The first part investigates Crimp's innovative formal approach to language in *Attempts* as a critical response to the impact of the media as ideological tools on language. It focuses on how the capitalist logic of the media influences the sense of individuality and subjective identity by questioning the particularity of language. The second section examines the fragmented language of *Crave* as a critical reference to the disorientation of human beings and the fragmented and multi---perspectival form of perception in a high---speed culture. The final section explores the link between mediatisation and globalisation and the emergence of a global lingua franca in *Attempts*. These sections also examine how formal reconsiderations of language in the plays are interpreted on stage by analysing Tim Albery's and Katie Mitchell's productions of *Attempts* and Vicky Featherstone's production of *Crave*.

4.1. Whose Words are These? Dramaturgical Reflections on the Deindividualisation of Language in *Attempts*

Martin Crimp presents the model for *Attempts* as a series of 'scenarios' in his introductory note: 'Let each scenario in words – the dialogue – unfold against a distinct world – a design – which best exposes its irony'.[55] *Attempts* is a series of seventeen unrelated scenarios – outlines of fragments of events, dialogues or narrative passages that are juxtaposed 'just like a montage in the pictorial arts'[56] without having to generate a chronological order or a meaningful whole. The use of scenarios that are based more on contiguity than causality clearly contrasts with the coherently connected scenes of a dramatic play. The deliberate use of such a form undermines the representation of the world as a complete whole, and proposes a fragmented, pluralist, changeable view of the world. The emphasis on 'irony' in Crimp's note adds to this unconventional form by implying uncertainty from the outset. As David Barnett argues, 'the ironic, rather than signalling the opposite of literal meaning, points to an unfixed locus of meanings along a spectrum.'[57] Unlike the satire form in *Video* and *The Treatment*, which provides a definitive viewpoint and point of criticism, irony challenges the dramaturgical structure by deliberately and consciously challenging the words on the page. It is a play that goes beyond the model of dramatic plays --- the central position of text and its implicit translation onto the stage --- towards the postdramatic idea of text as one of many elements in the theatrical process. Crimp's play epitomizes what Poschmann defines as the 'no longer

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[55] Martin Crimp, *Plays: 2 No One Sees the Video, The Misanthrope, Attempts on Her Life, The Country* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p. 202. All references to *Attempts on Her Life* are taken from this edition. Subsequently, the shortened title *Attempts* will be followed by a page number in the footnotes.

[56] Heiner Zimmermann, 'Martin Crimp, *Attempts on Her Life*: Postdramatic, Postmodern Satiric?' *Contemporary Drama in English*, 9 (2002), 105 – 125, (pp. 115).

[57] Martin Crimp qtd. in David, Barnett, 'When is a Play not a Drama? Two Examples of Postdramatic Theatre Texts', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 24:1 (2008), 14--- 23, (pp. 16).

dramatic theatre text',[58] a new form of text that destabilises conventional categories of plot, characterisation, fable, dialogue and structured time.[59]

However, Barnett argues, 'the pristine postdramatic theatre text hardly exists. It is usually a hybrid form, with dramatic and postdramatic traits co--existing on the page.'[60] Thus, Crimp does not entirely remove the dramatic form. He still uses naturalistic elements such as recognisable dialogues and logical conversational progression. Moreover, the scenarios involve a variety of recognisable discourses and styles --- adverts, consumer analysis, art criticism and pop--songs --- through short or long dialogues, monologues or lyrical forms in English as well as Eastern European and African languages. Each scenario displays a different perspective of 'Anne' (Anny, Anya, Annushka), the much talked--about, yet absent and unknowable figure in the play. Anne can be anybody and anything – a daughter, a terrorist, a porn star or a car – and Anne can be anywhere, from European capitals to North African countries. What is striking about the identifiable dialogues in the scenarios is that, despite their recognisability, it is unclear where they emanate from, or who speaks them, since Crimp replaces character names with dashes, undermining the traditional unified relationship between speaker and character. Language becomes an autonomous medium with multiple origins and discourses rather than a definitive source or tone. Rather than fully developed--characters with agency over language, the anonymous speakers, become what Gerda Poschmann suggests are *Textträger* (text bearers)[61] responsible for delivering the text rather than representing it.

The genealogy of anonymity dates back to the rise of modernism in the early twentieth century. Here, several playwrights wrote plays in which individual character names --- a fundamental tenet of dramatic plays – were replaced by categorisations or allegorical names. For example, in August Strindberg's *A Dream Play* (1902) and Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of An Author* (1921) the characters are mainly defined by their social or occupational roles rather than names --- the Director, the Father, the Lawyer, the Poet. In the second half of the twentieth century, Beckett took this feature further in *Act Without Words II* (1950s), *Breath* (1969) and *Not I* (1972) by attributing letters instead of names to the speakers and by completely removing individual and symbolic names. Instead he used anonymous language and voices. (Section 2.2.)

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[58] Gerda Poschmann, qtd. in/ referred to in Karen Jürs--Munby, 'The Resistant Text in Postdramatic Theatre: Performing Elfriede Jelinek's Sprachflächen', *Performance Research*, 14: 1 (2009), 46 – 56, (pp. 46).
[59] Gerda Poschmann, qtd. in Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p. 18.
[60] David Barnett, 'Reading and Performing Uncertainty: Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen* and the Postdramatic Theatre', *Theatre Research International*, 30:2 (2005), 139--149, (pp. 141).
[61] Gerda Poschmann qtd. in David Barnett, 'Reading and Performing Uncertainty', p. 140--1.

These experiments sowed the seeds of anonymity in late twentieth and early twenty---first century plays --- exemplified in the works of Peter Handke, Heiner Müller, Elfriede Jelinek and Sarah Kane. The way Crimp divorces the language from the speaker generates an inventive form of frustration through a tension between the recognisability of the text and the non--- identity of its speaker with no identified character or name. Crimp's dramaturgical strategy here incorporates a predetermined, familiar language, which suggests that the language emanates from a larger social system rather than from a unique individual. The language is known to all and spoken by all. However, it does not originate from individuals but is given to them by the predominant system in power. This puts the individuality of the speaking subject and his/her autonomous agency into question. Crimp's incorporation of media discourses and aesthetics into the language of the play critically emphasises the role of the media as a part of this social construct, underlying the question of individual subjectivity. It highlights the increasing influence of the media as ideological tools of global capitalism on human consciousness, identity and language.

Crimp's unattributed text presents the reader/audience with a mélange of recognisable discourses and styles taken from a great many sources, some of which give clear references to media forms and their capitalist logic. In the seventh scenario, 'The New Anny', the speakers constitute Anne as a brand---new, sleek, fast car Anny.[62] Crimp uses the discourse of advertising seen or heard every day on television, radio or the internet. The commercial style of the scenario implies the clichés, the capitalist agenda behind adverts, promoting consumerism and a world conforming to the capitalist ideology. It also turns the feminine into a product. What is striking is the unexpected and direct revelation of the ideological underpinnings that adverts normally cover up by presenting capitalist aspirations of luxury, success and security: 'In the ideal world of Anny there are no places for the degenerate races [...] the mentally deficient [...] the physically imperfect' and no room for 'gypsies, Arabs, Jews, Turks, Kurds, Blacks or any of that human scum.'[63] This exposes the hidden messages behind consumerist advertising discourse, the racist undertones of adverts and the mass media in creating a normalized and normalizing image of society.

However, Crimp's overtly identifiable text clashes with the lack of unified characters or attributed speakers of the text. The speakers, without names, age or psychological background, are separated from the text. The use of text---bearers whose language is ideologically predetermined and presented by the media indicates that the speakers are not the originators

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[62] Crimp, *Attempts*, p. 234.
[63] Ibid., p. 237.

of language and meaning. Crimp uses this tension between recognisability and non---identity to address how the media shape perception, drawing attention to their ideological logic and critically highlighting their increasing influence not only on people's consumption habits but also on human agency and identity. The form of language use therefore addresses the changing mode of perception and socio---cultural dynamics of the media---driven, commercialised environment. The playwright enriches the dramaturgical form through the content. This evokes the experience of 'being' in the mediatised culture and sensitises the reader/audience members to their own subjectivity without asserting a fixed viewpoint. Crimp here undermines the certainty of satire form which is traditionally based on referentiality and a definite source and direction. He reconsiders the aesthetics of satire and adapts it to the epistemological uncertainty underlying the form and content of *Attempts* by leaving the source of recognisable texts anonymous. Thus, Crimp subverts the definitiveness of satire without removing the satirical tone. In *Attempts,* while the reader/audience perceives the satire on the capitalistic and racist ideology of the media, he/she cannot pin it down to a specific standpoint. Consequently, the anonymity engenders an open text with multiple possibilities rather than a fixed one with predetermined critical framework. This form of text does not refer to a directionless multiplicity, yet encourages the reader/audience to speculate on the potential readings of the text in relation to what is suggested in the critical framework of the play.

Some scenarios in *Attempts* offer multiple clichés from different sources in various configurations, yet the recognisable dialogues in each continually pose the same question concerning the origin of the language given the absence of characters. In the scenario 'Pornó', Crimp presents the reader/audience with a selection of identifiable discourses and styles different from the focus on a single, media---related discourse and pattern in the seventh scenario. Unlike the unidentified, multiple speakers of 'The New Anny', in 'Pornó' Crimp identifies the principal speaker as *'a very young woman.'*[64] However, despite this, the speaker still functions as a text---bearer rather than an individual character as demanded by the text – she has no name, and the familiar patriarchal discourse of the porn industry that she delivers contradicts what would seem to be her interests. This incongruity between the speaker and text raises the question of how female identity, voice and language are constituted increasingly in accordance with the desires of the dominantly patriarchal discourses of the media, represented here by the porn industry. This does not mean that all media forms and products are based on a patriarchal view, or that female identity is the only constructed one. Rather, the scene highlights the role of the media in disseminating role models and constituting identities that humans adopt.

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[64] Crimp, *Attempts,* p. 269.

The scenario, however, does not continue as one would expect and seems to shift location and speaker, unlike, for example, 'The New Anny'. Later, the language divides into two strands, spoken simultaneously: the language of a heroic narrative and the recorded discourse of aircraft passenger information:

--- Anne will save us from the anxiety of our century...
--- [translation][65]
--- ... and usher in an age in which the spiritual and the material... --- [translation]

--- During the flight ...
--- [translation]
--- ... we will be coming round with a list of duty---free goods.
--- [translation][66]

The use of these recognisable discourses registers them as familiar, yet their anonymity and their irrelevant juxtaposition create an epistemologically unstable context and a sense of unknowingness and instability. This critically speaks to the contemporary humans' sense of disorientation and uncertainty since it presents imagery and information that we think we know well and are in control of yet, at the same time, destabilises this sense of knowingness through a lack of context. There are no direct or overt references to a mediatised world, but the anonymous yet well---known 'global' language of aircraft or adverts refers to the shaping of knowledge and perception on a global scale by the omnipresent media.

Additionally, in the scenarios, 'The Camera Loves You' and 'The Girl Next Door', Crimp uses a lyrical song form where lines are completely unidentified, potentially indicating they are to be sung in chorus. Similar to the unattributed text with dashes, this draws attention to the text and asks from where it emanates. The song in 'The Camera Loves You',[67] for instance, is about media---constructed identities, celebrity culture and the aspiration to become 'a megastar'.[68] The discourse echoes the language of a pop---song or on television (The camera *loves* you[69]), particularly in reality TV programmes such as Big Brother, which promote celebrity culture and encourage housemates to market themselves as commodities. The repetitious use of words and phrases evokes the style of popular song, which Adorno critiques

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[65] The stage direction '[translation]' is used in relation to the opening stage direction in which Crimp suggests that the lines are translated into an African, South American or Eastern European language. Thus, these markers in the text inform the reader/director about the translation of each line.
[66] Crimp, *Attempts,* p. 277.
[67] Ibid., p. 223---4.
[68] Ibid., p. 223.
[69] Ibid., p. 223---4.

as a part of the culture industry.[70] Crimp amplifies the question of autonomous subjectivity and individuality of language by incorporating an intertextual reference to *Hamlet*:

> ALL THE THINGS THAT ANNE CAN BE
> What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba?
> A megastar[71]

Crimp presents a recognisable text to the reader/audience, but again omits the identity of the speaker. Divorcing the text from the speaker here, and in the previous examples, frees language from a particular point of reference and its conventional interpretive limitations, placing it at the centre as a theatrical element on its own. Language becomes the protagonist,[72] a dramaturgical mechanism standing on its own and working within the mechanics of this particular theatre, rather than as an extension of dramatic narrative or characterisation. This underlines how language is not an individual's creation, but constructed by the ruling ideological structures and their apparatuses.

In the above scenarios, the use of media---related discourses and clichés, and the contradiction between recognisability and anonymity dramaturgically and critically accommodate the mediatisation of language, identity and consciousness. They establish a link between the mode of human consciousness and the mode of dramaturgical expression, both based on language and increasingly shaped by the media. This consequently expands the play's capacity to critically engage with and raise awareness of the impact of the media on language, and, by extension, on people's perception and experience of the world and the self.

Crimp, however, does not only present familiar discourses or texts with indefinable speakers. Some scenarios present recognisable languages in linear and coherent dialogues between speakers with rather distinct voices and attitudes, which gives the impression that the characters are talking to each other. For instance, in 'Untitled (100 Words)' the discourse of the speakers constructs them as art critics. They critique the works of an artist exhibiting 'various objects associated with the artist's attempts to kill herself over the past few months',[73] in a clear, linear and coherent dialogue. Every so often, the dialogue is interrupted by a list of words that seem to refer to the artworks the art critics are talking about. The speakers repeat the clichéd phrases of art critics: 'If *any* point is being made at all it's *surely* the point that the

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[70] For Adorno's analysis of popular music see: T. W. Adorno, 'On Popular Music' in *Essays on Music*, trans. by Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley, Los Angeles: California UP, 2002).

[71] Crimp, *Attempts,* p. 223---4.

[72] The notion of 'language as protagonist' (*Sprache als Hauptdarsteller*) is introduced by Gerda Poschmann qtd. in David Barnett, 'Reading and Performing Uncertainty', p. 140---1.

[73] Crimp, *Attempts*, p. 249.

point that's being made is *not* the point and never has in fact *been* the point. It's surely the point that a search for a point is pointless'.[74] The recognisable attitude and language of art criticism, and the naturalistic form they are presented in creates the illusion of the speakers as individual art critics. Similarly, in 'STRANGELY!' the linearly structured dialogue and consistent discourse of the speakers imply that they could be border guards, interrogating a 'nameless woman'.[75] In fact, there is a clear indication of their identities through a descriptive voice before they question the woman: 'the soldiers crowd round this nameless woman with the long grey hair streaked with blood and round the red Cadillac'.[76]

Despite the apparently naturalistic form and indications about the possible groups the speakers belong to, the scenarios themselves leave the definitive identity of the speaking subjects unestablished, and do not anchor the language in individual, named characters. The play remains undetermined and open. There is still, though to a lesser extent, a tension between the text and the speaking subject, which positions the speakers as text---bearers rather than fully---developed characters on the page or on the stage, if the production follows Crimp's dramaturgy. By transmitting this recognisable discourse through predictable yet still indefinable speakers, Crimp engenders frustration about the origin of the familiar voices. Although the reader/audience know that the speakers are soldiers or art critics, they do not know their motives, personal history or psychological background. Crimp restricts the speakers' individuality by withholding information about them and undermining their autonomy over language and thought. This strategy critically addresses the dissolution of the Enlightenment idea of the self---knowing subject more than ever as a result of the increasing media influence and presence.

In these more recognisable scenarios with familiar language and predictable speakers, there is the temptation while reading or performing the play to consider the speakers as characters and attribute individuality to them. This, as will be seen in the analysis of Mitchell's production, would weaken the questions *Attempts* poses concerning the particularity of language and constructedness of identity. The play's consistent refusal to attribute individual names to the speakers and its adherence to anonymity and generality, even in the scenes with a clearer idea of the speakers, is noteworthy.

As the analysis of the scenarios indicates, instead of a single recognisable discourse and style, Crimp blends different familiar discourses and modes from a variety of sources, offering a

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[74] Ibid., p. 251.
[75] Ibid., p. 258.
[76] Ibid., p. 258.

linguistic landscape, a networking of different voices and discourses, in Hans---Thies Lehmann's words, a 'textscape',[77] a theatre of voices that discards 'an originary source/agency of discourse'[78] and multiplies 'sending agencies/sources on stage that lead to new modes of perception.'[79] Elfriede Jelinek takes a similar view through her notion of 'language surfaces' (*Sprachflächen*) which are, as Karen Jürs---Munby explains, 'montages of playfully and deconstructively manipulated quotes from a wide variety of different spheres and genres, including popular culture, the media, philosophy, poetry as well as classical dramatic literature, intermixed with what reads like the author's own 'voice'.[80] Crimp's language surfaces, like those of Jelinek, are striking not simply for their multiplicity of voices and discourses, but also for the deindividualisation of these language surfaces. The de---characterised and pluralistic form of language evokes the anonymity and multiplicity that humans experience in mediatised culture, which inundates them with media images. Crimp's language use critically addresses the increasing dissolution of a sovereign voice and identity. It speaks to the contemporary subject's experience of becoming, not entirely but increasingly more, the products of the consumer---driven, mediatised culture.

Crimp's dramaturgical approaches to language, illustrated here through associative and indirectly denotative, linearly structured texts, problematise the particularity of language by divorcing the text from the speaker. Language is no longer an element of dramatic narrative representing a particular character, but a dramaturgical tool that cuts loose from its conventional interpretive and representational roles. Deindividualised language surfaces undermine fixed critical frameworks or viewpoints, inviting multiple readings on stage and in the auditorium, 'leav[ing] lines to jar, in conversation with themselves and the contexts of their spectators.'[81] Crimp, thus, offers an open text to directors/actors to play with forms of theatrical expression and critical engagement with the questions the play dramaturgically and thematically addresses.

4.1.1. Staging the Unattributed Text

The stage directions at the beginning of *Attempts* indicate that the play is a 'piece for a company of actors whose composition should reflect the composition of the world beyond the theatre.'[82] This open---ended direction can be interpreted as a reference to the ethnic diversity

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[77] Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p. 148.
[78] Ibid., p. 32.
[79] Ibid., p. 32.
[80] Karen Jürs---Munby, 'The Resistant Text in Postdramatic Theatre', p. 46.
[81] Barnett, 'When is a Play not a Drama?', p. 22.
[82] Crimp, *Attempts*, p. 202.

and gendered composition of the cast and the globalised world. It could also relate to the contemporary mediatised world, of the changing perception of reality, the blurring of the distinction between reality and its representation due to the bombardment of media images. Martin Crimp introduces this idea before his stage direction through a quotation from Jean Baudrillard: 'No one will have directly experienced the actual cause [sic] of such happenings, but everyone will have received an image of them.'[83] Crimp's 'reflecting' contemporary culture beyond the limitations of dramatic illusion may seem contradictory in this context because it requires the representation of a world in which representation is increasingly problematic. It could be an ironic comment to directors and actors, inviting them to consider ways to reflect on the mediatised world beyond dramatic representation. Moreover, Crimp's unconventional formal strategies, particularly his inventive dramaturgical rendition of language, present the stage with an open text that subtly asks speech to be processed not on the stage, but in the auditorium.[84]

Attempts opened at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in 1997, directed by Tim Albery. The production, delivered by eight speakers who were not associated with 'characters' as such, elaborated on Crimp's experimental dramaturgy. The actors were chosen to create balance on the stage in terms of gender and nationality (a point to which I return later in this section). The production followed Crimp's suggestion of reflecting the composition of the world beyond the theatre in terms of ethnic and gender diversity. Albery's production reinforced the play's formal and thematic reference to mediatised society by deploying 'video screens, stage screens and photographic montage sequences [that] flicker and change with the efficiency of robots.'[85] This presented an 'artfully cryptic, deliberately inconclusive and depersonalized'[86] experience linked to the implied backdrop of global media hegemony. The actors delivered the lines with clarity and great adherence to the words on the page.[87] Albery structured the presentation of the language in a musical shape, underpinning the variety Crimp's play offers – Albery notes 'if, for example, you had one scene which was an aria, it would be followed by an ensemble, then a duet, and then a quartet.'[88] Albery also gave thought to the multiplicity of discourses that the play significantly incorporates. The production was a musical presentation of 'jingling lists, overlapping dialogues, quasi---Eastern European translations and answer---machine soundbites'.[89]

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[83] Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*, trans. by James Benedict (London: Verso, 1993), p. 80. Martin Crimp misquoted Baudrillard. Correction: Instead of 'cause', Baudrillard uses 'course'.
[84] Barnett, 'When is a Play not a Drama?', p. 18.
[85] Nicholas de Jongh, 'Review on *Attempts*' (*The Evening Standard*), *Theatre Record*, 6: 27 (2007), p. 311.
[86] Roger Foss, 'Review on *Attempts*' (What's On), *Theatre Record*, 6: 17 (1997), p. 313.
[87] Tim Albery qtd. in Aleks Sierz, *The Theatre of Martin Crimp* (London: A & C Black Publishers, 2006), p. 195.
[88] Ibid., p. 196.
[89] Roger Foss, 'Review on *Attempts*', p. 313.

Albery's depersonalised production of *Attempts,* with a focus on its diverse and fragmented styles and discourses in a hi-‑‑tech setting, clearly communicated some of the questions that Crimp raises concerning the pervasive influence of mass media on language and human perception. By treating the scenarios as musical pieces, Albery underlined the multiplicity and non-‑‑linearity of the voices. He also presented the audience with 'repetitiousness and verbal recyclings of most scenes'[90] as well as 'multiple perspectives in sliced-‑‑up prose'[91] on the constantly shifting figure of Anne, consequently, eschewing any naturalistic and easily identifiable theatrical experience and presenting a mosaic, an unsolvable puzzle, of recognisable voices and images via unidentifiable text-‑‑bearers. According to the popular press, the production was 'an enigma in motion [whose] components [were] designed not to imitate a reality you can recognise or to tell you a story you can follow, but to offer you objects for interpretation.'[92] This engendered frustration and epistemological uncertainty on the part of audience, encouraging them to question the particularity of language and the dissolution of individual autonomy, identity and voice in a media-‑‑saturated environment.

Albery's staging technique refused to communicate a cohesive fable or representational action and characterisation on stage. He accommodated the experience of living in mediatised culture and the changing patterns of perception through an innovative theatrical expression. This new theatrical strategy offered a new way of seeing the world and invited the auditorium to process the issues the play suggested through its content and form. Thus, he related the stage to a larger system, the world beyond the theatre: the mediatised environment of the audience. Albery enhanced Crimp's language use and critique by incorporating media technologies and subverting the categories of dramatic theatre.

A decade later, when mass media technologies and discourses had become increasingly prevalent, Katie Mitchell reinterpreted *Attempts* at the Lyttelton Theatre, intensifying Crimp's thematic and dramaturgical references to media culture and society through the pervasive use of cameras, more in number than the actors on the stage. The setting was sparse – just a row of chairs – but the stage was covered in microphones and photo and video cameras. Mitchell's version adhered to Crimp's dramaturgical structure, based on the disconnected juxtaposition of scenarios – fragments of dialogues, events, narratives --- rather than the coherently connected, fixed scenes of dramatic plays. The onstage action was projected live on screens above the stage 'in a huge variety of filming techniques – noirish close-‑‑ups of the feet of a

[90] Alastair Macaulay, 'Review on *Attempts*' (*Financial Times*), *Theatre Record*, 6: 17 (1997), p. 312.
[91] Michael Billington, 'Review on *Attempts*' (*The Guardian*), *Theatre Record*, 6: 17 (1997), p. 312.
[92] John Peter, 'Review on *Attempts*' (*Sunday Times*), *Theatre Record*, 6: 27 (2007), p. 311.

murder victim morph into overlit television commercials and grainy police videos.'[93] The co-presence of the mediatised images and live action generated a metatheatrical effect by presenting the audience with the filming of the scenarios as well as the staging of them.

Critics such as Michael Billington and Alice Jones, received Mitchell's highly technologised production as a reductive approach that overwhelmed the main asset of the play, its language.[94] The linguistic medium and its implications were 'submerged in the whirl of camera-work and pastiches of the X-Files and Nineties music'.[95] Although Mitchell aimed to relate to 'a society in which life is lived through a lens and every action is filtered by the media'[96] through an innovatively technologised stage, the production created a gimmicky effect. The production was focussed more on the technologies than the critical implications of these technologies particularly in relation to the language of the play.

Mitchell was faithful to the text in her approach to the array of cultural discourses; she filled the stage with a collage of TV spoofs, newsreader announcements, songs, a barrage of chat and so forth.[97] However, the ways she staged the unattributed yet familiar texts varied. In some scenarios, such as 'The New Anny', Mitchell asked the actors to deliver the lines without individualising the language, hence the audience did not encounter characters but text-bearers on stage, reinforcing the tension Crimp engenders between recognisability and non-identity, between text and speaking subjects. This enhanced the issue of the particularity of identity and language in an environment where perception is fundamentally influenced by the media. This form of staging opened the text to the auditorium and gave the spectators the space to create their own associations and readings.

However, in presenting the more recognisable and conventionally structured scenarios with linear dialogue and coherent language use, Mitchell tended to treat the speaking subjects as characters. For instance, the scenario 'Untitled (100 Words)' was staged as a parody of the television show, *The Late Review*. The actors pretended to be well-known critics and were dressed as look-alikes of the two presenters of the show, Germaine Greer and Tom Paulin. Mitchell interpreted the scenario in a more traditionally representational manner with direct reference to real life, and overlooked what the play dramaturgically suggested: no matter how much the speakers in these scenarios are identifiable, they are still anonymous channels for particular organizations of discourse. Mitchell's version of *Attempts* engaged with the issue of

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[93] Alice Jones, 'Review on *Attempts*' (*The Independent*), *Theatre Record*, 6: 27 (2007), p. 309.
[94] Michael Billington, 'Review on *Attempts*', p. 312.
[95] Jones, 'Review on *Attempts*', p. 309.
[96] Ibid., p. 309.
[97] Lloyd Evans, 'Review on *Attempts*' (*The Spectator*), *Theatre Record*, 6: 27 (2007), p. 312.

mediatised society to an extent, by accommodating some of its aspects formally and thematically, and responded to the influence of mass media on human perception and language. Moreover, the production used some innovative staging techniques: the juxtaposition of the live and the mediatised, which highlighted the workings of technological media on the stage; and the de---characterisation of actors as text---bearers delivering the recognisable text, which underpinned questions about individual autonomy and the particularity of language. At these points, Mitchell truly opened up the text and the onstage action inviting creative responses and receptions from the auditorium.

Crimp's diverse spectrum of recognisable texts through anonymous speakers in some scenarios proposes an innovative way of relating to the mediatised world where language has become increasingly less particular and individualistic. In the scenarios where text---bearers are less recognisable and identifiable despite their familiar, conversational language, Crimp engenders in the reader/audience epistemological uncertainty about the origin of language, and creates a tension between the text and the speakers, leaving the text with no defined origin or critical direction, yet multiple meanings. Crimp's formal strategy rearticulates the position of language in the theatre as a dramaturgical element in its own right, with limited interpretive or representational roles, rendering the text undetermined and open. This provokes the reader/audience to reconsider their own relationship to language in the contemporary culture, and their unconscious consent to the media's deindividualisation of their perception and language, amongst other symbolic and ideological systems. Finally, Crimp's language dramaturgically acknowledges and responds to the influence of mass media technologies and logic concerning the ways in which human beings perceive, define and relate to the world around them. The play does not simply talk about the mediatisation of language; it speaks through the language of mediatisation itself.

4.2. *Crave*, Language in Fragments: Mapping Human Perception and Relations in the Mediatised World

This section explores Sarah Kane's use of language in *Crave* in the context of its relationship to contemporary culture. It investigates how the use of fragmented and incoherent dialogue, delivered by anonymous speakers, addresses the disoriented subject and the increasing fragmentation and pluralisation of perception and changing nature of social relations.

Crave, a play about loss, pain and desire, is presented by two women and two men, identified only by the letters A, B, M and C. As discussed in section 2.2. and later in 4.1.. The

genealogy of anonymity indicates that the question of individuality and language's inability to define the contemporary world is not a new concern. However, as we shall see, Kane's language use along with the challenging form of *Crave* draws on and furthers previous examples, particularly Beckett.

To begin with, *Crave* gives only fragments of information about each character: M is an older woman who feels affection for the young man B; the young woman C, suffers the memories of an abusive past; the older man A is an abuser, a paedophile. Apart from these loosely implied features, the play provides no fully developed, detailed characterisation through structured dialogue. Instead, Kane's characters 'constantly elude psychological verisimilitude and do not allow us with any certainty to pin down their moral standpoint.'[98] What is striking about *Crave*'s dramaturgy is the fragmented nature of most of the dialogues. The play is structured mainly through dialogues, apart from one long, stream---of---consciousness style monologue. The speakers' lines are scattered; when they speak, the speakers do not necessarily respond or address each other.

> B: Love me.
> A: Guilt lingers like the smell of death and nothing can free me from this cloud of blood.
> C: You killed my mother.
> A: She was already dead.
> M: If you want me to abuse you I will abuse you.
> A: She died.
> B: People die.
> M: It happens.
> C: My entire life is waiting to see the person with whom I am currently obsessed, starving the weeks away until our next fifteen minute appointment.
> A: MNO[99]

Critics such as Karoline Gritzner and Graham Saunders liken Kane's approach to language to the style of Beckett or Eliot, noting a 'musical structure [that] resembles a dramatic poem'.[100] Kane's poetic language evokes not only modern playwrights and poets, but the poetic language of Greek tragedy, in which the rich texture of poetic diction is an essential part of the meaning.[101] Kane's poetic language is a musical, self---reflexive and expressive instrument of fragments, ideas and emotions rather than a mere communicative tool, enabling social contact and transmitting information. The self---reflexive, non---consecutive form of language use draws

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[98] Graham Saunders, 'Love me or Kill me': Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002) p. 9.

[99] Sarah Kane, *Crave* (London: Methuen, 1998), p. 32.

[100] Karoline Gritzner, 'Fading of the Subject in Sarah Kane's Later Work', in *Consciousness, Theatre, Literature and the Arts*, ed. by D. Meyer---Dinkgrafe (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 1999), pp. 249---257, (p. 250).

[101] Charles Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation ofSophocles* (Oklahoma, US: Oklahoma UP, 1999), p. 17.

the attention even more to language as an element in and of itself, undermining its traditional function in dramatic plays to reinforce dramatic illusion and represent a cohesive plot or world. Moreover, lines in the dialogues are separate entities scattered within the text – only occasionally do they seem to relate to each other. This does not generate a cacophony, however. The intercommunication between the lines produces associative rhythms, challenging the reader/audience to combine narrative fragments to grasp the stories of the speakers. Kane's aim is not to generate a consistent narrative style, but, as director Vicky Featherstone explains, 'to find out if you could arrive at meaning through rhythm and whether language could become arbitrary.'[102] In her inventive style, Kane undermines the idea of language as continuous, meaningful, communicative and realistic, as is the implicit case with dramatic plays. Kane's approach generates a rupture in the meaning---making process; it retains and suspends definitive meaning.

The language in *Crave* is intentionally and markedly different from everyday language. Drawing on Beckett's subversion of realistic language to indicate language's inability to define the world in definite terms, Kane crafts language with multiple, indeterminate meanings to create a sense of disorientation, alienation and indifference in the human condition in a postmodern, globalised world. For instance, the non---corresponding lines of the characters suggest an inability to communicate and a sense of disconnectedness and isolation, or a sense of inattentiveness to others. The question of human communication and connection arises even in scenes where there are some corresponding lines, as in the above quote from *Crave*. Despite some consistency, there is predominantly non---correspondence between the speakers. Language in such instances is less communicative; it neither establishes an identifiable connection between the characters, nor does it present a coherent narrative and allow a consistent representation of the characters. There is no direct reference to mediatised culture in the language itself. However, the recurring motifs of alienation and the limited communicative capacity of language evoke the weakening of social relations in the globally connected world. In other words, the disjointed, non---corresponding use of language implicitly suggests modern existence and responds to the human condition and the way people communicate in contemporary culture.

The fragmentary form of language in *Crave* of dispersed utterances and images can also be considered in relation to the ways in which the incessant and multiple flood of media images, sounds and discourses shape human perception and use of language. In some scenes, Kane dissolves the dialogue into a non---consecutive, incoherent and thus unpredictable

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[102] Featherstone qtd. in Saunders, *'Love me or Kill me',* p. 129.

exchange of words:

> M: Every time I have an egg I stick the shell on there and spray it.
> C: She sees through walls.
> B: Will. You. Make. Me. One.
> C: Other lives.
> A: A mother beats her child savagely because it runs out in front of a car.[103]

In this example, the dialogue fails to cohere, to a large extent. Every line, even without a change of speaker, says something different and irrelevant to the preceding or following lines. The style is similar in the extended, uninterrupted monologue, delivered by A,[104] a prolonged and fast--paced outpouring of words, in a stream--of--consciousness style, presenting fragments of memories in a disconnected manner. There is no clearly identifiable narrative; rather, this scene reconfigures language, making it more like musical phrasing, allowing it to communicate rhythm without necessarily identifying the meaning of each individual line, without breaking the associative ties between the utterances.

In the fragmented dialogue and monologue, the language presents a wide range of utterances and images. This form relates to the mode of perception which has become increasingly more multi--perspectival and fragmented due to its continual exposure to an incessant flow of information through the media. Rather than directly referring to media culture or deploying media forms, *Crave* critically addresses mediatised culture through the reconsideration of language use, accommodating the media's impact on human perception and condition. This might not have been Kane's motive. However, rather than her intentions or psychological condition, the focus here is on the text, on how its challenging aesthetics of representation relate to the mode of perception and contemporary socio--cultural reality. Kane produced her work at a time of expanding TV culture, internet and mobile phones, and was, consciously or not, affected by these technologies and the cultural environment they have brought about. It is therefore not unreasonable to consider the form of *Crave* in relation to the changing conditions of consciousness and experience of the contemporary world.

Kane's approach to language use in *Crave* posits associative rather than denotative language, more uncertain than definitive, more multi--referential than unidirectional. Like Crimp, Kane treats language as a medium in its own space, unfettered by conventional interpretive limitations. Her approach provides directors with great latitude in their staging style and approach to the text as performance. David Greig notes about Kane's work: 'In a Kane play the

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[103] Kane, *Crave*, p. 9.
[104] Ibid., p. 17-- 18. The monologue or an extract of it is not given here due to the limited space.

author makes demands but she does not provide solutions."[105] The text thus offers productive grounds for critical treatment and formal experiments, processed and experienced by both stage and auditorium.

4.2.1. Interpretation of the Fragmentary Language on Stage

The 1998 premiere of *Crave*, a Paines Plough production directed by Vicky Featherstone, elaborated on Kane's experimental dramaturgy and acknowledged the implied formal and thematic link to a mediatised context by setting the performance as a TV chat show. Gardner's review describes how the audience 'enters through the circle and is immediately up close and personal with the actors, who sit in four chairs in a line as if taking part in a confessional chat show.'[106] The four actors on their row of chairs throughout the performance, had limited body movements – no more than the quarter---turn of a seat. Thus, as Ian Shuttleworth argues, 'when two of the performers get up and change places it strikes as a theatrical *coup*.'[107] The deliberately restricted level of physicality drew the audience's attention to the words rather than the speaking subjects.

That Featherstone's four chat---show speakers deliver 'a series of disconnected meditations, fluctuating between the intensely personal and the powerfully abstract',[108] can be considered a critical reference to the mediatised world. In addition to the way they speak, Featherstone used this setting to situate the fragmented speech in a context where the audience would recognise the possible motives behind the speakers' utterances. She explains, she and the designer, Georgina Sion, were interested in the themes of psychiatry and psychology in today's society which 'invites us to unburden our emotional baggage'.[109] They also wanted to generate direct eye---contact and an intimate relationship with the audience to acknowledge the audience's presence, diminish the distance between the stage and the auditorium, and invite the spectators to be consciously involved in the theatrical process. The use of the chat---show format produced a metatheatrical experience and increased the consciousness of the audience, allowing their imagination more freedom to interpret the theatrical performance. Moreover, it furthered the implied reference to mediatised culture and the modes of perception that the fragmented, cryptic language reflected.

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[105] David Greig, 'Introduction' in *Sarah Kane Complete Plays*, by Sarah Kane (London: Methuen, 2001), p. xiii.

[106] Lyn Gardner, 'Review on *Crave*' (*The Guardian*), *Theatre Record*, vol. 21 (2001), p. 606.

[107] Shuttleworth, Ian, 'Review on *Crave*' <http://www.compulink.co.uk/~shutters/reviews/98052.htm> [accessed 14 May 2011]

[108] Ken Urban, 'An Ethics of Catastrophe: The Theatre of Sarah Kane', *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 23: 3 (2001), 36---46, (pp. 43).

[109] Vicky Featherstone qtd. in Saunders, *'Love me or Kill me'*, p. 132.

In Featherstone's production, the flatness and uncertainty of Kane's characters was enhanced as the actors 'sometimes deliver remarks to an obvious interlocutor, sometimes to another party, sometimes leave them hanging directionless'.[110] Featherstone approached Kane's language, as suggested by the flow of the text itself, as a musical piece, 'revealing its meanings not line by line but, rather like a string quartet, in the hypnotic play of different voices and themes.'[111] This foregrounded the language as the protagonist, leaving the audience with fragments of speech to process rather than a unified meaningful narrative and definite critical direction. The fragmented form of the language on stage also asked the spectators to question what lies behind the unspoken. It could also generate different reactions in the auditorium. For instance, the disjointed and fast---paced language used on stage astonished some members of the audience, who opined that the rapid presentation of the play did not give them 'space to ponder the language.'[112] This effect, as Featherstone explained, was intentional: 'it was absolutely about creating the rhythm through the communication of the lines to the next person. It wasn't about a member of the audience being able to ponder the meaning of each individual line.'[113] Besides the musical---poetic style and effect, the form of language used in connection with the chat---show format is notable. The rapid presentation of mostly incoherent utterances, each offering different information or perspectives, addresses a fast---paced life style.

The setting and the fragmentary form of the dialogue sometimes presented as quick---fire, allowed the fictional world to address the 'real' mediatised environment, particularly the lack of communication between people and their mediatised and fragmented perception. The mode of theatrical expression in Featherstone's interpretation furthered Kane's dramaturgically innovative and critically responsive aesthetics as it accommodated the social and perceptual reality of the contemporary world. Thus, on stage, *Crave* appeared more overtly a play for the media age, critically addressing the change in modes of perception and human connection in this culture. As Featherstone acknowledges, '*Crave* is definitely born out of the city, with the idea of the loneliness of the person isolated in this massive population.'[114] With its disjointed and incoherent language use, shifting pace and rhythms of speech, indefinite characterisation and unfixed points of reference, the production enhanced the open nature of Kane's work and so, radicalised the role of the spectator, allowing audiences to process the language the stage presented (not represented) and to encourage their own (critical) readings.

In conclusion, in *Crave,* Kane undermines the dramatic mode of linear dialogue and

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[110] Shuttleworth, Ian, 'Review on *Crave*'.
[111] Greig, 'Introduction', p. xiii--- xiv.
[112] Featherstone qtd. in Saunders, *'Love me or Kill me'*, p. 131.
[113] Ibid., p. 131.
[114] Ibid., p. 129---130.

language use, and destabilises the interpretive limitations of language in theatre. The language rejects totality and coherency as a model of the real. Instead, through disjointed fragments of narrative with indifferent, unspecified speakers Kane's language presents an incoherent, unfixed and fragmented perception of the world. This analysis shows how the form of language relates to the changing form of human consciousness, its increasingly fragmented and pluralistic mode, and the increasing frailty of human relations in contemporary culture. This section established how Kane's language use goes beyond its already acknowledged poetic aspect or as a manifestation of the playwright's interior state. Rather, the innovative form of language foregrounds the play's critical response to the current social and cognitive reality. Language therefore becomes a critical tool, exposing the embedded form of mediatisation and its perceptual and social implications.

The following section offers another perspective of the indirect mediatisation of language and the changing socio---cultural environment in the media age. It investigates the changing linguistic landscape in the globally connected world through the use of foreign languages and the positioning of English in comparison to these languages in *Attempts*. Following the analysis of Crimp's play and its stage productions, I briefly refer to the use of foreign languages in *Crave*. As will be discussed, in Kane's play polyglossia functions mainly as a formal strategy to reinforce the fragmented text rather than raise questions about the globalised world, the central subject of this section.

4.3. Dramaturgical Reflections on Language in a Globally Mediatised World: English as Lingua Franca in a Polyglossical Environment

Globalisation is variously defined but fundamentally related to the concept of (inter---) connectedness and thus mediatisation. One prevalent definition identifies globalisation as a process through which the world has become a smaller and more closely connected place due to rapid advancements in transportation, information and mass---media technologies.[115] In this shrinking world, the understanding of time and physical distance has changed. Also, different cultures interact with each other and have also become accessible to larger numbers of people.[116] Besides environmental and cultural interconnectedness, globalisation refers to an economic, political and ideological phenomenon, the extension of capitalism, under neo---

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[115] For further information, see: David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1990). Particularly see, Part III, 'The Experience of Space and Time', p. 201--- 284.
[116] For further information, see: Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press/ Basil Blackwell, 1990).

liberal policies, on a global scale, fostering consumerism and cultural standardisation.[117] As ideological apparatuses, the mass media perform many functions for global capitalism, monopolised for the most part, by Anglo---American, European and Japanese corporations. Despite the multinational status of corporations, they take their lead from Anglo---American management systems hence foster English as the dominant, common language across borders for international business. English has become the language of the globalised world – 'the first global lingua franca.'[118]

The dominance of English, as Stig Hjarvard points out, is nothing new, but a centuries---long trend following British imperial colonisation.[119] However, in today's world it is mainly due to American economic power. A significant difference today is the use of English in mass media and information technologies, which have rapidly disseminated English and its consumerist discourse to the world, borders and cultures notwithstanding. English is the language of computer games, the internet, blockbuster films and international political, legal and commercial documents. English is a global lingua franca in a monoglossic environment where 'international English' with many dialects and spoken by non---native speakers dominates society and culture. This does not mean the end of cultural and linguistic diversity. Monoglossia does not exclude other languages, but a hierarchical tendency over polyglossia. The globally---connected world is not an English---speaking world but a polyglossic world where different cultures and local languages interact and are not bound to disappear in the shadow of English, but to be dominated by it.

Martin Crimp's *Attempts* engages with these issues by incorporating foreign languages into some scenarios, and critically positioning English in relation to these languages. The way Crimp restructures language use evokes Marvin Carlson's view on language under globalisation, likening it to a 'pool', which 'is no longer, if it ever was, the kind of uniform and stagnant carp pond'.[120] *Attempts* has two scenarios – 'The New Anny' and 'Pornó' – incorporating different languages through translation of the lines. The play does not have the lines in foreign languages themselves, but a marker '[translation]' after every line where the foreign language should be placed in performance. Crimp's dramaturgical technique has two significant aspects in relation to the changing linguistic landscape in the globally mediatised world: the direction of the translation and the choice of language. First, it is important to note

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[117] For further information, see: Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991); Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi, *The Cultures of Globalization* (USA: Duke UP, 2003)
[118] Crystal, Language and the Internet, p. 1.
[119] Hjarvard, 'The Globalization of Language', p. 77.
[120] Marvin A. Carlson, *Speaking in Tongues: Language at Play in the Theatre,* (Michigan, Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 2006), p. 179.

that the play's interest in globalisation and mediatisation is not just dramaturgical, but also critical. Recurring motifs in the play refer to the circumstances of today's globally mediatised world, such as terrorism, consumerism, disorientation, the uncertainty of location and time, relating to time---space compression in a highly technologised, global world. Some thematic elements, analysed in this section, complement the multilingual approach in these two scenarios.

In 'The New Anny', composed as a commercial for a brand---new car, the lines are initially uttered in an African or Eastern European language, and then translated into English. The direction of translation, intentionally requiring every phrase to be finally spoken in English, indicates its dominant position in relation to the 'other', initial language. That is, the line is only complete once it has been successfully rendered in English. What is also striking is that the use of English as the dominant language alongside the capitalist commercial discourse could be read as a reference to English as global lingua franca and the language of global capitalism. The translation underlines how mass media conglomerates, operating globally, render English as the common language whilst also subtly instilling capitalist and consumerist ideas. The scenario critically highlights English not only in a common linguistic context, enabling information transmission across the world or intercultural communication; it is also an ideological, linguistic mechanism homogenising socio---economic and cultural differences and shaping human perception in line with consumerism.

The thematic content and the commercial context of the scenario reinforce the reference to the globally mediatised, capitalist world that the form of translation presents. By setting the scene as a car advert, Crimp uses the discourse of advertising, of selling, promoting 'Anny the car' by describing its features in typically glowing terms. One aspect the advert implies is that Anny is a mass---produced global product: 'The *Anny* crosses the Brooklyn Bridge [...] the Sahara [...] the vineyards of Bordeaux [...] dawn through North African villages'.[121] This indicates an imperialist undertone – the advert is not just selling the Anny locally, but to the world underlining the global mobility of the Anny as a commodity. This does not mean that the Anny is available to everyone. The advert hints that the car is only for the elite, offering an uncontaminated world and 'affirm[ing] what is repressed by the slick dreams of beauty, luxury and security designed to make the car attractive to buyers.'[122] When considered in relation to the critique of global capitalism through the direction of translation, attributing the dominant position to English, this criticises the globally mediatised world, focussing on the linguistic

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[121]Crimp, *Attempts*, p. 237.
[122] Zimmermann, 'Martin Crimp, *Attempts on Her Life*', p. 121.

aspect of globalisation, a polyglossic landscape, where English reigns as the global lingua franca through today's TV culture, adverts and so on.

Crimp's critical picture of global capitalism and his use of capitalist discourse are underpinned by the incorporation of the foreign languages into the scenario. The use of other languages supports the view that consumerist ideology is universal, but Crimp's specific choice of languages of developing areas such as Africa or Eastern Europe rather than France, Germany or Japan underlines how the economically powerful countries rule global capitalism. The world is now one place where the ruling ideology dominates almost every corner of the globe, turning it into a 'global village' of people with common mindsets. The incorporation of African and Eastern European languages highlights how the cultures, other than those of the Anglo---American powers, adapt to the common social and linguistic forms without disappearing from the cultural landscape.

Although Crimp implies a critical context in his use of different languages, he does not clarify the reason behind the need for translation. This is, of course, intentional. The unexplained need for translation is a dramaturgical strategy, reinforcing the epistemological uncertainty that the play generates through narrative discontinuity and the tension between recognisable texts and unidentifiable speakers. It is a critical tool that gives the audience space to speculate on the reason for translation and invites them to question the implications of the multilingual form in relation to the above---mentioned thematic motifs and issues the play thematises.

The other scenario incorporating foreign language is 'Pornó'. Here, the translation changes direction and the choice of languages is slightly different: the words of the principal speaker, a very young woman, '*are translated dispassionately into an African, South American or Eastern European language.*'[123] Considering the direction of translation in this scenario compared to 'The New Anny', it could seem that the positioning of a third---world language as the ultimate language implies subordinate status for English. However, the intentional change in the direction of translation could be a formal strategy to underpin the role and authority of English. That is, the order of translation locates English as the leading, common language that the media such as television, the internet, virtual social networks or international news broadcasts use to connect different cultures and to transmit information. English is the mother language of the media and information technologies through which people in the mediatised environment experience the world. It is not only common linguistic ground enabling

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[123] Crimp, *Attempts,* p. 269.

intercultural communication, but also the language through which information is disseminated to the world. Other languages appear as the impartial or *dispassionate* providers of information transferred from English.

The suggestion of objective dissemination of information --- from the language of global capitalism to that of local cultures --- as opposed to the capitalist discourse of the scenario works as a critical tool. That is, the dispassionate tone creates the image of impartial information flow; however, language is the language of the culture industry, shaping worldviews, rather than a transparent tool for communication and information transmission. This emphasises the fundamental relationship between power and language. Additionally, it underlines that the global lingua franca does not generate an exclusive monoglossic world; on the contrary, it acknowledges the existence of other languages. It is a polyglossic world with different languages, voices and sounds, where English acts as the common language.

Similar to the previous scenario, Crimp leaves the motive for translation obscure and asks directors, actors and readers/audiences to speculate on possible explanations, and draws attention to the languages and the way they are used, rather than to the 'character' speaking the lines. Language appears as the focus for critique in itself, opening the text to multiple readings rather than restricting it to a single ideological perspective. Language is no longer an element taken for granted in dramatic narrative. On the contrary, it is an open mechanism with diverse directions and meanings that invite both stage and auditorium to process its multifarious themes.

4.3.1. Interpreting Polyglossia on Stage

This dramaturgical experiment with language and its critical concern with globalisation also affects the style of performance. The utterance and translation of the lines can be delivered through several speakers, free from the limitations of ethnic, linguistic or sexual background. For instance, the racist discourse of the advert in the seventh scenario delivered by a black or Middle---Eastern actor would increase the ironic disjunction between speaker and spoken. Also, a performance that integrates a European language (besides English) as opposed to an African or Eastern European language that Martin Crimp suggests in the stage directions would change the critical impact of the text. It would potentially undermine the critical tension and tone that Crimp's choice of languages and mode of translation create, and thus it would generate a different critical reading. Furthermore, the role of the media in global capitalism Crimp underlines, for example, by constituting the seventh scenario as an advert for a car, can

be directly performed on stage by presenting the advert as a TV commercial or an Internet advertisement. It is not essential to use technology on stage to accommodate this relationship or critique mediatisation since the dramaturgical structure of *Attempts*, albeit indirectly, suggests a compelling formal and critical response to media---saturated cultures and mindsets. As Crimp's innovative strategies open the text to multiple readings on stage, the scenario could be staged to encourage unconventional or postdramatic aesthetics of the play, but these could also be suppressed to generate a more traditionally dramatic interpretation.

In his interpretation of *Attempts*, Tim Albery used Portuguese and Serbian[124] and integrated different English accents into the performance.[125] The use of foreign languages on the stage as Mary Luckhurst argues, 'allow[ed] scope for the insertion of topical local and global politics'.[126] Similarly, Roger Foss reads it as a 'perspective on the underlying violence of late twentieth---century corporate global hegemony'.[127] Although most reviews saw the use of foreign languages as a reference to the globalised world, they did not necessarily question the structure of its multilingual composition or implications about the increasing dominance of English over other languages and cultures. Critics also failed to acknowledge the use of consumerist media discourses juxtaposed to the use of foreign languages. One reason could be the use of Portuguese, instead of an African or Eastern European language, since these languages would underline critical concern with globalisation as a system of cultural hegemony, something that is not so readily evident in the use of Portuguese, the language of a Western country that used to be a colonial power, largely in Africa.

Katie Mitchell's production staged the seventh scenario in Russian, before translating it into English. The scene was set in a location suggestive of a news studio: the Russian speaker delivered the lines live on stage while being simultaneously projected onto a screen. Her words were simultaneously translated into English. The choice of Russian could be for practical reasons, but it also evokes the global impact of capitalism contrasting with the communist history of Russia. It therefore speaks to the experience of globalised capitalism and emphasises its global influence. By creating the television context on stage and employing a language other than English, Mitchell underpinned the play's critical concern with mediatised globalisation. Moreover, the TV setting, and concurrent live and mediatised presentation of the text involved the audience in a multi---layered narrative, a metatheatrical experience highlighting the

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124 Tim Albery chose to balance genders with four men and four women; in terms of nationality, he selected five British actors, a Portuguese, a Nigerian and a Serbian actor. One actor, the Nigerian, was black.
125 Sierz, The Theatre of Martin Crimp, p. 196.
126 Mary Luckhurst, 'Political Point---Scoring: Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life*', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 13: 1 (2003), 47---60, (pp. 52).
127 Roger Foss, 'Review on *Attempts*' (What's On), *Theatre Record*, 6: 17 (1997), p. 313.

constructedness of both the televised presentation and the live, on-‑-stage action. Mitchell's use of a self-‑-reflexive, multi-‑-lingual presentation by unnamed speakers refused to provide the audience with a singular critical context or a definitive direction or meaning. Instead, the production sensitised the audience to the artifice of theatre and invited them to see the diverse implications of the staging technique and the text in a new light, and to create their own assumptions about what they were watching.

Mitchell's staging of 'Pornó' responded to the tension Crimp generated between recognisable discourse and unidentifiable speakers by asking the actors to deliver the text, rather than enact it. The focus was on the languages as theatrical tools in their own right rather than on the words of a character, leaving the audience face to face with the direct presence of impersonated languages. As in the staging of 'The New Anny', Mitchell used Russian as the second language in this scenario, but did not create a mediatised setting. The use of the same foreign language served the play's critical focus on global consumerism and the universal issue of a consumerist and patriarchal porn industry. However, the critical impact might have been more powerful if Mitchell had used one of the languages Crimp suggested, which would expand the global context of the play rather than limit the critical readings of the audience to a specific language and culture alongside English.

Like Crimp, Kane in *Crave* deploys foreign languages, but differently from Crimp and also for different ends. Kane uses seven phrases in Spanish, Serbo-‑-Croatian and German in line with the fragmented form of the text. The lines in different languages are scattered with no linearity or conventionally logical sequence and connection to the previous or following utterances:

> B: The woman with dragon eyes.
> A: Blue into green.
> C: All blue.
> A: I don't have music, Christ I wish I had music but all I have is words.
> B: Du bist die Liebe meines Lebens.[128]

Moreover, the lines in foreign languages are not translated into English in the text, though Kane provides a list of translations as an endnote to the play. It could be argued that the use of foreign languages in *Crave* does not necessarily relate to the globally mediatised world. These instances suggest Kane's themes of alienation, disorientation, loneliness, despair and the frailty of human relations are universal matters. This is clearly different from the reference to the globalised, consumerist world Crimp suggests through the use of particular foreign languages

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[128] Kane, *Crave*, p. 20.

and different models of translation which imply the predominance of English over other languages and cultures in the globalised world.

Kane's multilingual structure functions to underpin the fragmented text that renders the language more associative than denotative. The utterances in foreign languages – divorced from individual characters and without meaningful motivations or reference points --- highlight language as a dramaturgical element in and of itself. Language is separated from the speaker and freed from its interpretive limitations. In this respect, Kane's use of foreign language evokes the avant---garde 'language poets' who foreground the materiality of language, draw attention to the workings of language itself and recognise sentences as sentences in a language rather than as poetic voices or 'sentences representing propositions'.[129] Language poets 'eschew any "finite interpretation," any singular myth"[130] or single interpretation. They present language as an open object to be re---written in a process of re---interpretation. This usage subverts the traditional idea of language as a communicative, complete, individual system, making it unfamiliar and so inviting further writing and interpretation. Similarly, in *Crave* foreign languages are used without intelligible underlying propositions, incomprehensible to readers/audiences who do not know the language and open to creative interpretations.

Kane's dramaturgical approach, based on sporadic, non---consecutive use of phrases in different languages, functions in relation to the fragmented form of language. As the analysis in section 4.2. argued, this form speaks to the fragmented and multi---perspectival mode of perception and weakening of human relations in mediatised culture. *Crave* does not relate the use of foreign languages to the globalised, capitalist world by pushing the formal strategy further from the fragmented form as Crimp did through different directions of translations. However, as suggested here, the multilingual form underlines the universality of the transformation in consciousness and social relations, generating 'a distinctly international consciousness [which] takes the personal and places it in a global context.'[131]

Vicky Featherstone's stage production of *Crave* did not follow Kane's deliberate exclusion of translation from the text. The lines were translated immediately after being uttered, because the director thought that it was important and necessary to know what the lines mean: 'If you don't know where that's come from, but you understand the words, you

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[129] Oren Izenberg, *Being Numerous: Poetry and the Ground ofSocial Life* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2011), p. 162.
[130] Sandra Kumamoto Stanley, *Louis Zukofsky and the Transformation of a Modern American Poetics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California UP, 1994), p. 170.
[131] Urban, 'An Ethics of Catastrophe: The Theatre of Sarah Kane', p. 43.

understand the image it evokes."[132] This, to a certain extent, vitiated the sense of uncertainty that *Crave* generates through language, yet still retained the fragmentary and incoherent form of the text, as Rhoda Koenig comments: 'And the solemnly uttered foreign phrases ("You are like a Wednesday" in Spanish; "It's neither in my pocket nor out of it" in Serbo-Croat) make one think, "Why not 'Yes, we have no bananas' in Swahili?'".[133] Kane highlights the materiality of language through the incomprehensible and inconsistent mode of foreign phrases. Featherstone furthered Kane's style and integrated these utterances in English sporadically, highlighting the workings of the language and onstage action, and undermining the interpretive role of language in dramatic theatre. Featherstone opened the stage to multiple critical readings, increasing audience's critical awareness of the potential implications of the form and content, the said and the unsaid on the stage.

The discontinuous presentation of foreign phrases generated a lack of meaningful totality, as befitting the works of Ionesco or Beckett in the Theatre of the Absurd, as well as a sense of disorientation. It could also be a means to highlight the universality of the subject matter the play deals with --- the sense of disillusionment, isolation and broken interiority of the contemporary human, and the experience of displacement. Nevertheless, like the text, the performance offers no direct link to the mediatised, globalised world. Featherstone's interpretation of the foreign phrases adhered to what Kane proposed on the surface: a fragmented and multi-lingual form, subverting traditional dramatic representation, rendering the stage self-reflexive and perhaps emphasising the universality of the themes. The production seems not to have considered the aesthetics of language-use beyond the themes mentioned above. Hence, it stopped short of reconsidering the aesthetics of theatrical expression to enable the stage to address the cultural and perceptual landscape of the globalised world.

To conclude this section, the use of foreign languages in *Attempts* and the different positionings of English in relation to these languages critically responded to the linguistic and cultural context of the globally mediatised, capitalist world. Multi-lingual dramaturgy exposes two significant aspects of globalisation: multiculturalism and global capitalism or cultural hegemony. On the one hand, the use of foreign languages refers to the polyglossic socio-cultural landscape of the globally connected world. On the other, the directions of the translations, which differ in both scenarios, ironically highlight English as the 'master language'. With this formal strategy, in addition to the use of media-related discourses, Crimp

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[132] Featherstone in conversation with G. Saunders, *'Love me or Kill me'*, p. 130.

[133] Rhoda Koenig, 'Review on *Crave*' (*The Independent*), *Theatre Record,* Issue 10, vol. XXI (2001), p. 609.

emphasises the consumerist ideology underlying the use of English as the language of commerce, technology, and mass media. The critical reference to the globalised world is neither merely formal, nor linguistic. The thematic concerns of the scenarios with their capitalist and discriminatory discourse of commercials, and the patriarchal and consumerist discourse of the pornography industry, suggest a critique of global capitalism.

Crimp's approach does not deploy language only as a critical tool, but also a formal one. The languages and translations are still delivered by anonymous speakers, or text---bearers, which generates an epistemologically problematic situation for readers/audiences since they cannot identify who is speaking the lines or why the dialogues are translated into or from various languages. This liberates language from its representational limits or interpretive function and leaves the audience with multiple directions and conclusions to reach in processing the language. The unidentified speakers and unclear reasons for the use of different languages and directions of translation give the audience space to interpret the workings and implications of a globally connected, capitalist world and with their possibly unreflected consent to it. On the other hand, Kane's sporadic use of different languages works chiefly in association with the fragmented form of the text, emphasising the universality of the transformation in human perception and social relations. Kane's multilingual aesthetics therefore does not suggest a link to the phenomenon of globalisation. Like in *Attempts*, the discontinuous presentation of foreign phrases in *Crave* undermines categories of dramatic plays, such as unified plot and dialogue, and the interpretive limitations of dramatic theatre. It foregrounds the workings of language and opens the text to multiple readings on the stage and in the auditorium.

5. Conclusion: Reviewing the Mediatised Dramaturgy of Language

This chapter investigated whether and how a play as a form addresses the changing mode of language use as reflecting the social and perceptual situation of the mediatised culture. The analysis focused on three plays – *Closer*, *Attempts* and *Crave* – each with different perspectives on language, and examined the critical implications of these dramaturgical approaches. The chapter suggests that the capacity of a play to critically relate, respond to, and raise awareness of mediatised culture through language is not necessarily based on direct incorporation of medialect, but on a linkage between the mode of language and the mode of human life and consciousness in the mediatised age.

In *Closer*, Patrick Marber integrates netspeak into the language of the play in the third scene and also other media---related linguistic aesthetics throughout the play (e.g. underlined

phrases). He incorporates this new mode of language in line with the dramatic form of the play through linear and coherent dialogues, which enhances the dramatic illusion of the world as a unified whole rather than sabotaging it and suggesting something more radical. *Closer* illustrates thematic engagement with the human condition and relations in media culture and reinforces its content through medialect, suggesting a direct reference to this environment. However, the positioning of these elements mostly in line with the aesthetics and logic of dramatic representation generates incongruity between the world it critically refers to and the one it represents. In other words, despite its relevant themes and direct reference to mediatisation, *Closer* stops short of accommodating the changing social and perceptual conditions shaped by the media, whilst attempting to critique them. It remains limited in its critical ability to raise awareness about a social reality beyond the characters.

On the other hand, Martin Crimp's *Attempts* and Sarah Kane's *Crave* propose innovative dramaturgical approaches to language that indirectly address various aspects of mediatisation. Their modes of dramaturgical expression suggest an implicit reference to media culture. But Crimp's and Kane's language use and their critical ends differ in a variety of ways. Crimp focuses on two aspects of the condition and use of language in view of mediatisation relating to the social processes in the late-‑‑capitalist, globalised world: language as an ideologically oriented media-‑‑construct and the globalisation/Anglicisation of language in the multi-‑‑lingual global village. Crimp presents the reader/audience with recognisable dialogues uttered by unidentifiable speaking subjects to draw attention to the question of where the language comes from, if not the speaker. The question of the individual particularity of language emerges even in the relatively conventional and more easily identifiable scenarios where speakers could be treated as characters. Crimp's use of specific media-‑‑related, consumerist discourses in some scenarios presents a critical response to the question by implying that language is constructed through symbolic-‑‑ideological systems such as the media rather than individuals. Divorcing language from speakers foregrounds questions of individual identity and agency, which Chapter 3 analyses in detail.

Crimp also restructures the play's language by incorporating foreign languages into the text and proposing different configurations for translating utterances into these languages. The translations are either into or from the English language, positioning non-‑‑English languages as either being directed towards or away from English. This mode of language use establishes English as a master language, which is not to say it excludes the presence of other languages, but reinforces the dominance of English over them. This, along with the consumerist and media-‑‑related discourses of the two scenarios, critically addresses global capitalism and the

role of the media in this process, monopolising language whilst connecting people and cultures across the globe.

Crave, on the other hand, uses neither a medialect, nor does the context evoke aspects of mediatised culture. Rather, the play presents the fragmented interiority, loneliness and despair of four people whose identities are purposely left vague. It might be considered that reading the play as relating to the mode of perception and human condition in the mediatised society is far--fetched or that this kind of perspective on the play and the use of language have nothing to do with Kane's poetic style, experimental aims, and intentional or unintentional psychological self--portraiture. Nevertheless, I have read the plays against that grain to further question dramaturgical structures in relation to the socio--cultural and cognitive environment in which they were produced. Kane's fragmented language speaks to the altered perceptual processes in mediatised culture. Kane wrote her plays at a time when mobile phones and the internet had begun to pervade everyday life, so it is not misleading to argue that Kane was influenced by these circumstances and, perhaps unconsciously, reflected this in the aesthetics of her dramaturgical expression.

In *Crave* the dialogues are principally non--linear and disjointed sections whereby the utterances do not link or respond to one another. The speaking subjects do not have individual names; they are identified with letters. Throughout the play, they scatter pieces of stories and speak a fragmented language pointing in indefinite directions to multiple meanings. The disjointed form of utterances and the indifference of the speakers towards each other address the increasing alienation of humans in modern society. It critically accommodates the contradictory effect of mass media on human relations – that technologies of mass communication render people less connected, not more. Although Kane does not overtly suggest a media--related context, the dramaturgical structure and language use offer a critical response to the impact of the media on consciousness and interpersonal relationships.

Despite their different formal approaches to language and interest in different aspects of mediatised society, *Attempts* and *Crave* share some common aims, aspects and effects in performance. Both plays problematise conventional dramatic form by destabilising fundamental tenets such as linear dialogue and narrative, dramatic characterisation, and the close connection between text and character. The unconventional formal strategies in these plays reconsider the role of language and restructure it as inconsistent, unidentified and fragmented. Both reposition language as a dramaturgical element in its own right without interpretive limitations or definitive individual sources or critical direction. They refuse to

accept a linguistic landscape that makes totality the model of the real. Instead, they suggest a fragmented, pluralist, and epistemologically problematic experience which corresponds to aspects of a mediatised culture. The form of the plays, which undermine the traditional categories of dramatic plays, opens the texts to multiple interpretations on the stage and in the auditorium. In so doing the plays prepare the ground for the audience's critical awareness, inviting them to question not only what they experience in the theatre, but also to reflect on their unconscious or unthinking consent to the environment they live in and the language through which they define and experience the world.

One question this chapter gestures towards is what happens to the notion and experience of individual subjectivity, once everyday life and human consciousness are extensively shaped by the media? This raises the further question of whether plays can address such changes in the experience of the self and individual identity through their form. These questions lead to the subject matter of Chapter 3: the mediatised subject and changing dramaturgical approaches to character and to the character---actor relationship.

CHAPTER 3

Rethinking Character Presentation: Mapping the Subject in Mediatised Culture

We are becoming fluid and many---sided. Without quite realizing it, we have been evolving a sense of self appropriate to the restlessness and flux of our time.[1]

It is self---evident that as the basic tools of representation and subjectivity are changing so should our manners of creating, teaching and researching theatre.[2]

1. Aim and Context of the Chapter

This chapter explores the ways in which character presentation in specific plays has evolved in relation to the changing experience of the self and interpersonal relations with respect to mediatisation. In this chapter, I refer to this changing state of subjectivity as the *mediatised subject,* which denotes not a new subject model or theory, but a way of emphasising the condition of 'being' in today's multiply mediatised landscape (see section 2). The chapter argues that there is a tendency in contemporary plays to experiment with the concept of character, particularly to suspend dramatic characterisation --- consciously or unconsciously --- in relation to the mediatised subject. For instance, playwrights such as Elfriede Jelinek, Heiner Müller, René Pollesch, Martin Crimp, Deborah Levy, Caryl Churchill, Dennis Kelly, Sarah Kane, Simon Stephens and Tim Crouch have put forward new perspectives on character presentation that destabilise conventional characterisation grounded in psychological realism and the idea of the human as a coherent, sovereign being in plays and, by extension, in the world.

This chapter concentrates on this shift in characterisation in Tim Crouch's *My Arm* (2003) and *An Oak Tree* (2005) by examining Crouch's texts and stage productions, and in Simon Stephens's *Pornography* (2007) in relation to its German world premiere and English production (2008) by Sean Holmes. I have chosen these works as case studies because they provide intriguing ways of rethinking character presentation in text and on stage at a time when 'there is no longer anything "out there," or anyone "in here," to imitate'.[3] The focus on

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[1] Robert Jay Lifton, The Protean Self: Human Resilience in an Age of Fragmentation (New York: Basic Books, 1993), p.1.
[2] Matthew Causey, 'A Theatre of Monsters: Live Performance in the Age of Digital Media', in *Theatre in Crisis?: Performance manifestos for a new century*, ed. by in Maria M. Delgado and Caridad Svich (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002), pp. 179---183, (p. 180.)
[3] Elinor Fuchs, The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theater after Modernism (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996), p. 170.

the British productions demonstrates the British take on the question of mediatised subjectivity, while the analysis of the German production provides insight into a different, formally more radical context due to a financially more secure system.[4] Crouch's staging of his plays addresses the increasingly fluid and heterogeneous condition of the mediatised subject by blurring the boundaries between the fictional character and the physically 'real' actor through an unconventional staging of his relatively traditional dramatic plays. The analysis of Crouch's character/actor model draws specifically on aspects of posthumanism, theorising the hybrid and pluralistic state of postmodern subjectivity in relation to the media.

Stephens's characterisation in *Pornography* subverts the dramatic notion of character, with characters more like silhouettes than three---dimensional, unified characters: incomplete, unspecified and underdeveloped. *Pornography* presents an anonymous and fragmented structure with unidentified characters, detached from each other, rather than individual characters, connected through a coherent narrative. Stephens's characterisation suggests a critical response to such social phenomena as individualisation, deindividuation (terms I return to in section 2), and the objectification of the human and the weakening of human relations in the mediatised culture.

Before examining the inventive dramaturgical approaches to characterisation and their critical and theatrical implications, some fundamental points need to be considered. The next section presents an overview of conceptions of the self that have reacted against dominant notions of the liberal humanist subject since the Enlightenment. This suggests that the model of the liberal humanist subject, which considers the human being as a unified, sovereign individual separate from social and cultural factors, is no longer relevant to the human condition and subjectivity in mediatised culture. Fundamentally, human beings have become increasingly less autonomous as their everyday lives and perception have been shaped greatly (but not exclusively) by the media. Thus, theories analysing the historical shift from liberal humanism

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[4] The German theatre system (the *Stadttheater*) is supported fundamentally by large state subsidy. Theatres in Germany 'receive open---ended funding from the cities and states' (Goethe Institut Website), and 'recoup roughly 10% of their income through ticket sales; the rest is provided by the state through its cities and the regions.' (Barnett, 153) On the other hand, British theatre is a highly commercialised institution where 'the subsidies offered by the Arts Council of England (ACE), the largest arts funder in the UK, are embarrassingly meager.' (Barnett, 157) While the ACE and the National Lottery are planning to invest roughly £2 billion on arts by 2015 (ACE website), the city of Berlin provides just under €1 billion in annual arts subsidies. (*Spiegel*) For further information, see: David Barnett, '"I've been told [...] that the play is far too German": The Interplay of Institution and Dramaturgy in Shaping British Reactions to German Theatre', in *Cultural Impact in the German Context: Studies in Transmission, Reception, and Influence*, ed. by Rebecca Braun and Lyn Marvin (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2010), pp. 150---166; David Ashley Hughes, 'Notes on the German Theatre Crisis', *The Drama Review*, 51:4 (2007), 133---155 (pp. 149). Also see: Goethe Institut website: http://www.goethe.de/kue/the/tst/en10308845.htm
Spiegel: http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/declines---in---funds---and---space---threaten---berlin---arts---scene---a---824497.html
ACE: http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our---investment/#sthash.thqpDPBr.dpuf

to a less autonomous subject model are specifically germane to the purpose and content of the analysis. Following this, the theoretical background to this chapter provides a brief and necessarily selective account of previous approaches to characterisation and the character---actor relationship to appreciate the changing mode of character presentation.

2. Reviewing Shifting Notions of the Self and the Mediatised Subject

> Living beings do not belong to a uniquely organic domain anymore. Our bodies are now made of machines, images and information: We are becoming cultural bodies.[5]

2.1. Towards the Mediatised Subject

The notion of the mediatised subject is best understood through an overview of subjectivity since the rise of liberal humanism in the Enlightenment. That said, the concept of a unique and stable inner self is rooted in Western cultural tradition that predates the Renaissance and Enlightenment. For instance, Plato's concept of the reality of pure ideas and knowledge was derived from a belief in the transcendence of an inner self. Aristotle's philosophy, similarly, referred to a sophisticated formulation of the workings of the individual's mind.[6] Medieval thinkers, on the other hand, expanded the idea of pure self beyond the realms of the mind through concepts of the soul and the emotions, whilst in the pre---Enlightenment era, René Descartes' *cogito* then proposed the separation of the thinking mind from the material body. The Cartesian individual exists prior to and independent of society, divine authority and other external forces. Descartes sees the human subject as self---determining with an ultimate disembodied autonomy that is the sovereign centre of knowledge and will. Following Descartes' model, Immanuel Kant and Edmund Husserl's transcendental ego foregrounds the superiority of reason over emotion, and considers the self as fundamentally unchanging and sovereign. Enlightenment and post---Enlightenment liberal humanist positions predominantly see the human (generally, and thus normatively, male) as a self---governing agent and originator of his own actions and thoughts. This subject has a unique existence and a particular character, separate from and superior to other non---human animate and inanimate beings.

In the 19th century, the liberal humanist idea of the subject started to dissolve following socio---cultural and economic events, particularly the Industrial Revolution. Emerging philosophies challenged the sovereign subject from different perspectives. Following Karl Marx, Marxist thinkers focus on the construction of a sense of self through cultural

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[5] Ollivier Dyens qtd. in Steve Dixon, Digital performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance art, and Installation (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), p. 149.

[6] Kenneth J. Gergen, 'Technology and the Self: From the Essential to the Sublime', in *Constructing the Self in a Mediated World*, ed. by Debra Grodin and Thomas R. Lindlof (London: SAGE, 1996), pp. 127---141, (p. 127).

conventions, socio---economic practices and political relations. The subject is 'the ensemble (aggregate) of social relations'[7] and the mainsprings of his/her actions are 'rooted in the whole social organization of man [sic] which directs his consciousness in certain directions and blocks him from being aware of certain facts and experiences.'[8] Drawing on Marxist critique, Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer argue that capitalist economy calls for the death of the transcendental self because 'reason itself has become merely an aid to the all--- encompassing economic apparatus'.[9] The culture industry circulates commodities and consumerist ideologies through 'the manipulation of taste and the official culture's pretense of individualism',[10] so seducing humans into believing in individual identity whilst it shapes these very identities. Likewise, Louis Althusser argues that society and social consciousness are structured by the ruling ideology through its ideological state apparatuses. These – the media, the judiciary, schooling --- interpellate individuals into preconstituted forms of subjectivity while, simultaneously, understanding the individual as subject to these apparatuseses.[11]

Alongside Marxist attacks on the sovereign subject, one cannot ignore Sigmund Freud's theory of the self. Freud takes issue with the Cartesian idea of the cognitive and rational individual. For Freud, the motives of human action, existence and development are unconscious, mostly originating from libidinal, unconscious drives which are dynamic and fluid in nature.[12] Jacques Lacan goes on to radicalise Freud's anti---Cartesian view of the self and furthers Freud's idea by arguing that not only the Cartesian idea of the subject, but also a rational self, whose ego controls his/her instincts, is an illusion. Lacan explains this through his theory of the mirror stage. He argues that the infant sees its image in a mirror, identifies with it and misrecognises the image of the self as a homogeneous subject with a sense of mastery. However, Lacan argues, this concept disregards the lack of physical coordination of the infant and the fractured, heterogeneous experience of the self in the real world. The feeling of unity perceived is 'imposed from without and consequently is asymmetrical, fictional, and artificial.'[13] It is a tenuous illusion of harmony for a subject that is fundamentally split, multiple and in discord, but nonetheless serves as 'the template for all future objectifications and

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[7] Karl Marx qtd. in Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept ofMan*, trans. by T. B. Bottomore (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 63.

[8] Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept ofMan*, p. 19.

[9] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic ofEnlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (USA: Stanford UP, 2002), p. 23.

[10] Theodor W. Adorno, 'On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening', in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed. by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum, 2005), pp. 270---300, (p. 280).

[11] Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions ofPostmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. xx.

[12] Anthony Elliott, *Concepts of the Self* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. 36.

[13] Ellie Ragland---Sullivan, *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* (Kent, Croom Helm Ltd., 1986), p. 26---27.

identifications.'[14] As Lacan argues, 'this form situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone',[15] and it also implies humans' continual search for new 'mirrors' to complete the illusion of a unified self. As discussed later in this chapter, media images act as new mirrors with which contemporary subjects identify and so misconceive themselves as unified and autonomous.

The Lacanian self is indefinable due to the intangible nature of the unconscious. Lacan likens the unconscious to structural linguistics, particularly with reference to the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure. The subject for structuralists (e.g. Saussure, Claude Lévi---Strauss) is 'a construct created through the structures and application of language',[16] and language is a stable and objective system. The sense of sovereign self is therefore not intrinsically present, but is symbolically and culturally constructed. In response to the structuralists, the poststructuralists (e.g. Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva) argue there is no inherent and fixed relationship between the signifier and its referent, the signified. Drawing on this view, Lacan claims that, like the arbitrary nature of language, the unconscious denies any point of reference that constitutes the self as absolute, that the self is not unified, knowing or fixed, but decentred, fluid and multiple. Other poststructuralist thinkers highlight the influence of power relations and socio---political conditions on identity construction. For instance, Michel Foucault and Judith Butler argue that individual agency is 'a radically contingent phenomenon constructed through social practices, rather than an expression of an inner nature revealed through engagement with the social'.[17] Thus, people's actions, thoughts and decisions are always constituted 'within structures that embody certain patterns of power and difference, calling [them] into being within their discursive framework.'[18] Foucault focuses on the genealogy of the self across history and argues that subjectivity is enmeshed in power relations and socially constructed in discursive practices. However, the Foucauldian subject is still 'a thinking, feeling subject';[19] he/she is a 'social agent, capable of resistance and [...] able to reflect upon the discursive relations which constitute her and the society in which she lives'.[20]

Drawing on Foucault, Judith Butler argues that social reality and the subject's sense of his/her position in this reality are not self---evident, fixed givens, but constantly constituted as an illusion by hegemonic social conventions and ideologies 'through language, gesture, and all

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[14] Margaret Iversen, *Beyond Pleasure: Freud, Lacan, Barthes* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State UP, 2007), p. 134.

[15] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 2.

[16] Michele A. Willson, Technically Together: Re---thinking Community within Techno---Society (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), p. 7.

[17] Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), p. 171.

[18] Elaine L. Graham, *Representation of the Post/human* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002), p. 193.

[19] Chris Weedon qtd. in Marysia Zalewski, *Feminism After Postmodernism: Theorising Through Pracitce* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 88.

[20] Weedon qtd. in Zalewski, p. 88.

manner of symbolic social sign'.[21] According to Butler, human beings continually contribute to this social construction by enacting the ideologies in the performative act of speaking and by embodying them in actions. Thus, gender and identity, Butler argues, are 'an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which all the same, requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again.'[22] Accordingly, Butler contends that a human's sense of autonomous subjectivity is a retroactive construction, an 'act' which 'has been going on before one arrived on the scene',[23] and occurs merely through the performance of social conventions and roles. These poststructuralist approaches to the self privilege neither the psyche nor the social, external world. They all indicate that ideas of subjectivity are 'astonishingly imaginative fabrications of the private and public, personal and political, individual and historical.'[24] Moreover, these theories do not argue for a complete abolition of subjectivity, but consider it in a new light through a critical view of the humanist subject and a reconceptualisation of the self.

In an increasingly globalised and mediatised, capitalist culture, Cartesian and liberal humanist assumptions about individual autonomy have become increasingly problematic tenets of selfhood, mainly due to the pervasive influence of media technologies and culture on subjectivity. This has furthered the idea of subjectivity as a social, ideological and symbolic construct that is fragmented, fluid, multiple and dislocated. In this chapter, I use the notion of the 'mediatised subject' to refer to the changing aspects of the contemporary human in relation to and as a result of pervasive media technologies and culture.

The mediatised subject undermines the liberal humanist division between a changing body and a 'stable' mind by proposing a heterogeneous and fluid subject position that is a hybrid of the corporeal and the symbolic, the physically real and its representation through semiotic systems such as the media (see section 2.2. and 2.2.1). It refers to a decentred 'self of many possibilities'[25] and identities exposed to multiple realities and which 'loses its consistency, and becomes brittle, broken or shattered'.[26] The mediatised subject constantly shifts and recreates its identity through interaction with and exposure to mediatised culture without necessarily anchoring itself in a definite position. Therefore, it challenges the anthropocentric idea of human essence as the absolute and original source of meaning and

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[21] Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, ed. by Sue---Ellen Case (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990), pp. 270---282, (p. 270).
[22] Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution', p. 272.
[23] Ibid., p. 272.
[24] Elliott, Concepts of the Self, p. 11.
[25] Lifton, *The Protean Self*, p. 1.
[26] Elliott, *Concepts of the Self*, p. 145.

centre of the universe. Nevertheless, it does not refer to a subject position completely deprived of agency over actions and thoughts; it has limited autonomy and is also an 'individualised' being, encouraged by the consumerist market economy and the media to believe that he/she is a unique individual. However, in fact, as this chapter shows, the contemporary subject is deindividuated; his/her individuality is reduced to render her an apathetic member of the consumer culture. Also, the misleading promotion of individualisation leads to social alienation and indifference to other humans (see section 2.2.2.).

2.2. Theorising the Mediatised Subject

Marshall McLuhan provides a good starting point as one of the first theorists to recognise and discuss the influence of media on human beings. McLuhan suggests that in the same way as Narcissus 'mistook his own reflection in the water for another person [which] numbed his perceptions',[27] individuals in a media-‑‑driven society are numbed by media images into the idea that they have an absolute, sovereign and unified self. He underlines the profound and undeniable impact of mass media on human beings: 'all media work us over [so] completely [...] that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered.'[28] This premise can be compared to Jacques Lacan's idea of the 'mirror stage'. Similarly to the infant, who misrecognises the image in the mirror as himself/herself, McLuhan's Narcissus adapts himself/herself to media images and mistakes them for an image of himself/herself with a unified totality. Both Lacan's infant and McLuhan's Narcissus imply that the subject continually seeks a fixed, complete self, which both suggest is a misconception and myth.

Like McLuhan's Narcissus, the mediatised subject, inundated with media images, adopts these images and comes to misrecognise himself/herself as a singular individual, which itself is substantially a construct. Similarly to Lacan's infant and McLuhan's Narcissus, the mediatised subject is decentred and always searching for a unified self, an aim that has become ever more unattainable in a media-‑‑driven landscape. Yet, again, this does not mean that the subject is a selfless, entirely disoriented mechanism, but that in the mediatised context the idea of the self as sovereign and fixed becomes radically untenable.

Jean Baudrillard also considers the subject in the media age as a primarily passive spectator who 'cannot master --- let alone control --- the cultural logic of governing information

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[27] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge, 2001 [originally in 1964]), p. 45.
[28] Marshall McLuhan qtd. in Lifton, *The Protean Self*, p. 19.

diffusion'[29] but is governed by the dominant symbolic systems such as the media. Likewise, Arthur Kroker identifies the subject as a 'possessed individual,' 'possessed by the seduction of virtual reality',[30] whose subjectivity is formed 'through the principal axes of technological experience.'[31] Although Baudrillard's and Kroker's views highlight significant aspects of the mediatised subject, the idea of the self as a largely passive product of symbolic systems is restrictive, because it overlooks the subject's self---conscious experience of and critical awareness about media saturation and other forms of social relations and human interaction. Although the media 'have a very draining debilitating effect upon a subject's sense of self',[32] the subject is not merely symbolic or completely apathetic, nor is it obsolete. Rather, he/she still retains a degree of agency, though increasingly limited, over his/her actions and thoughts, as evidenced by various forms of resistant strategies, such as using social media or news programmes to protest media manipulation of public opinion or social events.

Robert Jay Lifton comments on the contemporary subject with his idea of the 'protean self', which he separates from other (contemporary or postmodern) theories of the self that associate 'multiplicity and fluidity with disappearance of the self, with a complete absence of coherence among its various elements.'[33] The protean self, by contrast, is 'the blending of radical fluidity, functional wisdom, and a quest for at least minimal form.'[34] It continually appropriates itself to the changing socio---cultural circumstances, with no clear end point or unified self. Proteanism is a 'balancing act between responsive shapeshifting, on the one hand, and efforts to consolidate and cohere, on the other.'[35] This view of the subject corresponds to an important aspect of the mediatised subject as it does not entail the complete abandonment of the self but emphasises the fluid, continually shifting state of the subject. The protean subject involves 'a quest for authenticity and meaning, a form---seeking assertion of self.'[36] The protean, like the mediatised subject, is malleable and non---autonomous, its subjectivity constantly constructed and reconstructed through exposure to media images and discourses. Lifton's idea of a form---seeking self evokes Lacan's infant and McLuhan's Narcissus, and the mediatised subject as a whole. The eternal quest for images to constitute a sense of complete self is embedded in human experience, while this quest is increasingly less attainable in the current culture where subjectivity is shaped predominantly by the media.

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[29] Elliott, *Concepts of the Self*, p. 150.
[30] Arthur Kroker, The Possessed Individual: Technology and the French Postmodern (Montreal: CTHEORY Books, 2001), p. 145.
[31] Ibid., p. 145.
[32] Elliott, *Concepts of the Self*, p. 152.
[33] Lifton, *The Protean Self*, p. 8.
[34] Ibid., p. 5.
[35] Ibid., p. 9.
[36] Ibid., p. 9.

2.2.1. Posthumanism and the Mediatised Subject

Posthumanist theory is another deconstructive perspective on liberal humanism in relation to media technologies and culture. Ihab Hassan introduced the term in the late 1970s[37] to refer to the radical change in 'the human form --- including human desire and all its external representations'[38] in view of the ever---increasing predominance of techno---science, mass media technologies and industrial production. Hassan claimed that 'five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end, as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call posthumanism.'[39] Hassan's posthuman subject is a dynamic and malleable entity, an amalgam partly determined by informational and symbolic structures, 'a creative, Promethean trickster split by language, [...] charged with the Nietzschean task of evolving humankind beyond humanism's dangerously oppressive "Man"'.[40] It was in the mid---1980s, when personal computers entered the market (amongst other technological advancements), that Hassan's theory was adopted and furthered by such theorists as Donna Haraway and N. Katherine Hayles.

In 'A Cyborg Manifesto' (1985), Haraway argued that human beings in the late twentieth century have become 'cyborgs', 'theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism',[41] or 'of social reality as well as [...] of fiction'.[42] For Haraway, the human subject as cyborg no longer has a unique, unified and autonomous individuality detached from the external systems and realities of the world. The cyborg is related to and composed partly of non---human symbolic structures, such as language and media technologies. Thus, the metaphor of the 'cyborg', rooted in poststructuralism and cybernetics, considers the subject as a symbolic construct conceived through the interaction of the organic with the symbolic and technological. Subjectivity, conventionally rooted in the mind, disconnected from the body or external forces, is relocated both within and beyond the material body. Haraway's cyborg metaphor has found its way into various reinterpretations and, significantly, into posthumanist discourse.

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[37] For further information, see: Ihab Hassan, 'Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthuman Culture? A University Masque in Five Scenes', *Georgia Review*, 31 (1977), 830---850. This is Hassan's keynote speech at the International Symposium on Postmodern Performance organized by the Center for Twentieth---Century Studies at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.

[38] Hassan, 'Prometheus as Performer', p. 843.

[39] Ibid., p. 843.

[40] Ann Weinstone, *Avatar Bodies: A Tantra for Posthumanism* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2004), p. 8.

[41] Donna Haraway, 'A cyborg manifesto: science, technology, and socialist---feminism in the late twentieth century'. The article is published in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York; Routledge, 1991), p.149---181. Here it is accessed via http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html [accessed 02 August 2011].

[42] Haraway: http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html [accessed 02 August 2011].

In *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), Hayles extends Haraway's ideas with a critique of cybernetics' misreading of the posthuman as an omen for the replacement of humans by intelligent machines. Drawing on Haraway, Hayles argues that the posthuman is a hybrid with diverse components and borders that concurrently accommodate the organic and the symbolic, problematising the entrenched liberal humanist division between the body and mind, or in a more recent context, between the organic and its engulfing technological environment. Posthumanism, as Hayles stresses, does not propose an anti---human argument, but is a critical attack on the liberal humanist subject. Posthumanism problematises the idea that the individual is the sole originator of his/her capacities, exclusive of society or external realities. It rejects the idea of a subject that is stable and autonomous. By contrast, it sees the subject as a fluid entity whose diverse components and borders are constantly being constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed.[43] Therefore, posthumanism is not simply about prosthesis, literal cyborgs, humanoid robots or science fiction. Rather, and particularly in the context of this chapter, it refers to the (re)construction of identity through the subject's interaction with and exposure to the highly technologised and media---saturated environment. 'Becoming posthuman' means going beyond the boundaries of the so---called human and furthering the sense of subjectivity, not only through the extension of the material body beyond the borders of the organic skin, but also through the expansion of consciousness and cognition. That is, one becomes posthuman once one uses the internet, socialises through Facebook, or feeds information into online systems such as Wikipedia. As Hayles argues: 'as you gaze at the flickering signifiers scrolling down the computer screens, no matter what identifications you assign to the embodied entities that you cannot see, you have already become posthuman.'[44]

The interaction between symbolic structures and humans is not a new experience. Humans have always interacted with semiotic systems such as language and media technologies. One might argue that the human has always been posthuman because it has acquired a language system, and then communicated through print media and so on. However, posthumanist discourse emerged relatively recently in response to the increasing presence of new media technologies and advancements in techno---science which further the transformation of human consciousness through its interaction with them. The prefix 'post' thus does not simply refer to what is beyond the organic body but connotes the process through which subjectivity has evolved in the age of media technologies. The notion of the mediatised subject is fundamentally linked to the posthumanist model of selfhood. Like the

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[43] Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics*, Literature, and Informatics (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1999), p. 3.
[44] Hayles, How We Became Posthuman, p. xiv.

posthumanist subject, the mediatised self is a fluid hybrid that rejects any definitive separation between the material and the symbolic, identifying the latter mainly in relation to the media. Drawing mainly on Haraway and Hayles's definitions of the posthuman, this chapter will explore the dramaturgical response to the mediatised subject as a fluid hybrid in relation to Tim Crouch's works (see section 4).

2.2.2. Capitalism, Individualisation and the Mediatised Subject

Posthumanism and some of the poststructuralist views mentioned above identify fluidity, heterogeneity and hybridity as important aspects of the mediatised subject. Besides these characteristics, the mediatised subject can also be identified with the experience of individualisation/deindividuation (see Chapter 1), alienation and objectification. This section gives a theoretical overview of these aspects of the contemporary subject and section 5 will illustrate them in relation to Simon Stephens's *Pornography*.

'Individualization', Zygmunt Bauman argues, 'now means something very different from what it meant 100 years ago and what it conveyed in the early times of the modern era – the times of extolled human "emancipation" from the tightly knit web of communal dependency, surveillance and enforcement.'[45] The concept today refers to the inescapable condition of humans in late---capitalist culture: it is 'a fate, not a choice; in the land of individual freedom of choice, the option to escape individualization and to refuse participation in the individualizing game is emphatically *not* on the agenda.'[46] Individualisation is about creating the idea of the human as an autarkic self with an interest in his/her own gains and success, whilst tying subjects 'into a network of regulations, conditions, provisos'[47] and standardising them to be pawns of mass culture. Theodor W. Adorno identifies this as 'pseudo---individualism', the 'endowing [of] cultural mass production with the halo of free choice or open market on the basis of standardization itself.'[48] Individualisation, therefore, is a subtle compulsion that adapts people to capitalist values.

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[45] Zygmunt Bauman, 'Foreword by Zygmunt Bauman: Individually Together' in *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*, by Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck---Gernsheim (London: SAGE, 2001), pp. xiv---xix, (p. xiv).

[46] Ibid., p. xiv.

[47] Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck---Gernsheim, Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences (London: SAGE, 2001), p. 7.

[48] Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on* Music, trans. by Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley, LA: University of California Press, 2002), p. 445.

Individualisation differs from individuation, as Bauman introduces Ulrich Beck's notion, the latter referring to a 'self---sustained and self---propelled individual',[49] whereas the individualised subject is a human being with no choice but to act along the lines of the dominant regulations subtly given under the guise of autonomy and profit. Thus, individualisation, Bauman and Beck suggest, is an 'institutionalized'[50] state since subjects are shaped by institutional, ideological, discursive systems. Consequently, the self---assertive capacity of the individualised subject stops short of what autonomous self---constitution requires.[51] The individualized subject is therefore a deindividuated being, whose actions and thoughts are regulated by power relations. This does not mean that the subject has no authority over his/her choices; rather it refers to the increased control of ideological and symbolic systems over humans.

By promoting self---interest, individualisation renders humans unable, Anthony Giddens argues, 'to take serious interest in anything other than shoring up the self'.[52] Likewise, Kenneth J. Gergen argues that the self---interest of the 'individualised' subject makes him/her less sensitive to minority voices and the 'other', and more likely to suppress the other and cause social division.[53] The contemporary subject has become increasingly uninterested in other humans, and society as a whole is left with 'a sense of profound isolation'[54] leading to social apathy rather than solidarity. Individualisation therefore influences interpersonal relations, weakening human bonds and increasing a sense of indifference.

This change is increasingly prevalent due to the growing influence and use of the media. The increasing speeds of communication networks, global transport and information technologies have made communication easier. Ironically, despite the subjects' increasing access to other humans through technological immediacy and 'reduction of space by speed',[55] they have become ever more isolated. 'Virtual proximity', Bauman argues, defines the predominant mode of human connection today, 'too shallow and brief to condense into bonds'[56] since they are 'easy to enter and to exit.'[57] (Chapter 1) The subject, Bauman argues, has 'no bonds that are unbreakable and attached once and for all'.[58] Prior to Bauman, Baudrillard argued that rather than creating communication, the media 'devours communication and the

[49] Bauman, 'Foreword', p. xvi.
[50] Beck and Beck---Gernsheim, *Individualization*, p. xx.
[51] Ibid., p. 23---24.
[52] Giddens, The Consequences of Modernity, p. 73.
[53] Kenneth J. Gergen, 'The Self: Death by Technology', *The Hedgehog Review* (1999), pp. 25---33, (p. 33). The article is *available at:* < www.iasc---culture.org/THR/archives/Identity/1.1EGergen.pdf>
[54] Ibid., p. 33.
[55] Nick Mansfield, *Subjectivity: Theories of the Selffrom Freud to Haraway* (New York: New York UP, 2000), p. 155.
[56] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love: On the Frailty ofHuman Bonds*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003), p. 62.
[57] Ibid., p. xii.
[58] Ibid., p. vii.

social.'[59] The media, Baudrillard claims, overload people with information and dissolve the social 'in a sort of nebulous state dedicated not to a surplus of innovation, but, on the contrary, to total entropy.'[60] The subject in mediatised culture is not only deindividuated, but also experiences a shift in interpersonal relations from strong bonding to superficial connection.

The media often treats humans as news material or sources of 'human interest stories', a means to attract or to divert the consumer's attention. It flattens the specificity of people's stories and presents them as catchy, mostly comforting and easily consumable objects, and thus trivialises the complexity of human lives. This objectification often happens through news programmes and reality TV shows. It has influenced how people perceive other humans, leading them 'to treat other humans as objects of consumption',[61] as images on the screen, pieces of information to be quickly consumed. This is not to suggest that people become less 'human' as emotional beings, but they may become less attached and responsive and more indifferent to other humans. This aspect of the mediatised environment reinforces the weakening of human relationships and the alienation of the contemporary subject.

3. An Overview: Subject, Character and Actor in Dialogue and Transition

Elinor Fuchs and Anne Ubersfeld both highlight how character in the theatre is a 'historical construct'[62] and thus 'can never be independent of contemporary constructions of subjectivity'.[63] Therefore, in line with changing notions of subjectivity, particularly since the rise of liberal humanism, the representation of people in the theatre has also undergone considerable transformation. This section presents a general overview of how such varying understandings of the self affect the mode of characterisation and acting, concentrating on naturalist, Brechtian and contemporary (postdramatic) approaches to character and character--- actor relationships to illustrate dramaturgical challenges to dramatic characterisation in the theatre of the media age.

Georg W. F. Hegel criticises Aristotle's identification of plot as the 'soul' of tragedy that situates the character as an agent of dramatic action. Instead, he argues for a transformation from the self---enclosed objectivity of ancient tragedy to the absolute subjectivity that places character as the representation of the 'absolute inner'[64] and at the centre of drama/theatre.

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59 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Michigan: Michigan UP, 1994), p. 80.
60 Ibid., p. 81.
61 Bauman *Liquid Love*, p. 75.
62 Anne Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1999), p. 76.
63 Fuchs, The Death of Character, p. 8.
64 Ibid., p. 26.

Characterisation, for Hegel, should be a fully developed representation of psychologically and ontologically unique subjects with historical and personal backgrounds, lifelike manners and complexity of mind. Compared to the Greek notion of fate, characters in what Hegel calls romantic or modern tragedies have more freedom of choice. Hegel argues that they find themselves in 'accidental circumstances and conditions within which it is possible to act either in this way or in that'.[65] He thus argues for self--determined, strong--willed characters and attributes initiative to them in undertaking actions.[66] For Hegel, 'the narrative frameworks and symbolic networks remain potent, but only after they have been internalized and taken up into the post--Cartesian drama of human inwardness.'[67] Hegel's view of selfhood and its dramatic representation indicate an idealistic, romantic view of subjectivity, and correspond to the idea of the liberal humanist subject.

Though perhaps the most influential, Hegel is not the first or only to argue for the liberal humanist approach to characterisation and pays attention to characters' inner personalities and self--driven actions. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's and Denis Diderot's works depend strongly on such notions of character. For Lessing and Diderot, 'every character on the stage is defined by its own unique moral character',[68] inward thoughts and feelings, and self--determined actions. As Enlightenment writers, Lessing and Diderot tend to adopt liberal humanism, manifested through the realistic approach to character presentation. Lessing, for example, emphasises that drama should be based on a first--hand representation of the world, and characters should embody the language and actions of 'real' individuals. They extend their view of characterisation to the aesthetics of acting, arguing that acting should be 'natural' and 'follow a logical sequence [...] a logical motivation of action'[69] to generate a complete picture of a character.

To a degree, the tendency to consider characterisation in line with liberal humanism continued in the nineteenth and twentieth century. For instance, in psychological realism and naturalist traditions and practices, the mode of characterisation is usually based on the representation of the human as a self--determining individual. Naturalist playwrights and directors structure character as a consistent and recognisable representation of an individual

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[65] G.W.F. Hegel qtd. in Iván Nyusztay, *Myth, Telos, Identity: The Tragic Schema in Greek and Shakepearean Drama* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), p. 64.
[66] Iván Nyusztay, *Myth, Telos, Identity*, p. 64.
[67] Roger Lundin, *From Nature to Experience: The American Search for Cultural Authority* (Maryland US and Plymouth UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), p. 155.
[68] Karin Barbara Fischer, Thomas C. Fox, (eds.), *A Companion to Works of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing* (New York: Boydell & Brewer, Inc., 2005), p. 54.
[69] Ibid., p. 226.

with true human 'actions and [...] feelings [that are] linked in understandable ways',[70] and with a self---propelled nature that is liberated from the intervention of external forces. For example, Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) is based on 'the exposition of a *liberal humanist* belief in moral progress',[71] which ends with Nora's decision to leave her husband. The characters in Shaw's social dramas are depicted as self---governed characters, thinking and feeling individuals with an awareness of the social structures they live in. There are exceptions to the 'liberal humanist mould of Ibsen or Anton Chekhov'[72], among others. August Strindberg, for instance, who wrote some of his plays in the naturalist tradition such as *Miss Julie* (1888), did not always adopt liberal humanism and create realistic characters. Strindberg's *A Dream Play* (1901) illustrates his transition from Naturalism to Expressionism as the play undermines the aesthetics of well---made naturalist drama by restructuring plot structure and characterisation through the symbolic dream pattern.

Humanist conceptions of character were not accepted without criticism or challenge. Half a century after Hegel, Nietzsche argued against the Romantic devotion to 'inwardness,' and 'the metaphysical conception of the subject as something isolated and independent'[73] and, relatedly, against naturalistic characterisation and its central position in theatre. Following Nietzsche, the Symbolists, whose attack on humanist discourse was adopted by such playwrights as Strindberg, destabilised the three---dimensional depiction of characters. They redrew characters as 'glimpses of human figures'[74] through allegorical representation. For instance, in Strindberg's symbolist and even in some of his naturalist plays, the characters are allegorical figures, 'conglomerates of past and present stages of culture'[75] patched together from 'scraps of humanity',[76] problematising the notion of coherent, unified characterisation.

The attack on naturalistic character became an increasing concern of theatre in the twentieth century. In response to the prevailing disillusionment of the post---Second World War industrialised twentieth century, playwrights, most notably Bertolt Brecht, reconsidered characterisation. Drawing on Marxist philosophy, Brecht approached the human and, accordingly, the character as a sum of gestures and acts in conversation with the socio---political, economic environment. Brechtian characterisation deploys the actor as a tool to

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[70] Tori, Haring---Smith, 'Dramaturging Non---Realism: Creating a New Vocabulary', *Theatre Topics*, 13: 1 (2003), 45---54, (pp. 46).

[71] Robert Fergusson, *Henrik Ibsen: A New Biography*, (London: Richard Cohen Books, 1996), p. 247.

[72] Rana Nayar, *Edward Albee: Towards a Typology of Relationships* (New Delhi: Prestige, 2003 [originally by Indiana University]), p. 243.

[73] Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel, Nietzsche and the Criticism of Metaphysics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1986), p. 184.

[74] Haring---Smith, 'Dramaturging Non---Realism', p. 47.

[75] August Strindberg, '*Miss Julie*, Preface' in *Miss Julie and Other Plays*, trans. by Michael Robinson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), p. 60.

[76] Ibid., p. 60.

critically refer to the socio-cultural setting of his/her character rather than mimetically representing it. However, the Brechtian model does not mark the demise of the naturalistic view of character, as characters are still placed in the framework of dramatic representation. Grusha in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* or Galileo in *The Life of Galileo* are recognisable, detailed representations of 'real' or lifelike people and are agents of dramatic narrative. Nevertheless, Brecht's innovative approach to theatre and characterisation is a point of departure for further critical challenges to the dramatic character.

The increasing pervasiveness of the media in the late twentieth century has caused the humanist concept of character, questioned by Strindberg, Artaud, Beckett and Brecht among others, to become more problematic with the changing notion of the self in relation to media technologies and culture. This change in the notion and experience of subjectivity called the dramatic mode of characterisation and figurative acting into question, and prepared the ground for the emergence of new dramaturgical ways to respond to the decentred subject. Theatre has moved away from traditional dramatic form that is based on the representation of the world as a unified fictive cosmos with recognisable plot and characters, and on a unified relationship between character and language, between character and actor. This traditional dramatic mode of representation is replaced by a new, challenging mode of theatrical expression, a self-referential world of texts speaking to other texts, destabilising the unity of character and actor and, by extension, the representation of the self as a unified whole.

Hans-Thies Lehmann responds to these concerns in his postdramatic theory, contending that the representational form of dramatic theatre and characterisation depicting the world as an absolute totality no longer relates to today's less surveyable, mediatised world and subject. The idea of character in postdramatic theatre, developing the approaches of Brecht, Beckett and others to characterisation, challenges the position of character as the originator of language and meaning and as the product of its own decisions and in-built talents. Lehmann goes beyond Brecht and others by theorising the refusal in theatre since the 1970s to create identifiable characters in the framework of coherent dramatic forms. In his analysis, Lehmann emphasises the tendency to restructure character as a fluid, multiple and inconsistent construct by destabilising character's relationship to language and by undermining the character-actor relationship.

As discussed in chapter 2, language in postdramatic theatre no longer functions as the unique voice of an individual; there is no longer a continually coherent relationship between language and character. It is an independent element with multiple origins and variable

discourses, disconnected from character, 'hovering above a vast range of contexts and meanings, each with multiple points of contact with life and the experience of the audience.'[77] This kind of structure, as Gerda Poschmann proposes, renders a play a 'Sprechtext' ('text to be spoken').[78] The stage functions as 'Sprechraum' ('speaking space').[79] Accordingly, characters, deprived of their individual subject point and voice, become 'Textträger' ('text bearers'),[80] responsible for delivering the text as 'an associative piece of communicative material'[81] rather than embodying and interpreting it (see section 4.1. in Chapter 2). The character is therefore a speaking *figure* who 'hints at something deliberately artificial' and 'evokes the impression of functionality rather than individual autonomy'.[82] The mode of characterisation in postdramatic theatre relates to the experience of subjectivity in a mediatised culture. The character's limited control over language and its presentation as a linguistic, textual construct responds to the dissolution of the self as a sovereign entity in the hands of symbolic---ideological systems such as the media. This relates to the constructedness of identity marketed by the media as an asset of the modern subject. As this chapter explores, such changes in the mode of characterisation propose new and critical ways of conceptualising character in relation to the fluid and heterogeneous state of the mediatised subject.

This restructuring of character affects the way character is interpreted on stage. It destabilises the traditional relationship between actor and role, as well as between the stage and auditorium. The mode of acting postdramatic theatre proposes extends the Brechtian approach to the actor's status in the theatre. Aiming to qualify with the dramatic form of characterisation, Brecht defied figurative acting and argued for a 'demonstrating actor' rather than an 'acting actor'.[83] The Brechtian actor is not supposed to unite with a character or 'tidy away the inconsistencies in a character'.[84] Instead, the actor is asked to keep the character at some distance, which is visible to the spectator, by demonstrating the contradictions in the character. The Brechtian actor is responsible for commenting on the role with gestures through his/her social experience and knowledge of human behaviour. The actor thus

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[77] David Barnett, 'Reading and Performing Uncertainty: Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen* and the Postdramatic Theatre', *Theatre Research International* (2005), 30: 2, 139 --- 149, (pp. 140).

[78] Gerda Poschmann qtd. in Barnett, 'Reading and Performing Uncertainty', p. 141.

[79] Hans---Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 31.

[80] Poschmann qtd. in Barnett, 'Reading and Performing Uncertainty', p. 141.

[81] David Barnett, 'When is a Play not a Drama? Two Examples of Postdramatic Theatre Texts', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 24:1 (2008), 14 --- 23, (pp. 21).

[82] Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), p. 160--- 161. Pfister identifies 'figure' as 'dramatic figure' in contradiction with 'character' whilst alluding to 'the ontological difference between fictional figures and real characters'. Alternatively, although I will refer to the artificial construct of 'character' in a similar way, I shall avoid delineating 'figure' as 'dramatic' to indicate its fictitiousness, since in the context of this chapter it might confusingly refer to the use of character in the convention of naturalist tradition. Thus, I shall be using the term interchangeably with 'postdramatic character/actor', speaking figure or text---bearer.

[83] Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. by John Willett (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 136.

[84] Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis, *Drama/Theatre/Performance* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 181.

illustrates the socioeconomic and political significance of the action. However, despite being liberated from the interpretive limitations of dramatic theatre, the Brechtian actor still reflects the human as a representational connection to the world.

Like Brecht's theories, the postdramatic view of acting liberates the actor from representational limitations as a character, and recognises his/her presence as an actor. Moreover, it radicalises Brecht's model through text---bearers, the autonomisation of language and through the rise of a polyvocal and heteroglossic text. This self---reflexive language reduces the specificity of actors by asking them to lose their particularity and their consistent relationship to language and characters. Nevertheless, text---bearers are not all the same; an interesting relationship tends to emerge between the task of delivering a text apparently neutrally and the way it is done. This is especially true in the work of René Pollesch. In such theatrical models, actors no longer represent characters or are figurative messengers for the author. Acting in postdramatic theatre is more 'presence' than 'pretence'.[85] The actor is present on stage as himself/herself, somewhat devoid of representational role, or oscillates between the fictional character and her physically 'real' position, no longer, the single logos or individual centre of the theatrical performance. Instead, he/she is composed of manifold voices and fluctuating subject positions that elude an absolute source of meaning, and preclude the presentation of a sovereign self. Viewed in terms of Derrida's *différance*, the actor's resistance to a single logos leads to performance as 'a productive non---presence'[86] that continually differs/defers. The idea of a knowing subject, the character/actor as the central source of truth and representation of a unified self are all called into question. This proposes a model of subjectivity that is fluid and multiple and acts as 'a site of disunity and conflict, central to the processes of political change and to preserving the status quo.'[87] It is in these respects that postdramatic approaches to characterisation/acting relate to the mediatised subject as a variable, heterogeneous and conflictual being with multiple states.

In light of this theoretical background, sections 4 and 5 investigate how Tim Crouch's and Simon Stephens' works address the mediatised self. The analysis first briefly examines the mode of characterisation in Crouch's texts to demonstrate the shift from text to stage (see section 4), then investigates the character---actor relationship on stage in relation to the mediatised subject. Section 5 examines Stephens's *Pornography* and its world premiere in Germany (2007) directed by Sebastian Nübling and its first English language staging at the

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[85] Andy Lavender, 'The Moment of Realized Actuality', in *Theatre in Crisis?: Performance Manifestos for a New Century*, ed. by Maria M. Delgado and Caridad Svich (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002), pp. 183---191, (p. 189).

[86] Philip Auslander, '"Just Be Your Self": Logocentrism and Difference in Performance Theory', in *Acting (Re)Considered: Theories and Practices*, ed. by Phillip B. Zarrilli (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 53---62, (p. 60).

[87] Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Bodmin Cornwall: Blackwell, 1996), p. 21.

Edinburgh Festival (2008) as a co-‐-‐production between The Traverse and Birmingham Repertory Theatre directed by Sean Holmes.

4. Addressing the Mediatised Subject: Character/Actor Hybrid in *My Arm* and *An Oak Tree*

An important aspect of Tim Crouch's plays is that they are both written and mostly performed initially by Crouch himself along with other actors, where necessary.[88] Crouch's scripts serve as 'outlines'[89] for theatrical performance that cannot be 'adequately circumscribed by language'.[90] They are not examples of dramatic plays -‐- complete on their own -‐- or literary work that can exist independently from performance. Nor are they 'postscripts', namely, 'relic[s] of/for an event that has passed'.[91] Rather, as the directorial focus of the stage directions indicates, they are written as material for performance. Texts are essential to Crouch's theatre as language is one of the vital 'weapons in [his] dramatic armoury'.[92] But what renders his works innovative and particularly important in the context of this thesis is the difference between texts and their performances. Crouch's staging illustrates some of the inherent tensions between text and performance because his rather traditionally structured scripts are, to an extent, deconstructed and reconstructed in performance through vacillation between the fictional world of text and the real world of performance. It is this vacillation that forms the basis for the reading of Crouch's character/actor in relation to the mediatised subject.

Crouch takes issue with spoon-‐-‐feeding spectators which can reduce the creative and critical involvement of the audience to a minimum. Accordingly, he criticises psychologically-‐-‐motivated characterisation and figurative acting which limit the theatrical event to a predetermined, 'closed' dramatic play with fixed structures and definitive interpretation. Such mode of theatrical expression, for Crouch, does the thinking and interpreting for the audience and restricts the space for spectatorial engagement with theatrical performance. According to Crouch, for theatre to take place, actors do not have to stand in for characters through either physical or psychological impersonation, neither does the stage need to be physically transformed into the fictional world of dramatic narrative, a somewhat less contentious point.[93] Theatre, Crouch emphasises, happens mainly due to the audience's creative

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[88] Apart from his solo work *My Arm*, Crouch worked with other actors in *An Oak Tree*, *ENGLAND*, and in *The Author*.

[89] Stephen Bottoms, 'Introduction' in *Tim Crouch, Plays One*, by Tim Crouch (London: Oberon, 2011), p. 11.

[90] Bottoms, 'Introduction', p. 12.

[91] Carl Lavery, 'Is there a text in this performance?', *Performance Research*, 14:1 (2009), 37-‐-‐45 (pp. 37).

[92] Bottoms, 'Introduction', p. 12.

[93] Seda Ilter, '"A process of transformation": Tim Crouch on *My Arm*', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 21: 4 (2011), 394-‐-‐404, (pp. 395).

interpretation of what they see and hear on stage. Thus, he aims to foster the audience's imagination, to 'maximize what's happening in the audience' by 'minimaliz[ing] what's happening on stage'.[94] Crouch proposes to achieve this through undermining the seamless link between character and actor, and the conventional relationship between the stage and the audience. Therefore, in most of his work, Crouch experiments with the character---actor relationship to generate 'uncertainty [that] enables an audience to be open and allows questions to materialise that might not otherwise materialise if there was certainty.'[95] However, as this chapter will demonstrate, Crouch's approach to the character/actor relationship moves beyond this objective and offers critical reflections on the mediatised subject, too.

4.1. 'Where is fictional me and where is real me?':[96] Blurring the Boundaries of the Self in *My Arm*

Tim Crouch's full---scale experiments with theatrical structure, narrative style and audience began with his first play for an adult audience, *My Arm* (2003). The play tells the story of a man, who, as a ten---year---old boy, decides to keep his arm raised above his head for the rest of his life and unintentionally becomes a visual arts icon. Crouch's narrative involves critical references to the mediatised world and subject by setting the story at a time when televisual culture and ready---made food define the individual's daily life: 'I was watching a lot of TV, eating a lot of processed food.'[97] This reference to a media---saturated, capitalist culture and lifestyle presents audience members with a thematic context that, perhaps indirectly, reinforces the critical undertones of the inventive form of character presentation in *My Arm*.

The play is a first---person dramatic narrative based on coherent and recognisable plot, unified characterisation, structured time and realistic language. Crouch emphasises that his play---scripts correspond to certain aspects of traditional dramatic form; namely, they 'subscribe to the Aristotelian unities, in terms of the nature and structure of the narrative'.[98] Likewise, the characters in *My Arm* are presented through the narrator's eyes as 'real' and unique persons with individual names such as 'Simon' and 'Antony', for example. Simon is an opportunistic artist who tries to get away with anything by convincing people that what he does is art, while Anthony, the narrator's brother, is a socially concerned and politically engaged artist who

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[94] Tim Crouch, qtd. in Stephen Bottoms, 'Authorizing the Audience: The conceptual drama of Tim Crouch', *Performance Research*, 14.1 (2009), 65–76, (pp. 69).
[95] Crouch in Ilter, '"A process of transformation", p. 399.
[96] Ibid., p. 398.
[97] Tim Crouch, *My Arm* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), p. 14.
[98] Crouch qtd. in Bottoms, 'Authorizing the Audience', p. 67.

works for a Refugee Action organisation.[99] Crouch also uses stereotypical personae such as 'Mother' and 'Dad', and stereotypical characteristics such as a 'caring mother', a 'normative psychiatrist' or an 'opportunistic artist'. Throughout his narrative, the main character---narrator appears as a three---dimensional character with psychological depth and consistent traits. Hence, in the text Crouch presents a liberal humanist concept of character and represents the human as an autonomous and stable individual, which, as the following discussion shows, he then deconstructs into a fluid, heterogeneous hybrid with diverse components and identities.

Crouch premiered *My Arm* at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh in 2003, where he appeared as the narrator---performer (the protagonist's adult self) whose retrospective evaluation of his signature gesture suggests a critique of commercialised art and consumer society dominated by the culture of television.[100] The performance opens with Crouch's direct address to the audience asking them to lend him objects they have on them – keys, ID cards, photos, and lighters. Crouch is the only live actor. The play then evolves through his use of the objects as characters and things in the story. Crouch uses the objects as they are, with no resemblance to the characters or the things in the story. Besides the audience's objects, which change with every performance, Crouch has a fixed prop, an 'Action Man' representing the narrator---performer as a body. During the performance, he randomly takes objects from a tray and puts them in front of a camera to project the images of the objects onto a television screen at the other end of the stage. In addition to this technology, he employs three pre---recorded film sequences incorporated into certain instances of the onstage narrative. For example, the first film, which shows a boy running across a field---like empty space, is played at the beginning of the performance after Crouch collects the objects.

The first person narration tricks most of the audience into thinking that Crouch is telling an autobiographical story. Crouch furthers this illusion by referring to one of the characters, Simon, as if he were present in the performance space, 'sitting at the back now, whose idea this all was, who doesn't do judo any more. Who's looking at his watch.'[101] He reinforces the illusion by using film sequences in line with his narrative, 'showing "childhood memories" from the 1970s',[102] giving the idea that the footage belongs to Crouch (in fact, it is his friend, Chris Dorley---Brown's).[103] For example, the film sequence, shown immediately after the narrator tells the audience about the death of his mother, involves a woman on the beach with a boy. The parallel between the onstage narrative and the filmed material reinforces the illusion of truth.

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99 Crouch, *My Arm*, p. 30.
100 Ibid., p. 14.
101 Ibid., p. 17---18.
102 Bottoms, 'Authorizing the Audience', p. 74.
103 Crouch, 'Introduction' in *My Arm*, p. 10.

The illusion is successful --- despite the fact that Crouch never openly states that he is telling his own story or raises his arm above his head --- mainly due to the perceived convergence between Crouch's use of 'I' and the 'I' of the narrative. Crouch plays with this presumed overlap and the audience's willingness implicitly to agree to this theatrical pact by 'layer[ing] one "readymade" convention (the actor as stand---in for character) over another (the solo performer playing "himself" on stage).'[104] Therefore, *My Arm* beguiles most of its audience members into assuming that the narrative is in fact true, certainly if they are not familiar with Crouch or the play.

The illusion of reality collapses when Crouch says he had to have his arm amputated and had 'conceded to having *this* [my emphasis] finger removed',[105] whilst showing the so---called amputated finger to the audience. It is at this point that most of the audience understands that Crouch is not telling his own story, that the two subject positions --- that of the narrator and that of Crouch on the stage --- do not belong to the same person. This scene has a revealing effect. However, in the frame of the theatre, where, in Stephen Bottoms's words, 'the "real" is always already representational, and the "self" always already a characterization',[106] the revelatory moment leads to a state of uncertainty about what is real and what is not. This raises the question of how much of the narrative is actually Crouch's --- when is he 'himself' and when is he in character? It is mainly after this point that two subjectivities merge and become almost indistinguishable. Crouch continues erasing the boundaries between the fictional and the 'real' to the end of the play, when he introduces the last film sequence, which is the same as the first, of a boy running across a field. The use of film again serves to mock the audience's credulity and highlights the technological means that duped them. Crouch takes this even further when he says that Simon, the opportunistic artist who introduced the arm---boy to the art scene, 'arranged for [him] to do a series of talks about [his] life'[107] since this implies that the performance the audience is watching could be one of these talks. It is only later that the audience can reflect on how it all happened, how it was constructed, and how uncritical of Crouch's theatricality they may have been.

At the very end of the play, Crouch reconstructs the illusion that he is presenting an autobiographical account and is actually the narrator---character. The uncertainty, generated through this shift between different realities and identities, is peculiar to the theatrical production of the play. The text, by contrast, provides the reader with certainty and integrity.

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104 Bottoms, 'Authorizing the Audience', p. 74.
105 Crouch, *My Arm*, p. 29.
106 Bottoms, 'Authorizing the Audience', p. 74.
107 Crouch, *My Arm*, p. 36.

The characters in the text are self-‑‑determining individuals with homogeneous identities. Unity in the text is created linguistically through the use of personal pronouns (e.g. first person singular in the protagonist's narrative) and individual names/roles (e.g. Anthony, Dad) that are congruous with the characters. Thus, when the narrator recounts *his* story, the reader experiences one identity, voice and reality that is stable, singular and absolute. Therefore, the modes of characterisation proposed by the text, and those Crouch presents on stage by disrupting the link between character and actor, contradict each other. The gaps the performance offers, as Crouch intends, '*authorize* the spectator's participation in the performance process'.[108] Furthermore, the character/actor hybrid moves beyond the initial aim of giving the spectators more authority since it implies congruence with the changing notion of the self in postmodern, mediatised culture.

The blurring of boundaries between the fictional and the physically real engenders a hybrid subject position, oscillating between the imaginary (the character) and the corporeal (the actor). The various voices do not result in a coherent, singular and ultimate subject position, once the play's twist has been executed. Crouch's character/actor, presenting the human-‑‑being as a site of unfixed components, addresses the posthuman-‑‑mediatised subject mainly through the aesthetics of character-‑‑actor relationship without explicitly thematising it. Like the posthuman subject, the character/actor appears as 'an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-‑‑informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction.'[109] The character/actor presents the symbolic and material as indistinguishable states of human-‑‑being. This becomes evident particularly when the character and actor become inseparable even though Crouch makes it clear that he is not the character by not raising his arm or showing his so-‑‑called amputated finger.

The hybrid, situated in a liminal space of uncertainty in a constantly varying, heterogeneous context, works against liberal humanism that argues for a 'human essence' or 'natural self' as the proprietor of identity and action.[110] It implies a posthumanist view of subjectivity with emphasis on the subject's multifaceted development. But how does the character/actor, with limited or no direct use of media forms and reference to media culture accommodate the posthumanist-‑‑mediatised subject? Hayles proposes an answer to this question in her theory of the posthuman subject. Posthumanism, as Hayles, among others, emphasises, 'does not require the subject to be a literal cyborg.'[111] Posthumanism is not simply

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[108] Bottoms, 'Authorizing the Audience', p. 67.
[109] Hayles, How We Became Posthuman, p. 3.
[110] Ibid., p. 3.
[111] Ibid., p. 4.

about possible non---biological interventions on the body, but about 'new models of subjectivity [implying] that even a biologically unaltered *homo sapiens* count as posthuman'[112] as a consequence of their interaction with, use of, or exposure to the media. This new sense of subjectivity is what Crouch's character/actor performs. Crouch's hybrid addresses mediatised subjectivity with a posthumanist tone that 'is emergent rather than given, distributed rather than located solely in consciousness, emerging from [...] a chaotic world rather than occupying a position of mastery and control removed from it.[113]

Besides the character/actor hybrid, Crouch's use of objects on stage to represent characters and items in the narrative adds to the creation of liminal space between fiction and reality, challenging the liberal humanist subject and character presentation. To elaborate, Crouch does not represent the characters through what Michael Kirby identifies as matrixed or 'symbolized matrix' acting,[114] where referential elements such as costumes enable actors to embody characters. Instead, he uses objects and photos taken from audience members at random to represent characters and things in the story. Crouch deploys objects without any representational connection between the object and the character/thing. He does not humanise or genderise the objects, nor use them as puppets or animate them figuratively as stand---ins for characters. Instead, he 'want[s] the objects manifestly to be themselves and not something else':[115] a lighter or an earring could be the father, a matchbox could be a car, and a lipstick could be Anthony, the brother of the boy.

Crouch's fundamental aim in this staging technique, which foregrounds the mechanics of performance, is to increase audience involvement. Crouch's use of 'object---subjects', as one might call them, gently coerces spectators into believing all sorts of fiction implicitly passed off as fact but, at the same time, increases audience awareness due to the visible non---coincidence between objects and characters. This theatrical strategy underlines the transformative power of theatre based on, according to Erika Fischer---Lichte, the relationship between the stage and the auditorium rather than only the given 'fictive world, within which the channels of communication were limited to the stage'.[116] Crouch increases spectators' awareness of theatricality and their roles in the meaning---making process, reminding them that the theatre

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[112] Ibid., p. 3.
[113] Ibid., p. 291.
[114] Michael Kirby, 'On Acting and Not---Acting', in *Acting (Re)Considered: Theories and Practices,* ed. by Philip Zarrilli (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 40---53 (p. 44).
[115] Crouch in Ilter, '"A process of transformation"', p. 401.
[116] Erika Fischer---Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics,* trans. by Saskya Iris Jain (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 21.

is 'an event, set in motion and terminated by the actions of all the subjects involved – artists and spectators'.[117]

The non--coincidence between objects and subjects also undermines the liberal humanist model of characterisation and manifests posthumanist undertones. The use of objects rather than actors' bodies explicitly presents the material and the symbolic positions, and emphasises the coexistence of these states rather than the domination of one by another. Crouch's staging technique presents the object--character as a protean hybrid of the fictional and the physically material, not a unified being. Hence, character presentation implies a posthumanist perspective as opposed to a liberal humanist one, foregrounding the hybridity of subjectivity.

Crouch presents the objects in front of a camera that projects their images enlarged on the TV screen at the other end of the stage. His motive for presenting the objects through a camera is mainly his interest in the scale of things and in creating perspective by 'going further and further away from something',[118] also asking 'what happens when a thing is mediated.'[119] This underlying interest implies a connection between Crouch's theatrical form and the media--saturated social environment rather than simply suggesting a decorative, representational use of the media technologies. Accordingly, the use of objects as characters through the camera hints at important questions concerning the condition of subjectivity and consciousness in the mediatised society. Crouch's staging technique presents the audience with various simultaneous perspectives on the characters: 'the human scale' (performer--narrator), 'the abstracted human scale' (narrated/fictional character), and 'the *super* abstracted human scale' (objects--as--characters),[120] and the mediated image of the objects through the TV screen. This mode of character presentation proposes a 'multiplication of the human'[121] like the heterogeneous form of posthuman--mediatised subjectivity that humans experience when, for example, they use Facebook.

The next section further analyses Crouch's approach to character presentation by focusing on *An Oak Tree*; it will establish the findings from Crouch's works in relation to the mediatised subject.

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[117] Fischer--Lichte, The Transformative Power of Performance, p. 22.
[118] Crouch in Ilter, , '"A process of transformation", p. 401.
[119] Ibid., p. 401.
[120] Crouch in 'Tim Crouch and Dan Rebellato in Conversation', ed. by Louise LePage, *Platform*, 6:2 (2012), 13--27, (pp. 15.)
[121] Dan Rebellato in 'Tim Crouch and Dan Rebellato in Conversation', p. 15.

4.2. Character/Actor Hybrid in *An Oak Tree*: A Reflection on the Mediatised Subject

An Oak Tree (2005) presents a similar approach to the relationship between character and actor in generating a hybrid subject who oscillates between different realities. The play is inspired by Michael Craig---Martin's 1973 installation piece *an oak tree*, a glass of water on a shelf which Craig---Martin claimed to have transformed into an oak tree without changing its appearance. *An Oak Tree* is about the encounter between Andy, a father grieving after the death of his daughter in a car accident, and a stage hypnotist, the driver of the car that killed Andy's daughter, during one of his performances. Andy does not know what to do in the face of grief. As a way of dealing with his pain, Andy has let himself believe that he has transformed a tree into his daughter. The Hypnotist, on the other hand, has lost his ability to perform his profession after the accident. He is 'honouring old bookings'[122] and trying to get his 'mojo'[123] back. Unlike the storytelling and monologue format of *My Arm*, this play is based on dramatic dialogue. Tim Crouch's playscript here (as with *My Arm*) acts as a 'guideline'[124] for the theatrical experience.

An Oak Tree premiered at the Traverse Theatre during the 2005 Edinburgh Festival. In performance, Crouch appeared both as himself (the maker of the piece) and the first actor (who knows the text, has rehearsed it and plays the Hypnotist). Also, in a scene between the Father, Andy, and Dawn, he plays the role of Dawn. A professional actor '*either male or female and of any adult age*',[125] who has neither seen a performance nor read the script, performs the role of Andy along with the roles of the participants in the Hypnotist's show. Crouch asks the guest actor[126] to spontaneously perform the tasks that he sets through direct instruction, via earphones (connected to a Walkman/iPod), or the script, while the audience represents the audience at the Hypnotist's show in a pub, a year into the future. This section initially presents a brief overview of the dramaturgy of character in the play text in order then to discuss how Crouch plays off the liberal humanist subject with its posthuman---mediatised counterpart in performance.

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[122] Tim Crouch, *An Oak Tree* (London: Oberon, 2005), p. 49.
[123] Ibid., p. 50.
[124] Crouch, 'Notes' in *An Oak Tree*, p. 14.
[125] Ibid., p. 14. (Stage directions are in italics in the original text.)
[126] Throughout the analysis the second or guest actor will be named as such; occasionally it might be referred to as 'the actor'. Crouch, on the other hand, will always be named as himself or as the first actor.

The play text explicitly exposes two discrete levels, 'series of "layers", or dramatic frames, superimposed over one another.'[127] The first group of characters, situated in the outer layer, act as the 'actors', while the second layer consists of the roles the actors are enacting: the Hypnotist and the Father (Andy), and some other dramatis personae such as Andy's wife Dawn and audience members attending the Hypnotist's show. The opening stage directions distinctly set the layered structure of the play: the first actor welcomes and introduces the second, guest actor who has never seen or read the play. The stage direction ('*The second actor reads the part of the FATHER from the script.*'),[128] the speech prefix (FATHER) allocated to the guest actor and the explicit introduction of his/her role in the dialogue ('HYPNOTIST: You're a father. Your name's Andy.'[129]) indicate the guest actor's responsibility for enacting the role of the Father, while the first actor plays the role of the Hypnotist. In the text, Crouch then enhances this layer when the first actor explains that the theatre audience watching the performance represents the audience at the Hypnotist's show: 'in a pub near the Oxford Road [...] this time next year'.[130] As the play develops, the discrete layering between the fictional world of the hypnotic show and the 'real' world of the actors becomes rather complex --- mainly because the second actor is always prompted by the first actor through direct instruction or written text, and thus his/her own identity as an actor becomes hard to discern. Also, when he plays the Hypnotist the first actor is always somehow the first actor playing the role, which blurs the boundaries further. This complex structure is in evidence when the Father/second actor and the Hypnotist/first actor move in and out of these positions:

> HYPNOTIST: Go and sit back in the audience.
> FATHER: In the pub?
> HYPNOTIST: Yes.
> FATHER: But they've all gone.
> HYPNOTIST: Yes. The show was a failure; they became embarrassed and left. [...] Have to think about a career change. Could be worse, I could be dead! Sorry. I'm so sorry.
> FATHER: It's fine. It's not really me. [...] And anyway, it hasn't happened yet.
> HYPNOTIST: What?
> FATHER: You said it's a year from now.
> HYPNOTIST: Yes! Of course.[131]

Here, in the first line it is hard to tell whether it is the Hypnotist telling the Father to go and sit in the audience at the pub or if it is the first actor asking the second actor to sit with the audience in the performance space. The second line reinforces this uncertainty through the

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127 Bottoms, 'Authorizing the Audience', p. 66.
128 Crouch, *An Oak Tree*, p. 15.
129 Ibid., p. 17.
130 Ibid., p. 17.
131 Ibid., p. 49---50.

Father's or the second actor's hesitation. However, the third line clarifies that it is the Hypnotist and Father talking and they are in the pub. So the two characters carry on their conversation. However, in the eighth line there occurs a shift as the second actor starts speaking rather than the Father. Here, the second actor exposes his/her identity as an actor, and self---reflexively refers to the staging of the story about the Father and the Hypnotist. In such complex instances on the page, Crouch always provides a clarifying note either through the stage directions or as above, through the context of the dialogue. The distinct separation presents each subject as a unified whole, separate from the other, as liberal---humanist individuals in their own entirety and autonomy. However, in performance, as discussed below, Crouch subverts the clear distinction between the subject positions by taking the layering further, generating an 'almost vertiginous'[132] experience with fluid, hybrid subjectivity.

The performance offers an intriguing view of character presentation and the relationship between character and actor, which, as is Crouch's aim, increases audience involvement in the meaning---making process while raising important questions about subjectivity and human agency. At the beginning of the play, Crouch introduces himself and the role of the Hypnotist he is going to enact by describing the character exactly as Crouch himself looks: 'I'm being a Hypnotist. Look. I'm forty---one years old. I've got a red face, a bald head and bony shoulders.'[133] This provides the audience with the traditional model of actor as a stand---in for a character who, through the 'symbolized matrix',[134] is physically transformed for the role through costumes, make---up or props. Crouch here eschews any incompatibility between character and actor. This congruity, in addition to the fact that Crouch knows and has rehearsed the text, prepares the ground for 'acting', for the seamless character---actor relationship. However, the audience is well---aware that Crouch is playing the role; it is impossible to forget Crouch's introductions or his constant interactions with the second actor even when he is the Hypnotist.

However, Crouch does not simply create the dramatic illusion necessary to repress the actor's presence as himself to engender a fully embodied character. Instead, during the performance, Crouch at times detaches the actor from the character by making it clear when Crouch is 'himself' and when he is in role. This, however, does not make the actor just a 'text---bearer'[135] responsible for delivering lines without enacting a role, but signifies two different states: when the actor is and is not 'in character'. For instance, in the sixth scene Crouch

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132 Bottoms, 'Authorizing the Audience', p. 67.
133 Crouch, *An Oak Tree*, p. 16.
134 Kirby, 'On Acting and Not---Acting', p. 44.
135 See: Gerda Poschmann qtd. in David Barnett, 'Reading and Performing Uncertainty', p. 140---1.

clearly appears to be himself when he asks the second actor: 'Who's your favourite character? [...] Do you get the story? [...] Are you okay if we get back to it? [...] You're really good. You're doing really well.'[136] It is also worth noting that this text is virtually meaningless since the actor may not be doing 'really well' at all. The exposé of the shift between the fictional and the 'real' identities, what Crouch identifies as '[d]isambiguating',[137] generates in a Brechtian sense, 'a knowingness on the audience's part'[138] initially about the identity of the speaking subject, the artifice of theatre and characters, and, by extension, about the increasing constructedness of subjectivity and consciousness in contemporary culture.

Although the actor seems able to separate himself from the character whenever he (Crouch) needs to, the audience's perception of the actor may subvert this binary distinction between the fictional and physical self. In the context of the transformative potential of theatre, here particularly due to the layered structure and symbolized matrix state (the Hypnotist's show in a pub a year into the future), the audience are inclined to perceive Crouch as acting even when he steps out of role. This performative state, which Kirby calls 'received acting',[139] refers to the audience's reception of and reaction to the actor. Here, the theatrical transformation happens chiefly through the audience's reception rather than the actor's 'acting'. This is most evident in the scene where the Father, under the influence of hypnotism, is convinced that he is naked in front of the audience in the pub, and has 'shit down [his] legs.'[140] Noticing this, the Hypnotist pretends to clean the Father's legs and clothe him with imaginary clothes whilst giving directives to the Father or the second actor. It becomes unclear whether Crouch is directing the second actor, or the Hypnotist is giving instructions to the Father. Also, it is difficult to tell whether the second actor responds to Crouch's instructions or the Father responds to the Hypnotist's directives:

> HYPNOTIST: Yes. Yes. All right. I'm sorry. You're naked. You have shit down your legs. [...] Here. Let me clean you up. Here, with this cloth. This is the right kind of cloth, isn't it? Say: 'Yes.'
> FATHER: Yes.
> HYPNOTIST: Soon get you clean. Stand here and face straight out.[141]

In such scenes the boundaries between the two subject positions blur and, as Bottoms observes, 'all these levels are somehow perceived simultaneously, superimposed on one

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136 Crouch, *An Oak Tree*, p. 47, 49.
137 Crouch in Ilter, '"A process of transformation", p. 399.
138 Ibid., p. 399.
139 Kirby, 'On Acting and Not---Acting', p. 45.
140 Crouch, *An Oak Tree*, p. 38.
141 Ibid., p. 38---39.

another.'[142] This, along with Crouch's 'disambiguation' about the artifice of characterisation, fosters 'a knowingness on the audience's part that there is uncertainty or [...] a vacillation between these two states',[143] and, accordingly, leads to 'an ambiguity on a more profound level about how we are represented and how we represent ourselves'.[144]

The vacillation between the fictional and the real relates to the posthumanist--mediatised subject yet without *direct* reference to the media, though this may occur indirectly through the subject's exposure to media culture and images. One might consider that this reading of Crouch's character---actor is somewhat irrelevant to his objectives or that there is a tentative relationship to the mediatised subject. However, Crouch's approach to character presentation, which evokes aspects of what it means to be human today, can be an indirect and even unconscious manifestation of the impact of mediatisation on human's experience and subjectivity. Crouch furthers the critical connection between character presentation in the theatre and the question of the self by presenting a more mobile and multiple senses of subjectivity and identity through the second actor.

Crouch introduces a different, experienced guest actor for each performance of the play. The actor can be an adult of either sex who has not seen or read the text before. Crouch creates an intentional unknowingness on the second actor's part by withholding the text and not allowing the second actor to rehearse. This unknowingness is fundamental to the play: 'the actor, who doesn't know the play, plays a character who doesn't know their world, from grief, really, and that character is played by someone who doesn't know their world, by not knowing the play they're in'.[145] The deliberate withholding of the text allows the second actor to spontaneously react to the play and freely perform the role of the Father without preconceptions. This format seems to liberate the actor from the limitations and requirements of traditional acting. Regardless of age or sex, the second actor does not physically change himself/herself to 'become' the character. In a similar way to Crouch's presentation of objects in *My Arm* as themselves rather than animating them as characters, he deploys the actor as himself/herself without physical transformation, consequently generating a non---coincidental relationship between the character and the actor by describing the character as differently as possible from how each guest actor looks. This sometimes entails changing the definition of the character, as Crouch indicates: 'If I have an actor who looks a bit like the traditional description in the text, I would change the description in the text so that they look like

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[142] Bottoms, 'Authorizing the Audience', p. 71.
[143] Crouch in Ilter, '"A process of transformation", p. 399.
[144] Ibid., p. 399.
[145] Crouch in 'Tim Crouch and Dan Rebellato in Conversation', p. 18.

something other than what they are.'[146] The disparity between the character and the second actor, and the fact that the second actor does not see the text before the performance suggest that he/she is liberated from text---based, figurative representation. However, this does not stop the audience from 'seeing' the actor as the character rather than the actor himself/herself. Thus, besides what is presented on the stage, the audience's perception depends on 'received acting'.[147]

However, Crouch does not let the second actor perform without any 'support' or direction. He instructs him/her through an earpiece, scripts and direct instructions: 'Look at me. Look. Ask me what I'm being, say: "What are you being?"'[148] The performance is strictly scripted; even the instances of 'off---script' conversations between the actor and Crouch, which are given as stage directions in the play, are all predetermined: '*Excellent. Hold that position. The Hypnotist will ask you to put your arm down, but I want you to just hold that position. Hold it until I say so. It won't be too long.*'[149] In this context, the actor seems to be responsible for spontaneously performing the predetermined text. Although withholding the text from the guest actor at the beginning of the performance liberates him/her from representational limitations of the dramatic text, the strict adherence to it afterwards limits this freedom, so the second actor has no ultimate control over language or action, but is symbolically and linguistically manipulated and constructed. There is a parallel between the artifice of the second actor and that of the Father insofar as they are symbolically constituted by the other, Crouch/Hypnotist. The constructedness of the characters speaks to that of subjectivity in terms of moving away from the liberal humanist position to posthumanist hybridity, with multiple parts symbolically and discursively constituted. This is not to say the subject is depicted as a purely semiotic construct with no agency, but critically refers to the impact of external structures on the sense and experience of subjectivity.

Additionally, the second actor's constant exposure to the text and directives may trigger the urge to act out the parts. An experienced actor's spontaneous responses may be constrained due to his/her professional experience because he/she may, consciously or not, tend to take on the role, gestures and language. Consequently, it is difficult to distinguish between when the actor is in role and when he/she is not, or to what extent the non---acting performer is detached from the part. As Stephen Bottoms points out about Terry O'Connor's performance as the second actor: 'Her responses seem to me to be "for real", but I have to keep

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[146] Crouch in Ilter, '"A process of transformation", p. 401.
[147] Kirby, 'On Acting and Not---Acting', p. 45.
[148] Crouch, *An Oak Tree*, p. 16.
[149] Ibid., p. 27. (Italics from the original.)

reminding myself that O'Connor is an experienced performer, who may simply be doing a great job of spontaneously acting spontaneous."[150] This presents the actor as the container of both identities and realities --- fluid and heterogeneous with no fixed, coherent position --- and raises the question of autonomy, suggesting a form of subjectivity that is not distinguishable from any social---symbolic reality *other than* or *external to* the subject. Hayles argues: 'there is no a priori way to identify a self---will that can be clearly distinguished from an other---will."[151] The symbolic *other* (fictional character) in Crouch's work is mostly mediated to the subject (actor) via the play---script and Walkman/iPod. When this mediated process is considered, the hybrid subjectivity corresponds more directly to the mediatised subject since the process refers to the shaping influence of the media on subjectivity.

Crouch further questions the changing notion of the self through a subtle parallel between the thematic content of the play and the model of character presentation he employs. The central theme of *An Oak Tree* is loss. There are two different angles to this theme; one is through Andy, who has lost his daughter and does not know what to do in the face of such grief, and the other is through the Hypnotist, who has lost his power of suggestion and ability to perform his act after killing Andy's daughter in the accident. Ironically, it is mainly through the power of suggestion that Andy can cope with his grief, as he believes that he has transformed a tree into his daughter. In the face of trauma and grief, Andy also loses his sense of place in the world and his relationship to the world and other people through which to make sense of his existence as an individual.

The rupture between the self and the world manifests itself through a rupture between language and character, as language is the means whereby subjects make sense of the world and their position in it. Andy, too traumatised to express himself, speaks, more often than not, the words the Hypnotist provides him with. Andy relates to the world through the language of an external 'other', who foregrounds his dissociation, and implies that his autonomy is limited. Andy's dislocation due to his loss and grief, goes beyond this personal traumatic condition. Given the character/actor hybrid as a reference to the mediatised subject, his disorientation could relate to the existential trauma of the postmodern---posthuman subject. The subject under these circumstances becomes a 'wandering [self], without the big picture overview of the human place in world---time that would help it locate itself'.[152] There are no longer grand narratives or cognitive maps, to use Jean---François Lyotard's and Fredric Jameson's terms, respectively, to provide orientation. Thus, the subject faces a 'conceptual dethroning of the

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[150] Bottoms, 'Authorizing the Audience', p. 71.
[151] Hayles, How We Became Posthuman, p. 4.
[152] Mansfield, Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway, p. 167.

unified essential subject'.[153] He/she is relocated with multiple identities, parts and processes, 'constructed by language, culture, and power relations, rather than an innate essence.'[154]

The sense of disorientation is reinforced through the unknowingness of the second actor about his position in the performance and the construction process of his identity by the external other. Like the character, the actor does not know what to say, how to relate to the world or even his/her identity, until he/she is given the language to define it. Andy's existence makes sense through the enactment of the guest actor, whose existence is shaped by Crouch, the actor/playwright. This layered structure foregrounds the workings of theatrical representation and character presentation, and also proposes a critical reference to the greater constructedness and disorientation of contemporary subjectivity. The explicit use of earphones and printed material through which the actor and character relate to the world also emphasises the constitutive power of mediated directions over subjectivity.

The Hypnotist, coping with a different kind of agony --- the loss of his ability to use the suggestive power of words --- manifests a problematic relation to language. He has to master words in his profession and is supposed to be eloquent but is unable to communicate or perform: 'Since your daughter's death, I've not – I'm not. I've not been much of a hypnotist.'[155] The inability to speak fluently or make sense through language is evidenced when the Hypnotist takes up his microphone to open his show:

> **Ladies and gentlemen.**
> **I will welcoming.**
> **I will.**
> **I.**[156]

His language is not only fragmented, but gives the sense of a pre---prepared and rehearsed language, decorated with ready---made audience address phrases and jokes:

> There is one are two types of person who cannot be volunteered hypnotised. The first type is anyone who is mentally unstable. If you are mentally unstable please do not volunteer for the for tonight's show. Also, in if you have asthma or the or ep---
> epilepsy, please remain in your chair. Also, if there are any ladies here, ladies here who, ladies who are pregnant. If you are pregnant, congratulations, but please don't voluntise teer for tonight's show. There may be some ladies who are not

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153 Léon Turner, *Theology, Psychology, and the Plural Self* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2008), p. 2.
154 Hetty Zock, 'The Existential Self in a Culture of Multiplicity: Hubert Hermans's Theory of the Dialogical Self', in *In Search of Self: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Personhood*, ed. by J. Wentzel van Huyssteen and Erik P. Wiebe (Cambridge, UK: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2011), pp. 163---182 (p. 163).
155 Crouch, *An Oak Tree*, p. 40.
156 Ibid., p. 19. Crouch uses bold characters in the play text to indicate the Hypnotist's speaks through a microphone.

pregnant but would like to be. Then come and see me after the show and I'll sort you out.[157]

The fragmented and pre---fabricated language suggests a disruption of its particularity. His language no longer conveys the meanings it used to communicate. This rupture corresponds to the unknowingness of the Hypnotist about what to do in life since he lost his 'mojo'[158] and talent as a hypnotist. He needs to re---define his identity and relocate himself in the world. Here, there is no tenable and firm link between the Hypnotist's disorientation and postmodern subject. This is particularly because unlike the thematic connection between the Father and the second actor, the Hypnotist's loss of control over his language does not manifest itself through the first actor's use of language.

Unlike the character of the Hypnotist, Crouch has great control over language. As the first actor, who knows the text and has rehearsed it, Crouch's speech is fluent when he is not playing the role. Moreover, Crouch is the author of the text that he delivers on the stage which reinforces his control over the material. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that there are two Crouches: the one who wrote the play and the one 'playing' Tim Crouch---the actor in front of the audience. The latter, who is the first actor in the performance, seems to be a self---knowing subject, the epitome of a liberal humanist individual compared to the posthuman guest actor/Father. However, like the Hypnotist's performance, Crouch's language and actions on stage, whether represented by Crouch himself or another actor, are predetermined. This is most evident in the completely scripted off---stage conversations between the first and second actors. No word that appears to originate from the first actor, even the ones off---script, actually does originate but is given to him by the author (even if the author, as in this case, is himself). Thus, his subjectivity is linguistically constituted and his singularity is limited, which, accordingly, destabilises his liberal humanist position. Although this is not overt, the constructed position of Crouch and the Hypnotist addresses the posthuman---mediatised subject and emphasises the shaping power of social---symbolic discourses and practices over subjectivity.

In sum, as texts *My Arm* and *An Oak Tree* follow the dramatic model of characterisation, representing the human as fully---formed characters with agency. However, given that texts in Crouch's works serve as 'outlines' for performance rather than a definitive authority over it, the dramatic mode of characterisation is deconstructed on the stage. Both productions offer a character---actor hybrid, a multiple and fluid subject that shifts between the materially real and

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[157] Ibid., p. 20.
[158] Ibid., p. 50.

the fictional rather than embodying fixed, autonomous subjectivity. The model of hybrid subjectivity in both performances does not directly address the mediatised subject, nor make great use of technologies to show the media---human interface. In a more implicit manner, through its aesthetics, the character---actor hybrid offers a view of what it means to be human in contemporary culture. The question here is not whether or not Crouch consciously intends to make a critical reference to the mediatised subject and world, but whether, the mode of theatrical expression accommodates the mode of being and consciousness, which Crouch's character---actor hybrid, perhaps implicitly, yet effectively, addresses. The model of hybrid subjectivity also generates a sense of uncertainty in the auditorium as it situates the audience in a liminal space between consciousness of a variety of differing theatrical artifices. This epistemological instability provides a space for the audience to participate in the meaning---making process and encourages them to negotiate their own assumptions about the theatrical event, and perhaps about their own subjectivity in relation to the fluid hybrid subject on the stage.

5. On *Pornography* and 'Being' in Pornographic Times: The Mediatised Subject as an Individualised and Objectified Self

This section investigates the mode of character presentation in Simon Stephens's *Pornography*, which accommodates the mediatised subject in relation to the interrelated social processes of individualisation/deindividuation, alienation and objectification, subjects I introduced earlier (see section 2.2.2.). Here, the analysis will illustrate these aspects of the contemporary human by focussing initially on the dramaturgy of character in the play, then on two of *Pornography*'s stage productions, the world premiere (Hanover, Germany, 2007) and the first English production (Edinburgh, 2008).

Stephens wrote *Pornography* in 2007, picturing a landscape of terror and indifference with reference to the 7/7 bombings in London. Despite its 'Britishness' in terms of setting, references (Luton airport, Fitness First backpacks, the Olympics) and 'characters', the play was premiered in Germany as a co---production between the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg and the Festival Theaterformen at the Schauspielhannover in October 2007, directed by Sebastian Nübling. *Pornography* made its British debut in summer 2008 at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival before transferring to the Birmingham Rep in September of the same year.

The setting is a week, largely in London, when the Live 8 concert, the G8 summit, the 2012 Olympics announcement and the 7/7 bombings happened. The temporal setting gathers,

yet does not unite, the lives of eight people: a female solicitor, disclosing trade secrets to her boss's rival; a pupil in love with his teacher; two incestuous siblings; one of the 7/7 bombers coming down to London on the day of the bombing; a university lecturer and his student; and a lonely widow, watching online pornography and craving human connection. Although every character in this mosaic of human lives brings different fragments of stories, the themes of deindividuation, alienation and the objectification of human beings in the contemporary world link their narratives. Stephens sets these motifs as the central thematic concern of the play, which he introduces metaphorically through the play's title.

According to Stephens, '[w]e live in pornographic times'[159] where people objectify others not very differently from 'the process of objectification that goes on in the production and consumption of pornography'.[160] Human beings in today's highly mediatised society perceive and connect to the world and other humans beyond their physical experience through media technologies. This state of 'virtual proximity' and the consumerist culture ingrained in the mentality of the individualised subject leads him/her to judge other humans 'after the patterns of consumer objects by the value of pleasure they are likely to offer, and in "value for money" terms.'[161] In a similar way, the human body in pornography becomes an object of desire and satisfaction; people beyond the screens become images and experiences to consume. It is this change in perception, intensified by individualisation and media---saturated culture, that *Pornography* addresses through direct references to the contemporary mediatised environment and through inventive formal strategies. The play is filled with explicit and recognisable images such as the *Metro*, eBay, CCTV cameras, television, iPod, and videogames that emphasise the omnipresence of the media in contemporary everyday life. These direct instances establish and reinforce the link between the thematic content of the play and media--- dominated culture.

Stephens complements the thematic content and critical discourse of the play with an inventive approach to dramaturgy, in terms of plot composition and, particularly, character presentation. The play comprises seven scenes that are, like the lives it pictures, disconnected: there is neither a linear story line nor a logically constructed plot uniting the fragments in an easily recognisable order. Only the temporal and spatial structure forms common ground for the disjointed stories, yet the shared setting does not necessarily generate a coherent narrative. In addition, one of the most striking formal features of *Pornography* is that it refuses to

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[159] Simon Stephens qtd. in Lyn Gardner, 'The finger---pointer', *The Guardian,* 4 August 2008 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2008/aug/04/edinburghfestival.festivals> [accessed 17 August 2010]

[160] Ibid., paragraph 5.

[161] Bauman, *Liquid Love*, p. 75.

attribute character names to the text or to mark the change of speakers.[162] Unattributed text is not a new dramaturgical device. As discussed in Chapter 2, plays such as *Crave* and *Attempts*, or those written by Heiner Müller and Peter Handke in the German tradition, use similar dramaturgical strategies. Despite having common ground with these plays, Stephens's text is more relevant to the mediatised subject and the changing nature of human relations in a mediatised culture.

To elaborate: unlike the liberal humanist concept of character, which represents humans as fully developed, individual dramatic personae, the characters in *Pornography* appear to be figures or silhouettes without names or detailed information about their personalities, thoughts or motives, and with limited consistency, psychological development. For example, the female character in the first scene is a mother and a solicitor sharing her boss's business secrets with his rival. However, Stephens provides no further information about this character regarding her past, for example, leaving her as a snapshot of a character within the limits of this fragment of a scene. This withholding of information engenders indeterminacy. The fifth scene furthers the epistemological uncertainty hitherto developed in the monologue form in a dialogue between undefined characters. At the beginning of the conversation, it is not clear how many characters there are or who they are. The dialogue continues for a while without attaching a clearly identifiable individual voice to the speakers; then it implies that the speakers are siblings: 'You decide. Have you seen Mum and Dad?'.[163] This relationship becomes more evident later in the conversation when one of the speakers say: 'You're my sister.'[164] Nevertheless, the scattered information about their kinship or identities do not lead to any definitive picture of the characters, nor provide the reader/audience with anything approaching an in---depth understanding of their identities. On the contrary, as the scene moves forward the sense of uncertainty becomes more intense due to the fragmented and discontinuous flow of the conversation:

> You were absolutely mad last night. But it is.
> —
> What do you want to do today?
> Go out.
> Where do you want to go?
> *
> She was a cleaner in St Pancras, at the train station. She found out she was pregnant. This was a hundred years ago. She came here. She spent all her money on getting a room. Threw herself over the side of the stairs. All the way down into

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[162] There are only dashes in front of the lines in the Scene Number 2, which indicates the use of dialogue form. Simon Stephens, *Plays: 2* (*Pornography*) (London: Methuen, 2009), p. 273. All references to *Pornography* are taken from this edition.

[163] Stephens, *Pornography*, p. 231.

[164] Ibid., p. 239.

the lobby. I've never seen her. People talk about her all the time. That's why they
built the handrail.
How did you find out you could get in?[165]

Besides the discontinuity of the conversation, a hyphen in place of the character's
response indicates perhaps silence or a pause, increasing the indeterminacy and also implying a
sense of absence, perhaps, of an individual voice. Similarly, the use of an asterisk before an
abrupt change of the topic and mode of the narrative seems to function as an indicator of a shift
or pause, and is not identified earlier through a stage direction. This increases uncertainty, and
draws the reader/audience into a guessing game about who these characters really are, and why
they are presented like incomplete silhouettes as opposed to fully---formed individuals. When
considered in relation to the play's socio---cultural setting, the anonymity and incompleteness
of characterisation offers a critical link to the condition of subjectivity in the contemporary
world in terms of the dissolution of the idea of the self---sustaining subject, promised by
individualisation.

Stephens underpins the limitations of individualisation by challenging the characters'
once firm relation to and control over language through the unattributed text. Here, the text
stands on its own and the characters are detached from it as its means, rather than its
originators. Consequently, the characters do not seem to be the sole source of language or
meaning, nor does language appear the indicator of the characters' singularity, their individual
voices and thoughts. In other words, most of the characters on the page have restricted agency
over the words they speak. Nevertheless, the dialogue and language are realistic; thus, a director
would have to address and indicate this status of the speakers in performance. Despite the
characters' limited agency, Stephens's unattributed text does not entirely divorce the characters
from the language and situate them as mere text---bearers with no sense of individuality and
consistency as it does in *Attempts*. Rather, the characters in *Pornography*, like those in *Crave*,
present some (limited) personal traits and anecdotes through their narrative descriptions,
monologues and dialogues. Nevertheless, the incomplete and underdeveloped mode of
characterisation prevails over consistent characterisation with agency and entirety. The
characters and their narratives remain limited to specific fragmented scenes and they are no
longer structured as unified, three---dimensional personae.

Stephens highlights this aspect of language and characterisation through the use of media
discourses as opposed to self---determined utterances in the final scene, analysed below. Along
with the contemporary context of the play, the unattributed language accommodates

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[165] Ibid., p. 234.

individualised subjects whose subjectivity is shaped by symbolic structures. Stephens's characterisation evokes what Anthony Giddens defines as a common experience of all authors dealing with subjectivity in capitalist systems: 'feelings of powerlessness in relation to a diverse and large---scale social universe.'[166] In contrast to the liberal humanist subject, who believes him or herself to be substantially in control of the influences shaping her life, in late---capitalism, 'the individual cedes control of his [sic] life circumstances to the dominating influences of machines and markets.'[167] What is considered self---propelled or individuated has become or always been a product of external agencies, promoting individualisation.

The critical analogy between the aesthetics of characterisation and the phenomenology of 'being' in contemporary culture gains another dimension through the fragmented plot structure. Each character and story is confined to one scene alone and has no relationship to the others in the play. The characters may be related to one another through shared instances of time and space; nevertheless, neither they nor their stories link or develop together to form a coherent narrative. The structure works as a critical tool to generate a sense of disconnectedness and alienation, accommodating the condition of 'being' in a globally connected yet increasingly less communal social environment. This critique becomes more pronounced in the scene where a lonely old woman talks about watching television, sending emails and using the internet, and defines the latter as being pulled 'towards the world that is there, on the other side of [her] screen'.[168] She lives an isolated life of her own preference: 'I don't see anybody. I don't speak to anybody. And God, the fucking horror if I were forced to.'[169] However, despite her lack of interest in other people, there is an underlying reference to her longing for human bonds. This becomes most clear towards the end of the scene when she smells barbecued chicken from a house while walking home on the day of the bombings and knocks on the door to ask for a piece of chicken. They think that she is 'fucking retarded',[170] and after whisperings among themselves, which the reader cannot see as the lines are left blank, they give her a piece of chicken and ask her to leave with no sign of interest or sympathy for her.

This scene clearly addresses human isolation and the pursuit of intimacy through the character of the woman and of human alienation through the attitude of the strangers in the house. The critique of alienation and apathy runs throughout the play for the characters'

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[166] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self---Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, California: Stanford UP, 1991), p. 191.
[167] Ibid., p. 191.
[168] Stephens, *Pornography*, p. 270.
[169] Stephens, *Pornography*, p. 269.
[170] Ibid., p. 274.

attempts to go beyond isolation do not succeed, as none of the scenes end in a sense of togetherness or human connection. The construction of characters as disengaged beings, situated in a landscape of iPods, surveillance cameras and television, concurrently presents a formal and thematic critique of the increasing frailty of social relations. Consequently, the dramaturgical structure reinforces the play's thematic content and critique of subjectivity and human relations in a contemporary media---driven environment.

The last scene of *Pornography* develops an important perspective on characterisation that differs from the style of the rest of the play but manifests similar critical implications concerning human subjectivity and relations. Stephens structures this scene as fifty---two separate, fragmentary descriptions with no speech prefixes. Each fragmented utterance is numbered and gives information about each of the fifty---two victims of the 7/7 bombings. Numbering the victims as opposed to naming them critically speaks to a culture of institutionalised individualisation that deindividuates and objectifies people. Thus, considered in line with the thematic content and continual references to media---saturated culture (e.g. CCTV cameras, television, iPod), the numbered utterances imply the objectification of humanity possibly, but not exclusively, by the media. Some of the numbered lines evoke various media---related discourses, styles and indirectly refer to the media culture:

> 13: The twenty---six---year---old, an engineering executive from Hendon, was killed on the number 30 bus after he was evacuated from King's Cross.[171] [...]
> 24: She attended the mosque every Friday, but loved Western culture and fashions and regularly shopped for designer clothes, shoes and handbags. She worked as a cashier at the Co---operative Bank in Islington.[172] [...]
> 43: —[173]

As seen in these examples, the numbered lines are fragmentary descriptions. Like the scenes preceding them, they are glimpses, taken from a wide variety of perspectives. They present a mosaic of diverse discourses mainly in an impersonal tone and with no clearly identified source. These descriptions refer to the way the media present human beings and involve, though implicitly, media patterns. For example, the impersonal and formal tone of number 13 evokes the tone and style of broadcast journalism or news broadcasting on radio or television. Number 24 relates to consumer capitalism and cultural assimilation with a focus on the cliché binary between Islam and Western culture and on the contradiction between what the victim's job was and what she consumed. Highlighting such superficial characteristics of a victim killed in a tragic event connotes the discourse of human interest television programmes, the way

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[171] Ibid., p. 276.
[172] Ibid., p. 277.
[173] Ibid., p. 279.

these media treat people as means to attract audience---consumer attention, and so foreground the sensational or polemical aspects of their stories to attract interest. Number 43, on the other hand, is the only number with no commentary. The gap may suggest many meanings (e.g. a reference to an unidentified victim), but its presence as absence merely poses a question and resists an answer. The impersonal tone used to articulate personal qualities and the brevity of the information about the victims in these descriptions speak of the ways the media portrays people. Media forms such as TV news broadcasting or tabloid journalism often reduce the lives of human beings to short instances as in 'news material' that quickly appear on screens, is consumed and forgotten. Likewise, the presentation of the 7/7 victims through anonymous, impersonal and brief fragments reduces their lives to superficial fragments of information or even to silence or nothingness ('43: ---'[174]). They are presented like the flickering images on a television screen. The influence of the media brings with it another inevitable consequence. It affects and shapes the ways in which humans perceive and relate to other humans, which has already considerably changed due to the relatively isolated life styles of people in the age of media---saturation and individualisation. The structuring of this scene, implying objectification, along with the disconnectedness of the characters, accommodates the increasing frailty of human relations – ironically --- in a globally connected landscape.

The form of the play and its real---life references generate an aesthetically innovative and a critical response to the mediatised subject, leaving the reader/audience in a state of uncertainty, thus allowing them to formulate further critical readings regarding their own position as subjects and interpersonal relations in contemporary culture.

5.1. *Pornography* on Stage

Whilst generating a landscape that refers to certain aspects of 'being' in the media age, *Pornography*'s unattributed and discontinuous form along with the media---related motifs and discourses opens the text to multiple readings on stage and encourages creative input from the stage and the auditorium. At its world premiere in Germany, *Pornography* presented the audience with a stage set picturing a city in ruins, a contemporary setting with implied references to today's world. The director Sebastian Nübling set the stage against an immense, fragmented image of Brueghel's 'Tower of Babel' as an unstable edifice, 'like a huge unfinished jigsaw puzzle with half the pieces lying around the floor.'[175] The presentation of Brueghel's painting as a fragmented mosaic on the stage emphasised the fragmented structure of the play,

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[174] Ibid., p. 279.
[175] Maik Hamburger, 'Theatertreffen in Berlin, May 2008' in 'Backpages 18.4', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 18: 4 (2008), 531–544, (pp. 541).

and visualised the disintegration of contemporary society, the inability of human beings to communicate, and the destructive effect of the 7/7 and other terrorist attacks.

Nübling emphasised the anonymous form of Stephens's text. He situated all the actors simultaneously on stage, sometimes attributing multiple roles to them and mostly refused to identify them with individual names. Nübling rarely used props to physically transform the actors into characters. There were a few instances where he used props and accessories to indicate an actor's change of role from the one in a previous scene. For example, he used high-heeled shoes to imply one of the male actors was enacting the role of a female teacher, or a relatively old actress represented the old woman in the second scene not only through age similarity, but also by carrying a walking stick. Nevertheless, despite such congruence between some actors and characters, the discontinuity of the narrative and the disconnectedness between characters did not allow for dramatic representation as such.

Nübling benefitted from the freedom the anonymity offers, and proposed alternative interpretations of some characters on stage by deploying actors who did not fit the role in terms of their physical appearance or gender. For instance, in the sixth scene of the play, a pupil called Jason falls for his teacher, Lisa, (one of the rare characters with names). On stage, however, Nübling presented Lisa using a male actor. Likewise, he interpreted the fifth scene in a way that differs from what the play suggests. As stated earlier, Stephens's text suggests that the characters in this scene are siblings having an incestuous relationship and that one of the characters is the sister. Nübling, however, employed two male actors, making the incestuous relationship more transgressive. Besides the uncertainty about the characters due to the unattributed, fragmented form of the play, Nübling's technique offered a form of disparity – yet not a complete separation --- between the characters and actors. The performance furthered the destabilisation of the liberal humanist characterisation and presented characters, by extension, humans as fluid, deindividuated subjects. Nübling did not use technology on stage to offer a direct link between characters and the mediatised self, but the mode of theatrical expression and the references to media---saturation (e.g. the verbal references to emailing, EBay, etc. in characters' conversations) suggested a link between the setting, characterisation and contemporary society.

Nübling's interpretation also reinforced the play's reference to social relations by situating the actors in separate areas on the stage. Whilst the actors in the staged scenes performed, the other actors remained on stage, yet showed no interest in the ongoing action. They wandered around or gathered pieces of Brueghel's mosaic. Their detachment and

indifference generated a sense of disconnectedness, which, considered in relation to the contemporary setting, could be read as a critical tool to foreground the looseness of human bonds. The actors' failure to gather Brueghel's painting also added to the sense of social disintegration. Nübling's is a compelling interpretation of *Pornography*, exploiting its aesthetic dynamism and highlighting the text's deliberate opacity as a critique of mediatised culture that was able to reach beyond the theme of British society at the time of 7/7 bombings.

In the first British production of *Pornography*,[176] Sean Holmes's setting illustrated the media-‑saturated landscape of modern society. The stage was a 'big mess of TV screens, stereo speakers and exposed lights […] all connected up somehow by a riot of wires and extension cables that stretched out from the auditorium.'[177] The director presented a microcosm of London the week in July before the attacks on stage where 'the faint sounds of Coldplay mix with the electric drone of a hot summer'.[178] Holmes staged the play in episodes; however, rather than single episodes, the production cut between the different stories. Holmes' staging technique furthered *Pornography*'s fragmented form and engendered a sense of disengagement, suggesting a critical reference to the disintegration of social relations. The intensified discontinuity enhanced the theatricality by exposing the workings of the performance and overexposing the seams between the fragments of scenes. This undermined the audience's expectations of a well-‑made dramatic narrative that is based on a seamless connection between the scenes. The fairly unfamiliar form, which emphasised the theatricality of the stage action, raised the audience's awareness of the theatre as a construct and their position in it. Besides the unfamiliarity, the epistemological instability that the production generated through the unattributed and fragmented speech invited the audience to fill in the uncertainties, and form their own interpretations. Holmes's production therefore encouraged the audience to engage with the meaning-‑making process and its critical implications.

The production involved an ensemble of eight actors, all present on stage at once. Following Stephens's characterisation, Holmes gave a glimpse of the characters rather than a detailed, psychologically motivated, figurative representation: a randy schoolboy, the incestuous brother and sister or a jaded lecturer.[179] Unlike Nübling, Holmes did not generate incongruity between the characters and the actors; however, he did not form completely unified characters either. Rather, he staged what the text proposed: superficially connected,

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[176] Despite investigations and inquiries with Simon Stephens, Traverse Theatre and Birmingham Repertory Theatre, I was unable to locate any video recordings of the British production of *Pornography*.

[177] Neil Cooper, 'Review on *Pornography*' (*The Herald*), *Theatre Record* (Edinburgh International Festival and Fringe 2008 Supplement to Theatre Record), (2008), p. 1519.

[178] Gardner, 'The finger-‑ pointer': http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2008/aug/04/edinburghfestival.festivals

[179] Cooper, 'Review on *Pornography*', p. 1519.

but essentially unspecified characters by refusing to attribute individual names and characteristics to the actors, and by merely gathering them in the same temporal space (day of the bombing) yet resisting a unifying narrative that would relate them and their stories to each other. Moreover, following Stephens's text, Holmes refused to show characters---actors in communication with one another outside the scenes they took part in. Rather, as in Nübling's version, they remained detached from each other and somewhat disinterested in the others' narratives. Like the text, the performance addressed contemporary society and subjectivity through its form and content.

However, one might argue that the anonymous and fragmented character presentation on stage failed to represent the bombings or their social roots and implications. Joyce McMillan's review of Holmes's production reflects on the production and the play: 'the piece fails to convince [...] the portrayal of the bomber, in particular [...] Stephens has suggested the play is a serious exploration of four British men driven to attack the very heart of the society that raised them, but it hardly even makes a start on that vital task.'[180] McMillan would be correct if the 'critical' and the 'social' in contemporary theatre involved only direct thematisation of real---life events. *Pornography* refuses to give a fully developed representation of the bomber, or of any other character. However, she overlooks the critical implications of Stephens's conscious refusal to generate dramatic certainty and to represent the contemporary world and subject as a manageable, stable and unified totality. As my analysis suggests, the form rather than the content renders *Pornography* critically able to map the darker elements of contemporary society and what it means to be human in this environment.

The interpretation of the final scene with the numbered lines in both productions puts forward interesting perspectives on human subjectivity and relationships in the mediatised world. Holmes set the scene as a text scrolling up the wall/screen after the curtain call evoking the credits at the end of a film. With this analogy in mind, this could be read both as a memorial to the victims of the 7/7 attacks and as a critical reference to the media culture reducing real lives to pieces of information and objectifying human beings as list of names at the end of, or mere images, in a film. In his conversation with Aleks Sierz, whilst talking about the closing scene in Holmes's production Stephens mentioned how some audience members had not even noticed the scene and left the auditorium.[181] This reference suggests an

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[180] Joyce McMillan, 'Theatre Reviews: Fall / *Pornography*', *Scotsman*, 5 August 2008. The review can be accessed at: http://living.scotsman.com/performing---arts/Theatre---reviews---Fall------Pornography.4356911.jp [Last accessed 15 September 2010].
[181] The interview can be accessed through the theatreVOICE website: Sierz, Aleks, 'Interview: Simon Stephens/ Playwright Simon Stephens on Pornography' <http://www.theatrevoice.com/2307/playwright---simon---stephens---on--- pornography/> [accessed 11 September 2011]

unintended reflection of how in the fast--paced life style of late capitalism, our attention spans get shorter and we become accustomed to rapid consumption and indifferent to one another. In Nübling's production, the actors began eating apples quite expressionlessly as they listened to the pre--recorded text about the victims. Nübling presented a critique of social apathy more overtly than Holmes, since the actors showed a callous attitude whilst listening to the recording. The last scene in both productions enhanced the critical scope of *Pornography* through aesthetically engaging with the question of deindividuation and objectification of humans. Stephens's strategies confer performative openness upon the text, allowing the text and its productions to expand the audience's critical horizons and allow them to create their own associations, bounded by the productions' own thematic concerns.

Pornography may at first seem to be only about the 7/7 bombings and British society. However, as this analysis suggests, beyond the historical details lie compelling techniques as critical tools, mapping aspects of culture and subjectivity through a link between the mode of theatrical expression and contemporary subjectivity as well as social relations. Thus, *Pornography* goes beyond its direct thematic concerns towards a critique of the mediatised, capitalist culture with its focus on mediatised subjectivity and the frailty of human relations.

6. Conclusion: Mediatised Characterisation as a Critical Response

Character presentation in Tim Crouch's and Simon Stephens's works addresses the changing modes of subjectivity and human relations in media--saturated, late--capitalist culture. Their common interest in the concept of character and undermining aspects of traditional dramatic characterisation and acting, manifests itself mostly through different motives and formal strategies that relate to different as well as shared interests in the contemporary mediatised subject.

Crouch's play texts are based on dramatic plays with structured time and three--dimensional characters that exclude the real in favour of representing a fictional world. On stage, Crouch destabilises this model of characterisation mainly by laying bare the mechanics of theatrical creation and character presentation. This metatheatrical attitude, however, does not engender complete disengagement from representation. Rather, Crouch presents fictional and real realms and subjects together through continual vacillation without leading to any fixed position. This chapter has argued that this liminal state situates the character/actor as a fluid hybrid, implying a link to the unstable, heterogeneous subjectivity of contemporary

humans. References to mediatised society through television culture or through the use of video recording, television or earpiece help to support this reading.

Hovering between the subject positions manifests both dramatic and postdramatic tendencies. On the one hand, the actor builds a character; on the other, he/she is 'no longer the actor of a role but a performer offering his/her presence on stage for contemplation.'[182] However, it would be wrong to limit Crouch's works to any one category because the character/actor hybrid, which could be considered a postdramatic category, is situated within the framework of a dramatic narrative. What is important about his approach, in the context of this thesis, is the questions it generates about subjectivity, the critical implications of the hybrid subject, as well as its influence on perception. The character/actor hybrid can unsettle the audience's entrenched assumptions about the theatrical process and the representation of humans in theatre. It situates the audience in a liminal state of uncertainty since there is no definitive realm or subject position to relate to. Crouch does not offer an 'actorly' actor, 'los[ing] sight of [herself/himself] behind a veil of indulgence.'[183] Instead, he highlights the 'actorly---ness'[184] of the actor through the interaction between the actor and the character and by blurring the boundaries between the fictional and the 'real' subject positions. The indeterminacy invites the audience into a collaborative experience, namely, to step in to 'fill in the blanks'[185] and form their own critical associations, or perhaps merely to acknowledge the blanks and let them remain as such. The involvement of the audience in the meaning---making process generates a sense of self---awareness, a form of consciousness of their 'audience---ness'. This awareness, along with the unsettling lack of an identifiable unified character, may potentially lead the audience to question their own subjective position in contemporary culture where the grand narrative of subjectivity has dissolved into a fluid, other---directed, multiple self.

Unlike Crouch's texts, *Pornography* destabilises some of the fundamental constituents of the dramatic genre such as the centrality of dialogue, linear narrative, congruity between character and language, and three---dimensional characterisation. The restructuring of the character/actor relationship starts in the no---longer---dramatic text, which proposes to 'prevent the actor from inhabiting a role in a psychological---realist manner'.[186] Such texts refuse to provide a definitive portrayal of the characters, and 'it is often impossible even to tell from the

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[182] Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p. 135.
[183] Crouch in Caridad Svich, 'Tim Crouch's Theatrical Transformations: A Conversation with Caridad Svich' <http://www.hotreview.org/articles/timcrouchinterv.htm> [15 January 2011]
[184] Crouch in Svich, 'Tim Crouch's Theatrical Transformations'.
[185] Adam J. Ledger, "Does What?': Acting, Directing, and Rehearsing Martin Crimp's *Fewer Emergencies*', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 26: 2 (2010), 121 – 132, (pp. 131).
[186] Karen Jürs---Munby, 'Postdramatic Performing', *Performance Research Lexicon*, 11: 3 (2007), 95---98 (pp. 98).

text who is speaking."[87] The openness of the text invites directors/actors to freely play with its structure. *Pornography* presents a more direct critique of contemporary culture through its thematic content, which reinforces critical references to the mediatised world. The play's unattributed and fragmented form, which rethinks characters as incomplete and unspecified figures disconnected from one another, reinforces its thematic engagement with individualisation, isolation and the objectification of humans.

Stephens's text undermines dramatic illusion and challenges directorial and performative traditions. On stage, the fragmented and anonymous structure is emphasised through actors who deliver the text and take on the fictional personae in a detached and somewhat incongruous manner. The form of the play and its productions produce uncertainty on the audience's part about the identity and subjectivity of the characters since they refuse to represent the human as an identifiable unified self. The dramaturgical and staging strategies along with the thematic content increase audience awareness and encourage them to consider their own subjectivity and relations. The radicalisation of characterisation serves as a critical tool, an inventive way of mapping the phenomenology of being in the mediatised world.

Crouch and Stephens challenge the liberal humanist concept of character, which is no longer able to meet the changing experience of subjectivity. Their models do not argue for the end of 'character,' nor 'bemoan the lack of an already defined image of the human being'.[88] Rather, they rupture and rethink the representation of the human in theatre, and propose new possibilities for addressing the contemporary subject. The formal and critical workings and implications of characterisation suggest compelling forms of critical engagement with mediatised culture and the subject. Rather than portraying the human condition merely through direct thematisation of mediatised subjectivity and social relations, Crouch's and Stephens's formal strategies accommodate the hybridity, fluidity, plurality of contemporary subjectivity, the alienation and apathy of the subject, and the frailty of human relations. The innovative aesthetics of representation take theatrical boundaries beyond the existing rules and expectations of the audience to enhance their critical horizons while inviting them to reflect on their own subjectivity in relation to the phenomenon of the mediatised self.

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[87] Ibid., p. 98.
[88] Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p. 18.

CHAPTER 4

Rethinking Plot Structure in relation to Media Aesthetics: A New Form for the Mediatised World?

1. Aims and Context

Chapters 2 and 3 investigated some ways in which the dramaturgy of language and characterisation in certain plays respond to mediatisation, and explored whether or how adequately these innovative forms address the changing human condition and consciousness in the mediatised culture. This chapter further examines the influence of mediatisation on plays and new dramaturgical patterns by focussing on plot structure. It examines how certain playwrights structure their mode of arranging and organising plot in relation to media aesthetics, and how far these new structures respond to mediatised culture. The compositional strategies discussed so far hinted at the content of this chapter, but it further elaborates on how dramaturgical formation and the organisation of events in a play may alter in line with media technologies and aesthetics, and discusses the critical implications of this change.

The chapter illustrates new approaches to plot composition, firstly through Douglas Maxwell's *Helmet* (2002) and then through Caryl Churchill's *Heart's Desire* (1997), works that appropriate computer game and televisual formats, respectively. The analysis of each play also investigates how changes in plot structure and formal vocabulary affect the interpretation of the plays on stage and in the auditorium by analysing the first theatrical productions of the plays on the British stage.[1] The two plays provide a comparative perspective on the influence of the media on plotline since both incorporate media aesthetics, but their formal and critical effects fundamentally differ. While the explicit incorporation of computer game design in *Helmet* works in line with the traditional categories of the dramatic play, the indirect manifestations of televisual aesthetics in *Heart's Desire* offer a challenging, 'no longer dramatic' form. Like the analysis of *Closer* in Chapter 2, the analysis of *Helmet* will provide a negative example, illustrating that the mediatised plot structure does not necessarily render the play critically capable of mapping mediatised culture and consciousness. This, as will be discussed, contrasts with the innovative formal approach to plot in *Heart's Desire* and its critical potential to respond to contemporary society. The analysis in this chapter prepares the

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[1] The *Theatre Record* archive (1981---2005) registered the two productions as the first and only theatre performances of the plays staged in the UK. The Out of Joint production of *Heart's Desire* was re---staged in 1999 at the Pleasance.

ground for discussing similar dramaturgical attempts, for instance, in Churchill's *This is a Chair* (1997), Arthur Kopit's *Y2K* (1999) and Dennis Kelly's *Love and Money* (2006), although these are beyond the scope of the current study.

2. *Helmet*: Remediating Computer Game Aesthetics

This section examines how Douglas Maxwell's *Helmet* (2002) remediates game aesthetics, and the workings and critical effects of this mediatised plot structure. Virtual media such as the internet and computer games have become increasingly prevalent since the last decades of the twentieth century. Computer games,[2] first promoted as a teenage pastime and perhaps still dominantly used by the young, have become a widely popular mass media form particularly due to their availability through the internet and mobile phones. Computer games represent vast social worlds that can simulate real---life places, situations or events and reproduce a map of the earth, human relationships or wars. In a similar way to how other mass media forms influence and shape the ways in which individuals perceive, interpret and relate to the world, computer games permeate human thinking.

Among other virtual media forms, games have drawn more attention from theatre practitioners than from playwrights. For example, theatre companies such as Blast Theory (*Can You See Me Now?*, 2001) or Rimini Protokoll (*Best Before*, 2010) have used games as central constituents while devising some of their performances. *Helmet* is possibly the only example of a play that overtly incorporates the form of computer games into its plot structure. In order to understand how *Helmet* works, it is necessary to survey some significant aspects of the computer game genre and aesthetics, and discuss the connections between drama and game design, with some references to theatrical works.

2.1. The Medium of Computer Games

Computer games can be defined as 'any form of computer---based entertainment software, either textual or image---based, using any electronic platform such as personal computers or consoles and involving one or multiple players in a physical or networked environment.'[3] They

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[2] Critics, game designers and media theorists use video games and computer games interchangeably. In this chapter, I will use both terms and sometimes refer to them merely as games.

[3] Gonzalo Frasca, 'Videogames of the Oppressed: Videogames as a Means for Critical Thinking and Debate' (online published MA Thesis, Georgia Institute of Technology, 2001) <ludology.org/articles/thesis/FrascaThesisVideogames.pdf> [accessed 10 April 2012], p. 4.

are based on a representational system that 'subjectively represents a subset of reality',[4] and generates a virtual make---believe world. Warren Robinett explains this further by claiming that a computer game is 'a simulation, a model, a metaphor'[5] that mimics real---life situations. This virtual model world is complete and self---contained as a structure in that it is based on predetermined rules and narrative, generally centred on a conflict or puzzle to be solved by the players by associating themselves with characters through role---playing and enacting them to achieve a task. The narrative moves forward as the player makes manoeuvres, overcomes obstacles and achieves the ultimate goal, indicating a linear narrative and structured time, developing towards a logical finale.

One of the principal aspects of computer games is their interactive nature, requiring the participation of the gamer. Despite the coherent structure, complete and self---sufficient form and predetermined rules, it is the player's input --- manoeuvres, flaws and achievements – that mainly determines the course of the game. In some games, such as *SimCity*, the player creates a virtual world and is responsible for its construction, growth and management. However, the player's input always remains within the boundaries of the game's design, though these are getting broader, particularly through the advent of online, multi---player formats. Thus, players, Richard Rouse and James Newman argue, are 'at the heart of the action'.[6] Unlike McLuhan's now outdated definition of gamers as 'puppets',[7] guided and manipulated by rules, players have an active role in the gaming process. Videogames do not presuppose a unidirectional process any more whereby players follow given instructions without contributing to the action. Games, as Jesper Juul emphasises, are essentially interactive 'because the actions of the player play a part in determining the events in the game.'[8] It is this facility of the player to 'affect a transformation on the game'[9] that, according to Gonzalo Frasca[10] and Janet Murray,[11] defines videogames as interactive media forms. Videogames as dynamic media are 'oriented around a transformable, and importantly, responsive simulation, [which] may dynamically adapt to the

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[4] Chris Crawford qtd. in Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2004), p. 77.

[5] Warren Robinett qtd. in Salen and Zimmerman, *Rules of Play*, p. 421.

[6] James Newman, *Videogames* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 17. For further information, also see: Richard Rouse, *Game Design Theory and Practice* (Plano, TX: Wordware Publishing, 2001).

[7] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions ofMan* (London: Routledge, 2001 [originally published in 1964]), p. 259.

[8] Jesper Juul, 'A Clash between Game and Narrative' (online published MA Thesis, 2001) <http://www.jesperjuul.net/thesis/> [accessed 14 March 2012]

[9] Newman, *Videogames*, p. 26.

[10] For further information, see: Frasca, *Videogames of the Oppressed*.

[11] For further information, see: Janet H. Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck: the Future ofNarrative in Cyberspace* (New York: The Free Press, 1997).

performance of the player.'[12] Hence, the completeness of the game structure is merely limited to a framework composed of rules, storyline and a digital coding system modelled on numerous possible reactions based on the player's input. In this respect, computer games are associated more with contingency than with absoluteness, which renders players' input imperative.

Besides their interactive parts, videogames also contain non--interactive segments such as cut--scenes, breaks or intermissions, requiring little or no player input (see 2.3.1.). However, the gamer is not entirely passive in these instances since s/he actively absorbs the material in order to make sense of the past events and characters within the game--narrative and to envisage those yet to appear. Videogame experience, as James Newman suggests, is 'the product of a complex interplay of elements each demanding and facilitating different degrees and types of participation and activity.'[13] Note, however, that interactive participation in gameplay differs from the active interpretation of other media since in the former, interactivity is a way of affecting the process of the game whilst it is going on. As Jon Dovey and Helen W. Kennedy argue: 'the interpretive activity of traditional media (film, literature, TV) is of a different order to what we do when we materially intervene in the text to make it look and sound different – an understanding of interactivity derived from the history of human computer interface design.'[14]

Another aspect of game design is the multi--plot form. In a computer game, the player is given a task and various chances to achieve the goal, the flow of the game depending on the player's decisions and success; s/he plays, fails, replays, fails or pauses and succeeds. If the player fails or pauses the game, the events in the virtual realm are halted, to be continued where the gamer left off or can be restarted. The gamer is free to play a level again, and to explore any 'what if' situation by trying other alternative manoeuvres. The 'replay' pattern of computer game design offers multiple possibilities, plots and 'alternative worlds'[15] in the narrative of games, allowing the player to discover and map potentialities. The multi--plot construction and interactive mode means the gameplay experience is dynamic and not entirely predetermined.

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[12] Newman, *Videogames*, p. 27. For more information on the interactive mode of computers games, see: Brenda Laurel, *Computers as Theatre* (Boston: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 1991); and M.L. Ryan, 'Beyond myth and metaphor – The Case of Narrative in Digital Media', *The International Journal of Computer Game Studies*, 1:1 (2001) <http://www.gamestudies.org/0101/ryan/> [accessed 12 April 2012]

[13] Newman, *Videogames*, p. 27.

[14] Jon Dovey and Helen W. Kennedy, *Game Cultures: Computer Games as New Media* (New York: McGraw--Hill International/Open UP, 2006), p. 6.

[15] Newman, *Videogames*, p. 86.

As stated earlier, games are based on simulation of real---life situations; they present a make---believe world and allow the gamer to become immersed in this virtual environment. In their creative simulation of life---like situations, games, like other media and popular art forms, can serve as a means to represent, understand and engage with the world. This aspect of videogames can be considered as an appropriation of ancient games in the digital media age. As Hanna Sommerseth argues, 'the latest addition to the various ways in which we have created worlds to explore and stories to tell since the beginning of humankind.'[16] Similar to ancient societies, which 'regarded games as live dramatic models of the universe or of the outer cosmic drama',[17] videogames can contain insights into socio---cultural, political circumstances. Some examples are games simulating the Iraq War or the American---led 'war on terror' in Afghanistan, or games representing celebrity fetish culture as in *The Sims: Superstar*, which allows gamers to become celebrities next to the simulations of real---life celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe and Jon Bon Jovi.

When considered in the context of the culture of simulacra, whereby images have no referents in the material world and the distinction between reality and representation is increasingly blurred,[18] computer games go beyond being a means to appreciate the workings of today's socio---cultural condition or entertainment media. In the current mediatised and technologised environment, where reproduction overthrows 'authenticity', virtual mass media such as games increasingly influence the perception of the 'real' experience that they used to mimic. It is increasingly through media representations such as videogames that humans connect to and interpret the world, as Janet Murray argues:

> The human brain, the map of the earth, the protocols of human relationships, are all elements in an improvised collective story---game, an aggregation of overlapping, conflicting, constantly morphing structures that make up the rules by which we act and interpret our experiences.[19]

The impact of games on consciousness epitomises 'the troubled status of our understanding of the real world in media culture.'[20] An important example, as Martin Lister et al. argue, is the first Gulf War, when the spectacle of 'smart weapons', 24---hour live footage from missiles and the use of a conflation of digital and video imaging technology in news broadcasts led to

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[16] Hanna Sommerseth, 'Exploring Game Aesthetics' in *Breaking New Ground: Innovation in Games, Play, Practice and Theory. Proceedings ofDIGRA 2009* <http://www.digra.org> [accessed 13 September 2010]

[17] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, p. 257.

[18] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. by Paul Foss et al. (USA: Semiotext[e], 1983), p. 2.

[19] Janet Murray, 'From Game---Story to Cyberdrama' in *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, ed. by Noah Wardrip---Fruin and Pat Harrigan (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2004), pp. 2--- 11, (p. 3).

[20] Martin Lister et al., *New Media: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 288.

confusion among the public as to whether this was a real war or a game, a simulation.[21] General Norman Schwarzkopf, the commander of coalition forces in the Gulf War, actually had to state in a press conference that the war was '*not a video game*' and it was 'real', it 'was concerned with a different reality [from virtual reality]'.[22]

The impact of computer games on consciousness can also be discussed in relation to the notion of the 'magic circle', a central term in game studies that is hard to pin down. The magic circle refers to 'the boundary of the game space and within this boundary the rules of the game play out and have authority'.[23] Katie Salen and Eric Zimmermann concentrate on this boundary between the magic circle of a game and the world outside the game, and identify the magic circle as 'a distinct space of meaning that is separate from, but which still references, the real world.'[24] Likewise, Bernard DeKoven emphasises the importance of the magic circle in gameplaying, arguing that '[b]oundaries help separate the game from life. They have a critical function in maintaining the fiction of the game so that the aspects of reality with which we do not choose to play can be left safely outside.'[25] Nonetheless, one wonders, particularly in view of the hyperreal mediatised culture, whether the magic circle or the illusory virtual world of games could be closed, self-‑contained and separated from the outside world.

Marinka Copier questions the interpretation of the magic circle as a fixed boundary between play and reality. She argues that computer games are part of a larger culture and the magic circle is merely another frame for understanding the contemporary world rather than a rigid boundary between game and ordinary life. According to Copier, the possibilities that the relationship between virtual and real worlds generate should not be considered as based on a binary opposition between real and imaginary. Instead, they should be interpreted as constructs that are under continual negotiation.[26] Similar undertones concerning the blurring of boundaries between virtual and real worlds are in evidence in Daniel Pargman and Peter Jakobsson's 'The Magic is Gone: a Critical Examination of the Gaming Situation'. They claim that the once strong boundary between games and the physical world is no longer definitive in today's digital world.[27] The issue is the ways in which such virtual constructs shape perception.

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[21] Ibid., p. 288.

[22] Alex De Jong and Marc Schuilenburg, *Mediapolis: Popular Culture and the City* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2006), p. 26.

[23] Salen and Zimmermann, *Rules of Play,* p. 96.

[24] Ibid. p. 97.

[25] Bernard DeKoven qtd. in Salen and Zimmermann, *Rules ofPlay,* p. 96

[26] Marinka Copier, *Beyond the Magic Circle: A Network Perspective on Role-‑‑play in Online Games* (Doctoral Dissertation, Utrecht University). The thesis is available at: http://igitur-‑‑archive.library.uu.nl/dissertations/2007-‑‑0710-‑‑‑214621/index.htm, p. 137.

[27] Dominic Arsenault and Bernard Perron, 'In the Frame of the Magic Cycle: The Circle(s) of Gameplay' in *VGTR/ The Video Game Theory Reader 2*, ed. by in Bernard Perron and Mark J.P. Wolf (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 109-‑‑‑133, (p. 111).

This is discussed further in relation to Maxwell's play (2.3.), but it is first important to give an overview of the relationship between the theatre/drama and games.

2.2. Computer Games and Theatre/Drama

Computer games are relatively recent mass media forms, continually improving verisimilitude with the latest technologies, based on the aesthetics of virtual reality, a technologically advanced context. However, they have roots in the age---old traditions of make---believe, narrative and, hence, drama and theatre. The concept of drama has continually been brought into play in game design and studies, as Janet Murray notes: 'games, as the word "play" reminds us, are intrinsically dramatic, enactments of life situations at varying levels of abstraction.'[28] Like dramatic plays, games are based on a fictional narrative: the story is built on a conflict, time is structured and characters are identifiable. The main aim of the characters is to solve the conflict or complete the quest, which leads the narrative into a sort of denouement. Computer games' debt to theatre can be seen in the theatrical terminology widely appropriated by game designers, such as character, setting, story and player. Another aspect of theatre invoked in computer games is the notion of suspense that is generated by and constructed around the conflict set at the beginning of the game and culminating in resolution at the end. Leblanc refers to the sense of suspense in games in relation to the concept of the *dramatic arc* shaped through the gameplay as it 'contributes to building tension, build up to a climax and then resolution.'[29]

Computer games are constructed through a similar framework to that of Aristotelian drama. Brenda Laurel and Gonzalo Frasca independently underline this by highlighting how computer games' design has drawn on the rules of drama Aristotle described in his *Poetics*.[30] In *Computers as Theatre*, Laurel focuses on human---computer experiences rather than computer games alone, yet her approach manifests common ground for almost all computer---generated technologies. Drawing on Aristotle's *Poetics*, she puts forward a '*poetics of interactive form*'[31] through which she argues 'theatre can be directly applied to the task of designing human---

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[28] Janet Murray qtd. in Steve Dixon, Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2007), p. 601.

[29] Clara Fernandez---Vara, 'Play's the Thing: A Framework to Study Videogames as Performance' in *Breaking New Ground: Innovation in Games, Play, Practice and Theory. Proceedings of DIGRA 2009* <http://www.digra.org/> [accessed 12 August 2011]

[30] Gonzalo Frasca, 'Videogames of the Oppressed', p. 85.

[31] Laurel, Computers as Theatre, p. 35.

computer experiences'.[32] She also claims that an 'Aristotelian paradigm is more appropriate to the state of technology to which we are trying to apply it.'[33]

Aristotelian theatre is based on mimesis, the creative imitation of action, and aims to draw the audience into the heart of this representational world through identifying with the characters. Similarly, computer games aim to generate a similar experience through the magic circle and the audience's interactive immersion. The audience's identification with the character here is a central distinguishing feature since, as Dixon argues, it is 'closer within a videogame than in traditional theater [...] the audience is the participant, the participant is the player, the player is the character.'[34] Nonetheless, this does not necessarily mean the player is less self---conscious than the audience watching a theatrical piece performed according to Aristotelian principles.

Reversing the direction of the intermedial influence reveals how computer games have increasingly affected theatre, particularly in performance, yet rather less in plays. I concentrate on the latter aspect throughout the rest of Chapter 4, though here, it is useful to examine the relationship between theatre in general and games. Theatre companies such as Blast Theory and Rimini Protokoll have experimented with computer games, mostly in relation to the interaction between the audience and the actors and the participatory role of the audience as spectator, actor, and character. For example, Rimini Protokoll's show *Best Before*[35] (2010) uses computer game design by transferring the multi---player computer game from virtual space to the intimate, actual setting of the auditorium. Almost 200 spectators participate in the performance at every show. They are provided with gaming controllers with which they can direct their avatars according to the questions asked by the onstage performers. Blast Theory has various productions that appropriate game aesthetics into live performance and generate mixed reality environments. For instance, the game---play---performance *Can You See Me Now?* (2001), takes place simultaneously in the virtual realm of the internet and on the streets. Players from all over the world go online and play the game in a virtual city against the members of Blast Theory, while actual players/actors on the streets are tracked by satellite and guided by the online gamers.[36]

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[32] Ibid., p. 22.
[33] Ibid., p. 36.
[34] Dixon, Digital Performance, p. 601.
[35] The production was premiered at PuSh/Vancouver: "The Cultch", Vancouver, British Columbia (29th January, 2010)
[36] For more information on the company and their works, please visit:
<http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/bt/work_cysmn.html>

Whilst questioning whether the use of the virtual medium is 'a challenge to develop a more sophisticated social criticism',[37] Sherry Turkle suggests that it might be possible to use simulation frameworks to 'help players challenge the model's built---in assumptions.'[38] Even though this alternative approach to simulation has not been widely configured on computer, a similar attitude to a representational framework has been practised in the theatre, as in Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal's challenges to the dramatic form of theatre.[39]

As an alternative to Aristotle's dramatic model, Boal followed in the steps of Brecht and took his approach even further through his concept of the 'Theatre of the Oppressed'. Like Brecht, Boal aimed to obliterate the 'fourth wall' by proposing to undermine the actor/spectator dichotomy through his idea of *Spect---Actor*, as he explains:

> The members of the audience must become the Character: possess him [sic], take his [sic] place – not obey him, but guide him, show him the path they think right. In this way the Spectator becoming Spect---Actor is democratically opposed to the other members of the audience, free to invade the scene and appropriate the power of the actor.[40]

In Boal's Forum Theatre, the stage always presents an oppressive situation where the protagonist is concerned with a problematic situation. Thus, the members of the audience playing the role of the protagonist offer solutions; and as Boal claims, '[b]y taking possession of the stage in the fiction of the theater [the Spect---Actor] acts: not just in the fiction, but also in his [sic] social reality. By transforming fiction, he [sic] is transformed into himself [sic].'[41] The multiplicity of spectator responses also lead to the repetition of scenes, rendering the theatrical event unfinished but always presenting multifarious perspectives of the issue.

Brecht and Boal's non---Aristotelian approaches to theatre have caught the attention of computer game designers and theoreticians, particularly in terms of generating a non---immersive or more self---conscious game structure. For instance, Fernandez---Vara asks whether it is possible to 'apply Brecht to study of videogames, for example --- is there an equivalent of the Alienation---effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*) in videogames?'[42] On the other hand, game developer and researcher Gonzalo Frasca draws on the aesthetic and theoretical aspects of Boal's theatre and Sherry Turkle's proposal, arguing that Boal's theory, though practised merely in the

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[37] Sherry Turkle qtd. in Frasca, 'Videogames of the Oppressed', p. 87--- 88.
[38] Ibid. p. 87--- 88.
[39] Ibid., p. 88---9.
[40] Augusto Boal, *Theater of The Oppressed* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), p. xx. [Originally published in 1979]
[41] Ibid., p. xxi.
[42] Fernandez---Vara, 'Play's the Thing', p. 8.

theatre, 'is closer to games and simulation than to theater.'[43] Consequently, '[the Theatre of the Oppressed] is a perfect model for creating non---Aristotelian, nonimmersive videogames'.[44]

Frasca proposes a drama model for videogames, while the theatrical companies, Blast Theory and Rimini Protokoll, approach the matter using computer games as a model for creating an interactive, self---conscious theatrical experience. These theatre groups do not only adopt and adapt a non---Aristotelian perspective on theatre, like those of Brecht and Boal, but they do this through the remediation of computer games and game aesthetics in the theatrical performance. They benefit from the 'interactivity' that computer games engender, which, to an extent, blurs the boundaries between spectator and actor by positioning the audience as actor/player and character. Audience members in these productions are placed in a dual reality since they inhabit both the fictional world of the game---performance and their own reality in the auditorium.

Some productions also blur the boundaries between the imaginary world of game---performance and the reality of the outside world, which tends to expose the workings of mediation. In Bolter and Grusin's sense, this mode of remediation generates hypermediacy, a multiplication of signs of mediation that enhances the human sensorium of the mediation processes.[45] It disorients spectators, denying them the familiar theatrical illusion, and thus increases their levels of consciousness by inviting them to participate in the theatrical process and performing given tasks through their critical imagination. This liminal space produces a sense of epistemological uncertainty, addressing the changing mode of consciousness within mediatised culture and demonstrates how a definitive representation of the world is becoming increasingly problematic. Hence, these productions tend to sensitise spectators to the constructed setting not only of games and theatre, but also of the world they live in.

As noted, computer games have not attracted the attention of playwrights as much as that of theatre companies, performers and directors. Though ontologically they share common formal features with drama, games mostly remain an untouched source for new playwriting techniques. However, *Helmet* appears to be an exception to this lacuna in the domain of playwriting, and hence requires further investigation. The following section (2.3.) analyses how *Helmet* remediates game aesthetics in its plot structure, and investigates whether or how its game/play structure enables the play to address aspects of mediatised culture and

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[43] Frasca, 'Videogames of the Oppressed', p. 89.

[44] Ibid., p. 89.

[45] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), p. 33.

consciousness. The analysis focuses on the composition of the play, its thematic content, and its interpretation on stage.

2.3. *Helmet* as a Game/Play

2.3.1. Remediating Game Aesthetics: Modus Operandi, Objectives and Effects

Douglas Maxwell's *Helmet* is not just a play about computer games and the computer game generation. It is, perhaps more significantly, a play written in the form of a computer game. The story revolves around two characters: Sal, the owner of the Zone computer game shop, an unsuccessful businessman in his late twenties who has disappointed his father and wife; and Roddy (a.k.a. Helmet) a teenager obsessed with computer games. The play opens with the closing down of Sal's gaming shop, and centres around Sal's guilt and feelings of failure, and Helmet's efforts to keep the shop open longer. Helmet, infatuated by computer games, treats the shop's closure as another challenging 'game' like those he constantly plays on computers, and accordingly tries his best to stay as long as possible in the Zone, even if this means taking dramatic steps. Throughout the play, Sal tries to convince Helmet that he should go out and get a 'real' life like other children, whilst Helmet's only idol is Sal and his only aim is to become the owner of the shop himself. The reason behind Helmet's obsession with games and the shop is soon revealed to be an unhappy household and the death of his little brother due to his and his parents' negligence. Meanwhile, Sal is obsessed with the idea that his wife is cheating on him with his successful brother and is furious that he has never achieved his dream of becoming a stand---up comedian. As the synopsis indicates, *Helmet* is a play not simply or only about games, but about the disillusionment of these two people and their escape into a virtual world. The question that emerges is whether or to what extent the plot structure is able to accommodate the issues of disillusionment, displacement, and virtual reality as an alternative world.

The plot structure of the play is formed in line with computer game design. Every scene is a level and there are five levels in total; each player/character has three lives. Every so often, the players/characters lose lives when they are defeated or their energy levels drop if they are weakened or become upset, and they also gain lives and energy when they are successful or happy. When one loses a 'life' the action halts, and then goes back to a few minutes earlier. The characters then pick up where they stopped as if nothing has happened. Each time the scenes are replayed, the narrative moves on a little further, but with different outcomes. There is a continual play---fail---replay---succeed sequence. Thus, until the characters make a successful

manoeuvre, the level remains incomplete and they cannot move onto the next one. The game/play opens with an 'Instructions' section, which explains that the setting is 'The Zone', that there are five levels to the game, some of which are for two and others for a single player. The five levels of the game/play are built within the linear framework of two hours: the first level starts at 7.05pm and the final level ends at 9.08pm. Apart from Level 4, analysed later in this section, each level contains a number of replays leading to the 'appropriate' instance which allows moving to the next level.

The play opens with Sal 'performing last rites' of closing the shop at 7.05pm on a Tuesday evening --- he switches off the screens, sets safety alarms and so forth. This scene is interrupted when Helmet enters, surprised at finding the screens are off. Sal tries to persuade Helmet to leave and upon Helmet's refusal, becomes violent and kicks him out of the shop. At this point, the stage directions indicate: '*RODDY dies. Death noise, blackout, life lost on screen.*'[46] What follows this scene is its replay; it is again 7.05pm, Sal carries out exactly the same closing ritual and Helmet enters and they bicker, this time with more insistence and resistance from both sides. Then, as Helmet loses energy, he asks where Sal's wife is, which reminds Sal of something awful and he 'dies'. The following scene shows the time as 7.11pm, and opens with Helmet's question to Sal, this time getting a different answer and attitude, changing the direction of the action. This scene is followed by two others, the latter finishing at 7.25pm, with Sal insisting that Helmet leave and giving him 'a long hard look of disgust as the lights go down to blackout.'[47] Level 1 repeats parts of the same scene five times with different outcomes each time, leading to a different restarting point, until every replay reaches the ideal instance for the dramatic action to the predetermined ending of the level/scene before Level 2.

To give another example, Level 3 starts at 8.45pm: Sal and Helmet are having a discussion about an upcoming game where Sal criticises how the media and technologies bombard individuals with new and flashier products. Helmet, on the other hand, seems to have earned the necessary money for this new game. As the dialogue moves forward, it turns out that rather than earning it, Helmet stole it from a woman after punching her. As Helmet reveals this, '*as if telling the punchline to the world's funniest joke*',[48] Sal freezes with confusion and phones the police. The scene halts. The pause at this instance hints at moral functions of games inculcating the players with certain values and here implies a warning about an amoral act. The next scene starts at 8.50 from the point where Helmet is about to relate how he punched a woman and stole her money, yet this time, instead of exposing the ugly truth about

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46 Douglas Maxwell, *Helmet* (London: Oberon Books, 2002), p. 22.
47 Maxwell, *Helmet*, p. 29.
48 Ibid., p. 43.

the source of his money, he changes his mind and moves the story in a different direction by telling a story about how his brother died in a fire when he was one year old. At this point, the level ends and the next level opens with and focuses on Helmet's sad memory of his little brother.

To understand Maxwell's framework and its relationship to game aesthetics requires an investigation of the temporal aesthetics of games and the play's plotline. The game theorist, Jesper Juul, argues that '[g]ames are almost always chronological.'[49] The computer game scholar James Newman elaborates on this idea by arguing that 'even the most apparently 'non--- linear', branching games in fact comprise a finite number of levels.'[50] In games, there is a 'constant repetition of back and forth movement between the boundaries',[51] which often leads to different scenes, endings and thus beginnings after the replays. This leads to a kind of looping time structure in the chronological order of games that does not entirely violate linearity, yet expands the temporal dimension to the extent that the linear timeline coexists with looping time, the constant possibility of a rewind and restart.

The back and forth movements through rewinds, replays and intermissions bring about multiple variations in the game---narrative, as Britta Neitzel explains: 'The plot changes in every round, which means that in case of computer games there is a *multiform plot*.'[52] The replay format resembles 'harbinger storytelling [...] in which the protagonist inexplicably gets the chance of a "do---over"'.[53] Accordingly, this creates manifold possibilities for a single moment, without privileging any one over another --- the replays do not offer an 'either/or' situation or mean that one course is 'more real' than any other, or with a more direct and accurate reference to the real world. Nevertheless, the multi---plot form of games is structured within the boundaries of the rules, which, as indicated above, contain a coherent model --- a structured time and plot. No matter how many different plots a gamer creates, the 'successful' action leads to the 'next' point in the narrative and the game finishes in designated ways that are fundamentally similar.

This structure manifests through the sequence of scenes in Maxwell's play, yet in a slightly different manner because here one scene is privileged over another. In *Helmet* replays occur when one of the characters does or says something 'wrong' which suggests that the

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[49] Jesper Juul, 'Games Telling Stories?' in *Handbook of Computer Game Studies*, ed. by Joost Raessens and Jeffrey Goldstein (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2005), pp. 219--- 226, p. 223.

[50] Newman, *Videogames*, p. 104---5.

[51] Britta Neitzel, 'Narrativity in Computer Games' in *Handbook of Computer Game Studies*, ed. by in Joost Raessens and Jeffrey Goldstein (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2005), pp. 227--- 245, (p. 229).

[52] Neitzel, p. 241.

[53] Murray, 'From Game---Story to Cyberdrama', p. 6--- 7.

present scene should stop and lead to the 'right' one. Thus, the replays here do not simply depend on fulfilling a task as in games. They also signal 'right' over 'wrong', something that may well have an ideological and moral component with respect to the wider workings of society. As the scenes in the 'levels' continually start again, mostly from different beginnings and leading to different end---points, they generate a different plot with every replay. Rather than a linear---successive, one---dimensional plotline, there is a multi---plot narrative, a multi--- perspectival form structured through rewinds and replays. The succession of scenes does not occur in a conventional consecutive manner, whereby the initial point leads directly to the second and then to the third with complete consistency. Rather, the play is formed in a looping manner, so a scene stops, starts over, moves forward, halts, starts over again and finally moves forward. This does not, however, mean the play does not structure time and present any sense of unity. On the contrary, the story, though in a looping pattern, still evolves and time moves forward as shown in the numbered titles (levels) of the scenes, with an indication of the elapsing time continuum. The replays always lead one scene to the next, chronologically and thematically.

Considering the replay pattern, one might at first argue that the resets in *Helmet* undermine the *fabula* and thus, in a Brechtian way, make the familiar --- the strictly unified and chronological sequence of events – strange. In relation to this, one might consider that the replay mode draws attention to the artifice of the play, and, by extension, reflects the constructedness of the contemporary world, where multifarious views of reality have replaced any one definitive perception. However, rather than creating it, the play lacks *Verfremdung*. The replays here are situated essentially within a well---structured dramatic plot in which every resetting or mini---plot serves the dramatic illusion and the dénouement, the 'game over' point. The coherent and stable structure represents the world as a unified, definitive totality. Therefore, the mode of representation in *Helmet* does not relate to contemporary culture, a landscape where absolute meaningfulness, epistemological certainty and perception are problematic due to the high---speed and information---overloaded lives of human beings, and so forth. Accordingly, the critical capacity of the replay format to accommodate critical relations to the mediatised postmodern culture is fundamentally limited. It does not highlight the mechanics of dramatic narrative and ask the reader to think about the implied morality of the social---cultural conditions. As a result, the form of *Helmet* stops short of critically grasping the human condition in mediatised culture, its central theme (I return to the content below).

In addition to replays, *Helmet* remediates 'cut---scenes'. Cut---scenes are predetermined, fixed and non---interactive narrative components of game design. They are 'embedded narrative

element[s]'[54] which are essential to narrative---based computer games. In Maxwell's composition, cut---scenes can be associated with certain dramaturgical elements such as the 'Instructions' section at the very beginning of the play, the stage directions indicating the energy levels (projected onto the screen on stage), and the monologue---based narrative in the fourth level, discussed below. The Instruction part, for example, 'fills the role of both prequel and epilogue',[55] and serves to guide and inform the reader/spectator about what they will encounter shortly. The fourth level, on the other hand, pauses and expands on the dramatic action, in the gameplay format, as it presents background information about the narrative and action. Here, Helmet narrates his childhood memory about his little brother's death, thus revealing the underlying motive for his escapism from the real world into the virtual world of games.

The cut---scenes in *Helmet* function as descriptive tools, facilitating the flow of the dramatic narrative rather than disrupting it. Like the resets in the play, the cut---scenes serve to create a manageable and identifiable representation of the world with certainty and entirety. It reinforces the recognisable plot and unified characterisation, categories of traditional dramatic text. Moreover, the background story providing a clear indication of Helmet's motives also militates against uncertainty and epistemological instability, aspects of contemporary hyperreal culture that *Helmet* thematically refers to. Rather, it structures the narrative through flat characterisation and storyline, and leaves them unquestioned with regards to the world it thematises. The mode of remediation here remains within the bounds of dramatic representation of a unified fictive cosmos, which is no longer able to relate to the social and perceptual reality of the postmodern media---driven age. Therefore, despite its direct use of the media, *Helmet*'s mediatised plot structure shows a limited capacity to address issues concerning mediatised culture.

The structure of *Helmet* and its thematic content do, however, manifest an interest in mediatised culture. Both deal with themes such as consumerism and computer games as part of cultural industry, individualisation and the culture of apathy as well as the disillusionment of the human subject in a late---capitalist, mediatised world. Computer games, like many other media forms and cultural products, are 'a product of the culture industry and a way of perpetuating the dominant ideology'.[56] This is not to say that all games function as ideological apparatuses. Games can be considered beyond the relations and workings of power since games are also visual cultural forms and tools for education, entertainment, management,

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[54] Salen and Zimmermann, *Rules of Play*, p. 408.
[55] Ibid., p. 408.
[56] Steven E. Jones, *The Meaning of Video Games: Gaming and Textual Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 5.

socialisation or problem---solving. However, a predominant aspect of games is their role as replicating and reinforcing ideological positions. Games are also a key factor in building global markets through merchandising new products embellished with recent technologies, and through transferring them into products of other media, such as the film and television industries. Like other media, games also contribute to the consumer 'update culture', the constant release and promotion of new designs to encourage the consumer to update his/her products by buying their new versions. This pattern of marketing cultural products makes the consumer, in a Marxist and Adornian[57] sense, 'fetishise' the commodity more than its 'use---value' and consume whatever the culture industry launches without thought.

Maxwell thematises consumer capitalism and commodity fetishism particularly in the scene where Helmet confesses he attacked a woman and stole her bag in order to buy a new game. Helmet's desire for a 'new and flashier'[58] game and the callousness of his attitude evokes the mindless consumerism promoted by the mass media that has become prevalent in contemporary society. The play, thus, presents an aspect of the prevailing social reality of late capitalism where a woman Christmas shopping 'used a pepper spray on other shoppers who were around her' or a 'man died of a heart attack on Black Friday, and people [...] just stepped on him and didn't even bother to call 911.'[59] Helmet's desire to own the new version of a game is not simply about a personal wish or a random juvenile act, but denotes the wider social phenomenon of consumerism. It also addresses individualisation, and in parallel, people's indifference to one another. As consumer capitalism promotes self---centred progress and profit rather than collective solidarity, it inevitably leads, as Bauman argues, to a certain degree of indifference to the fate of others.[60] (See Chapter 3, section 2.2.2.) Accordingly, the apathy towards others leads people to perceive even their most unethical acts as acceptable, as Helmet callously does. The problem with the play, however, is that it deals in simplistic moral categories rather than making us see consumerism in a new light.

Another thematic motif in *Helmet* is disillusionment and the entrance into virtual reality as an escape route. Both characters experience discontent and disenchantment for different reasons. Helmet suffers from a traumatic childhood and cannot fit into society and be 'normal', or do the things that other young people do. Sal, on the other hand, feels disillusioned because he failed to meet the social requirements of becoming a successful son, businessman and

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[57] T. W. Adorno, 'On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening' in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 38.

[58] Maxwell, *Helmet*, p. 39.

[59] Both quotations are taken from the same source: http://independentword.com/2011/11/violence---of---black---friday--- merry---christmas---everyone/

[60] For more information, see: Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

husband. It is interesting that both characters are 'failures' seeking a refuge. However, this does not suggest that this mass phenomenon is made up of social outcasts, unsuccessful people or simply people with personal issues and excludes the rest. Rather, there is a deeper underlying circumstance that implicates large areas of contemporary society. That is, the reasons for the characters' discontent are not just based on 'personal' matters; they are the consequences of the socio---political conditions of individualisation, bringing about a continual struggle for progress and social compatibility, and 'effort and stress of survival in [...], and [thus a] never---ending material and psychological insecurity'.[61] This environment inflicts fear of personal inadequacy and leads humans to isolation, as Sal indicates:

> SAL: The real world is rubbish, Helmet. [...] I've seen the real world and I give you my word – it's not worth seeing. The real world is vile and horrible and boring and fatally depressing. You just play games and don't let anyone tell you it's wrong. It's not wrong. It's right. That's my problem, that's always been my problem, I actually pay attention to those idiots that bang on about money and jobs and relationships and responsibility. Effort and concentration![62]

In response to their circumstances, Helmet (throughout the play) and Sal (towards the end), seek refuge in the virtual world. Maxwell depicts games as shelters or alternative worlds that Sal and Helmet escape into. For Helmet, this alternative world becomes an alternative reality and it is as through this world makes the real one bearable. Likewise, Sal decides to stay with Helmet and play a game. The virtual environment is a landscape away from the roles, norms and values Sal is expected to conform to. Maxwell thus depicts games not simply as leisure activities or ideological apparatuses, but also as domains beyond ideological limits, namely, personalised tools people use to cope with their social circumstances. The escapism here is not the mindless entertainment associated with an unquestioning flight from reality. Rather, it refers to 'any human activity [that is] not immediately geared toward survival',[63] particularly survival in a capitalist society, by meeting its normative roles and values. Games offer relief from the difficulties and demands of contemporary society. As critic Andrew Evans states:

> When we look at the range of recreational activities that are probably considered escapist, we can further note that most of them are "leisure industries" promoted by heavy advertising. Such advertising emphasizes the whole idea of "getting away from it all", "leaving your troubles behind", having a "weekend break".[64]

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[61] Peter Brand and Micheal J. Thomas, Urban Environmentalism: Global Change and The Mediation of Local Conflict (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 77.

[62] Maxwell, *Helmet*, p. 54.

[63] Simon Egenfeldt---Nielsen, et. al, *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 147.

[64] Andrew Evans qtd. in Simon Egenfeldt---Nielsen, et. al, *Understanding Video Games*, p, 147.

Sal and Helmet seek a comfortable 'zone' as the name of the shop hints at, which reinforces Maxwell's underlying idea that rather than labelling all computer games as alienating and brainwashing ideological forms, which some might be, the underlying question is what leads subjects to want to escape from the real world.

Helmet thematises significant aspects of late capitalist, mediatised culture. Its mediatised plot structure implies perhaps an unconscious attempt to relate to this culture and the human condition within it. The remediation of media aesthetics in the text at first seems to suggest a potential to dramaturgically relate and critically respond to contemporary culture. However, as the thematic content and composition of the play are based on the aesthetically unified model of dramatic representation, the capacity of the play to relate to and map the realities of mediatised culture and consciousness remains limited. Despite its up---to---date look through the remediation of games and direct thematisation of social reality, *Helmet* still tries to depict the world with the certainty and stability that are no longer defining aspects of it. The logical structure with recognisable plot and unified characterisation, and narrative clarity seal the play off from the socio---cultural and perceptual conditions of contemporary culture. The dramaturgical form situates the reader in a comfort zone where there is order, meaningfulness and determinacy, aspects that are increasingly problematic in the politically and economically unstable world. Thus, on the page, the play remains restricted to the surface story. It is the dramatic representation of two young people in a game shop whose stories are told in a game format without questioning or furthering the formal potential and critical implications of the mediatised aesthetics. However, this might change in the hands of an imaginative director. An inventive production might establish a critical link between theatrical expression and contemporary society, and sensitise the audience to the play's themes and make them see the contemporary world in a new light.

2.3.2. *Helmet* on Stage

In performance, while a denotative dramatic interpretation can reinforce the traditionally representational model, a postdramatic approach can deconstruct it through an associative, connotative mode of sign usage. This section investigates how the first production of *Helmet* interpreted the play and its plot composition to appreciate how the mode of theatrical expression influences the critical capacity and reception of a play.

Helmet was first staged by Paines Plough and Traverse Theatre Company in 2002 under the direction of John Tiffany, with the collaboration of a team of digital animation and game

designers, a movement director, and sound and lighting designers. Tiffany designed the show within a vast computer game picture frame. As the audience entered the auditorium, they saw the title sequence projected onto the huge white screen showing the names of the two companies and cartoon versions of the characters, similar to how computer games begin. After the title sequence, the middle section of the screen was rolled upwards, whilst the frame surrounding the screen remained and enclosed the set of the shop, where the two actors took the roles of Sal and Helmet. The box---like stage, encircled by the digital frame, made the set 'look like the inside of a screen with its rapidly receding perspective.'[65] The energy levels, power bars and bonus points in the shape of hearts were projected onto this digital frame on either side of the stage. The production brought the game landscape onto the stage.

Tiffany's production, in accordance with Douglas Maxwell's plot composition, approximates the computer game format, environment and the gameplaying experience. It remediated some of the major elements of game design such as the rewinding/replaying format, characters with multiple lives and cut---scenes. For example, each time a character died on stage, the action stopped and the screen faded to black and then the action looped back to a few minutes earlier. The spectators saw the same scenarios being enacted in a different way each time. Thus, the resetting of scenes on stage enacted the replay structure of Maxwell's play. The theatrical performance followed the text's traditional dramatic structure and its filtering of 'the old certainties of narrative and dramatic development through a new medium with different rhythms.'[66]

One might consider that the resetting pattern on stage may have increased the audience's awareness of the mediatedness and artifice of the theatrical experience at least at the very beginning of the performance before, as Maxwell indicates, 'what started as a structural device became completely integrated.'[67] That is, as the performance moved forward, the remediation of videogame became ingrained in the dramatic narrative to the extent that its constructed reality became indistinguishable. Hence, rather than foregrounding the 'new medium' within theatre and emphasising the mediation process, Tiffany's production, like Maxwell's text, set the play in a dramatic manner to create mimetic illusion, a fictive cosmos. To relate this to J. David Bolter and Richard A. Grusin's theory (see Introduction), remediation in Tiffany's interpretation served to generate *immediacy/transparent immediacy* by erasing the

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[65] Robert Dawson Scott, 'Review on *Helmet*' (*The Times*), *Theatre Record*, 22:10 (2002), p. 626.

[66] Steve Cramer, 'Review on *Helmet*' (*List*), *Theatre Record*, 22:10 (2002), p. 372.

[67] Subsequent quotations refer to the unpublished interview conducted with the director, John Tiffany, on August 10, 2010. This will be indicated as Tiffany in Ilter, 'Interview'.

mechanics of representation and making the viewers forget the presence of the medium.[68] Maxwell underlined this when talking about his expectations from the production: 'The important thing for me is that while the audience get a buzz from the exciting way the story is told, all the flashing lights and gubbins, it shouldn't act as a barrier to the heart of the characters.'[69]

Likewise, the relationship between the two realms, the connection between the live action on stage and the computer---generated, mediatised world of the game operate along with the logic of immediacy. There was a harmonious relationship between the actors/characters and the roles they play in the game. That is, when one of the characters, embodied on the stage by live actors, lost energy or gained lives, the bars on the screen on both sides of the stage concurrently showed this change in their physical and emotional conditions. Also, if a game---character lost a life, the live actor on stage would enact dying by collapsing in a stylised way, by doing break---dance moves, inspired by Tiffany's videogame experiences. After this the scene would restart. The digital images here functioned as a virtual other to the live actors. Tiffany indicated this was one of the ingenious aspects of the play, 'it was like the subtext of the play, what is happening *between* the characters was played on energy levels, projected through bars onto the screen.' The juxtaposition of the live and the mediatised tended to indicate not only the realisation of the dramaturgical form of the play on stage, but also functioned as a motif referring to contemporary culture where human beings are surrounded with media technologies and images and where virtual reality has become a part of their lives and social relations.

In Tiffany's production, the co---presence of the two ontologies did not highlight the inseparable coexistence of the two different states as a reference to postmodern hyperreality. Rather, the production situated the mediatised within the borders of the fictional world of theatre to create an immersive experience of transparent immediacy as opposed to a critical perspective of hyperreality. The production, as both Maxwell and Tiffany individually underlined, aimed to get rid of anything that was a barrier to 'the audience's love/belief of the characters',[70] to the spectator's empathy with the characters and the represented world. Given that the mechanics of remediation were wiped out to create a fictional cosmos, the audience was drawn into the heart of the theatrical illusion. Thus, the idea that the remediated game aesthetics had a defamiliarising effect is misleading, as Tiffany states: 'people often think that

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[68] Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, p. 14.
[69] Subsequent quotations refer to the email interview conducted with the playwright, Douglas Maxwell in July --- August 2010. This will be indicated as Maxwell in Ilter, 'Interview'.
[70] Maxwell in Ilter, 'Interview'.

[the play] is alienating, but actually I don't think it is true at all. I actually think it pulls you more into an intimate and honest experience'.[71] 'Honesty' in this context refers to naturalistic representation that generates a superficial rather than a critically sensitising performance and the identification of the audience with the fictional world rather than a self---conscious experience, awakening the spectators to social reality. Maxwell's explanation of his aims illustrates the play's dependence on traditional dramatic representation and the underlying reasons of the production's adherence to the same dramatic model:

> There is a character, a story, something I want the audience to hook into and love and that's the centre. [...] The structure of the story, the way it is told, is thus 'just the sparkle, the hook. [...] I want my audience to love the play. To feel for the characters. [...] I want the audience to take them as REAL. I'm not looking to make a point beyond that of these guys' lives. No grand political narrative or analogical pattern lies beyond their story. Their story is all there is. This is about Sal and Helmet and how they feel, not what they mean.[72]

Despite the innovative idea of remediating game aesthetics through a play and theatrical performance, along with its content concerning mediatisation, *Helmet* both on page and stage does not push the boundaries of dramatic representation. The dramatic play as a form and its production do not question the mode of representation in relation to the postmodern hyperreal culture that *Helmet* thematically refers to. Therefore, although the play thematises mediatised culture and has the potential or unconscious attempt to address it formally, it stops short of reconsidering its aesthetics in relation to social reality and consciousness. The dramatic form of the play fails to correspond to the world it critiques and restricts further reading of the critical motifs. Likewise, the production of the play did not rethink the play's structure and themes. As a result, *Helmet* remains more of a dramatic play about Helmet's and Sal's lives than a formally inventive play for the media age that maps and responds to the epistemologically uncertain, media---driven culture and perception.

3. *Heart's Desire*: Televisual Dramaturgy
3.1. The Mass Medium of Television

To appreciate Caryl Churchill's inventive approach to plot structure, which --- as this chapter argues – processes televisual aesthetics and genres, requires first a consideration of some basic aspects of television. Following Theodor W. Adorno's premise that '[t]he social, technical, and

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[71] Tiffany in Ilter, 'Interview'.
[72] Maxwell in Ilter, 'Interview'.

artistic aspects of television cannot be treated in isolation',[73] this section gives an overview of the medium of television with reference to some of its formal and ideological aspects, starting with Marshall McLuhan's theories of television, which were first circulated in the 1960s. McLuhan was one of the first theorists to write extensively on television. Although some of his theories have been overtaken by today's digital TV culture, some of his principles are still important for understanding the basics of the televisual medium.

McLuhan defines television as 'a mosaic mesh of light and dark spots'[74] that presents the viewer with millions of pixels per second. He argues that, unlike the still shot of a film or photographic image, which provide the receiver with a static picture and a considerable amount of data, '[t]he TV image is visually low in data.'[75] Television is based on the incessant flow of images that continually disappear, so there is no formation or perception of a static image. The rapid movement of images on television bombard the viewer with pixels, pieces of information from which human perception attempts to gather a sense of the whole. Thus, one can read McLuhan's idea of television being 'low in data' as being low in providing complete, fixed images. He thus considers television to be a 'cold' medium and argues that the televisual medium constantly requires the viewer's input and engagement with it.[76] To elaborate briefly, McLuhan categorises media into 'hot' and 'cold' forms according to the degree of participation they require from the viewer in the meaning---making process. A hot medium, such as radio or photography, is high in data and based on defined and complete information requiring little input from the listener/viewer. Cold media, on the other hand, refers to 'low definition' forms that convey limited information. Consequently, they compel the viewer to complete the received data to construct meaning.[77] In this respect, owing to the rapid flow of numerous pixels, television requires the active involvement of the viewer so that s/he can connect and grasp the pixelated images.

McLuhan's idea, however, may have to be reconsidered due to the advent and widespread use of analogue television in the mid---1980s and then of digital technologies since the end of the 1990s, both of which render television in higher definition. New technological advancements have furthered the ways in which television has operated, that is, through 'a series of frames, each a fraction of a second part, and each a frozen snapshot of the action seen

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[73] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Prologue to Television' in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords,* trans. by Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia UP, 1998), pp. 49---59, (p. 48).
[74] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, p. 342.
[75] Ibid., p. 341.
[76] Ibid., p. 340.
[77] Ibid., p. 22 ---23.

by the camera'[78] which, when played back at the same speed fools the human eye into seeing a continuous, moving image. Thus, the change of televisual technology means McLuhan's controversial idea of 'hot' and 'cold' media, particularly television as a 'cold' medium, has weakened. Nevertheless, what has not changed since McLuhan's analysis is the fact that television is based on the rapid change of images, which inundate the viewer with manifold information and render perception increasingly fast-paced.

In connection with the rapid movement of images and the information-rich format of television, it is also worth mentioning that channel hopping, a habit adopted by most spectators confronted with a plethora of channels and the universal supply of remote control units, has become a widespread feature of television usage since the 1980s. Viewers have the opportunity to constantly change channels, moving from one set of information to another. Although channel hopping leaves 'what to watch' to the viewer, it still presents them with fragments of images and data. Television also has a multi-narrative form — various genres, ranging from sitcoms and soap operas to news, dramas and commercials. These programmes represent socio-cultural conditions, and, as theorists such as Horace Newcomb and Amanda Lotz argue, they sometimes function as a vehicle or 'cultural forum' to explore and understand social concerns.[79] The analysis of *Heart's Desire* will refer to soap opera and sitcoms to consider this aspect of television.

Another feature of television is its pervasive influence on consciousness. Television often functions as an ideological medium and affects perception with respect to the dominant worldview. For McLuhan, television has a manipulative and deadening impact on consciousness, turning the viewer into a 'technological idiot'.[80] He explains this through his idea of Narcissus/narcosis, and claims that watching television numbs individuals' senses and turns them into 'servomechanisms' of the media.[81] Adorno also elaborates on this, focusing on television's ideological role and arguing that it aims to possess the perceptual world of viewers by satisfying every sensory organ. As an ideological instance of the capitalist system or culture industry, it imposes its norms on individuals in subtle, often implicit ways. Over time, the ideological medium and the cultural products transmitted through television have become central to the lives of individuals: 'The gap between private existence and the culture industry,

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[78] Margherita Pagani, Multimedia and Interactive Digital TV: Managing the Opportunities Created by Digital Convergence (Hershey PA (USA) and London: IRM Press, 2003), p. 54.
[79] For more information, see such works as: Horace Newcomb, *Television: The Critical View* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), and Amanda Lotz, *The Television Will be Revolutionized* (New York: New York UP, 2007).
[80] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, p. 18.
[81] Ibid., p. 46.

which had remained as long as the latter did not omnipresently dominate all dimensions of the visible, is now being plugged.'[82]

Likewise, Pierre Bourdieu argues that television is a medium that functions discreetly to anaesthetise human perception in line with capitalist ideology by presenting easy---to---consume human---interest stories.[83] Moreover, Bourdieu claims that the media, and particularly television, 'depoliticize and reduce what goes on in the world to the level of anecdote or scandal.'[84] The trivialising effect of television, which is a premeditated feature of the medium managed by the capitalist system, functions in line with the norms and values of consumer culture as it offers consumable products for the free market and promotes an ideologically driven mindset. Television appears to have an ahistorical ideology. Neil Postman suggests it is 'a world of fragments, where events stand alone, stripped of any connection to the past, or to the future'.[85] Television as an ideological tool deprives people of a past through which to question the contemporary world. Instead, it encourages people to focus on the present by promoting the latest cultural products and ideological thought systems. In this respect, the medium and its formal structure foster an absence of memory in the same way as they generate a narcotic effect.

These theorists (among others) concentrate on television's role in shaping people's perceptual social frameworks by subtly presenting the dominant ideology. They all refer to the reductive impact of television on human cognition and critical thinking. McLuhan also discusses how humans, whose consciousness is fundamentally influenced by the media, can be made more aware of this impact and suggests that art could play a constructive role in this. Constant exposure to new media technologies, according to McLuhan, means human beings have not found ways to resist them. However, he argues that art might generate 'immunity' to new technologies[86] because 'the parallel between two media holds [individuals] on the frontiers between forms that snap [them] out of the Narcissus---Narcosis'.[87] Hence, presenting one medium in another may establish a connection or conflict between the media and art forms and foreground the workings of such media and disclose the agenda that constructs not only the media but human consciousness. Hence, the artist in the media---saturated world can deal with the collision of multiple media forms in order to raise awareness of each.

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[82] Adorno, 'Prologue to Television', p. 48.

[83] Pierre Bourdieu, *On Television*, trans. by Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson (New York: The New Press, 1998), p. 51.

[84] Bourdieu, *On Television*, p. 51.

[85] Neil Postman qtd. in Roger Freeman, 'Narrative and Anti---Narrative: Televisual Representation and Non---Causal Linearity in Contemporary Drama', *Journal ofDramatic Theory and Criticism*, 12: 1 (1997), 39--- 55, (pp. 43).

[86] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, p. 64.

[87] Ibid., p. 55.

One of the works that focuses on the relationship between art and media technologies is the collection *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance* (2006). In particular, Andy Lavender's essay investigates how mediatised theatrical staging might create a heightened awareness, a 'hypermedial' experience, by demonstrating 'the interface between the actual and the virtual, the corporeal and the mediatized'.[88] His discussion draws on J. D. Bolter and R. Grusin's idea of remediation and hypermediacy (see Introduction), which provides innovative perspectives on intermediality and its impact on consciousness through such notions as immediacy and hypermediacy. However, Bolter and Grusin do not necessarily deal with how the art---media connection could foreground the signs of mediation and increase awareness of the workings and impact of the media on the artwork and on society in general. It has been the objective of this thesis to study this connection with regards to the dramaturgical structure of plays and their theatrical productions, which the following section furthers in relation to the remediation of televisual form and aesthetics in plays.

3.2. A Selective Overview of Televisual Dramaturgy in Plays

As stated earlier, while there has been considerable interest in the interaction between the media and theatre/performance art, not much has been written about how a play text might incorporate media aesthetics into its form and what kind of dramaturgical, critical and performative repercussions this creates. This section analyses the remediation of televisual aesthetics in Caryl Churchill's *Heart's Desire* and how the mediatised plot structure responds to televisual culture. *Heart's Desire* is not the only or first example incorporating televisual aesthetics into its plot structure, it is therefore important to first briefly discuss similar formal strategies to understand its innovativeness.

The prevalence of television in contemporary society, with its far---reaching global scope and sphere of influence, has also changed the direction of the aesthetic influence between television and drama. Television once borrowed features and genre---related elements from drama --- character, gesture, comic elements and soap opera --- but since the 1960s, due to the widespread presence of television in the Western world, it has affected plays and theatre. The impact of television and televisual culture has generated new modes of expression in playwriting and new thematic motifs in plays. For example, while in some plays televisual form is explicitly used to support dramatic narrative, in others the incorporation of televisual aesthetics --- direct or implicit – undermines dramatic illusion and functions as a self---reflexive

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[88] Andy Lavender, 'Mise en scène, hypermediacy and the sensorium', in *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance*, ed. by Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 55---66, (p. 55).

critical tool. This section refers to a representative selection of plays written since the 1960s that remediate televisual aesthetics. The examples provide an eclectic array of important examples from the Western dramatic tradition because, as my research indicates, there are relatively few examples of such plays in British drama before the 1990s, remediating televisual aesthetics through their structure.

It is important to note that the influence of television on playwriting is not confined to the form and content of plays, it has also given rise to a new category of playwriting and a new industry in the cultural scene --- writing drama for television. From the 1950s and 1960s until the 1980s there was considerable interest in television drama in Britain. Television plays were originally inspired by kitchen sink drama/realism based on social realism, portraying social issues mainly concerning the working---classes. Some well---known television plays were broadcast through TV programs such as Armchair Theatre (1950s – 1970s), The Wednesday Play (1960s – 1970s) and Play for Today (1970s – 1980s). Television plays were less popular from the 1980s onwards chiefly due to the shift of interest towards television film. Playwrights who contributed to television drama include Dennis Potter, Nigel Barton, David Mercer, John Osborne, David Hare, Alan Bleasdale, John Hopkins, Alan Plater and Alan Bennet. Although plays written for television indicate an important aspect of the influence of television on drama and theatre, this chapter focuses on writing for the theatre whose dramaturgical form, directly or implicitly, relates to televisual aesthetics and culture.

Returning to the subject of plays that remediate televisual aesthetics and themes, Jean Claude van Itallie's plays such as *TV* (1966) and *Eat Cake* (1971) incorporate televisual form and motifs. For instance, van Itallie structures *TV* in two overlapping narrative layers: one layer of TV researchers watching and evaluating programmes, the other encompassing the personalities and characters of various televisual narratives such as news programmes and sitcoms.[89] The play adopts a metadramatic technique, a form similar to the play---within---a---play, placing fragments of television programmes and discourses within the artificial borders of the play text. The two narrative layers (the televisual and the theatrical) intermingle as the characters in the TV programmes start invading the viewing room of the researchers in the play. This blurs the boundaries between the 'televisual' and the 'real' in the context of the play and could be seen as a critical reference to the impact of televisual culture on individuals' perception of the world and reality, changing from a unified, consistent and intelligible experience into one of epistemological uncertainty. Moreover, the play is a critique of the ideological role and power of television that engenders a numbed and consumer---oriented

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[89] Jean---Claude van Itallie, *America Hurrah and Other Plays* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1967), p. 44.

society. As Gene A. Plunka explains: 'Jean---Claude van Itallie's plays depict McLuhan's nightmarish image that the media "narcotizes" individuals, sanitizing them into a Madison Avenue or Hollywood version of how American society ideally should function.'[90] The play addresses the changing dynamics of the world due to the prevalence of the televisual medium in the culture and daily lives of individuals.

Another playwright dealing with televisual culture in the 1970s was Des McAnuff who, similar to van Itallie, used televisual aesthetics in his play *Leave it to Beaver is Dead* (1974) as a means to critically reflect on the mass medium and the socio---cultural conditions television created. The play focuses on the socio---cultural changes emerging due to the increasingly influential televisual culture in the 70s. After an absence, the central character, Dennis, a medical student, comes back to his old commune to find that the free drug clinic he used to be in charge of has turned into a commercial venture, called 'The Show'. Here, Dennis's friends, now managed by a strong woman, Lizzard, service clients' fantasies with 'a mind---bending combination of interrogation, mockery, kindness, menace, and seduction, all simulated through games, play, plays within plays, and plays on words.'[91] The change from a non---profit clinic into a moneymaking make---believe project, and the continual references to the 1960s US sitcom *Leave It to Beaver* denote the socio---cultural transformation induced by the consumerist medium of television. In addition to the thematic content, the intertextual reference critically comments on how individuals' lives and consciousness are conditioned by the televised image.

The concern of the play with televisual culture becomes clearer through its dramaturgical structure. Similar to van Itallie's metadramatic construct, McAnuff is inspired by the televisual form as the incorporation of the TV show context as a show---within---a---play and the overt references to actual TV sitcoms creates a televisual setting within the artificial construct of the theatre. Throughout the play, the borders between the televisual make---believe setting of the commune and the theatrical setting of the play blur into each other and become indistinguishable, engendering uncertainties and gaps in the narrative and undermining the traditional representation of the world as a coherent, unified totality. Also, the 'synthetic language packed with sly quotations and a myriad of references to pop culture'[92] frustrates the seamless relationship between character and language. The unknowability of the characters, the indeterminacy as to the nature of the show, and the sudden and vague shifts between play

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[90] Gene A. Plunka, 'McLuhan, Perfect People, and the Media Plays of Jean---Claude van Itallie' in *New Readings in American Drama: Something's Happening Here,* ed. by Norma Jenckes (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), pp. 213---226, (p. 213).

[91] Elinor Fuchs, *The Death of Character* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996), p. 5.

[92] Ibid., p. 7.

and show or even rock concert destabilise dramatic illusion and relate to the changing dynamics of contemporary culture due to the increasing prevalence of the televisual medium.

Des McAnuff's formal strategy brings about a 'fluid and mysterious theatricality',[93] which highlights the artifice of the theatre and underlines the mediatedness of television and the televised worlds of individuals. Like van Itallie's plays, McAnuff's play is one of the first experiments with plot structure in relation to the televisual medium and in response to mediatised society. Also, the play presents a new form of critical response, proposing an alternative to traditional dramatic approaches to televisual culture. Rather than using televisual aesthetics to form an identifiable, unified and coherent narrative, McAnuff, like van Itallie, deploys them in a way that disrupts the demarcation of separate levels of action, raising the audience's consciousness and allowing them the opportunity to consider the constructedness of the play in relation to that of television and television---dominated culture.

Playwrights' interest in television aesthetics as a critical tool has intensified in line with the growing prevalence of the mass medium in contemporary society. In the 1990s, dramaturgical experiments in Western theatre increased. For example, the French dramatist Michel Vinaver approximates the televisual medium within his play *L'Emission de television* (1990) as a social critique. In response to the doubt cast by leading French theatre figures on the capacity of theatre to represent current social issues in view of the 'success of television in producing human interest programs',[94] Vinaver proposes a theatre embroiled in conflict with today's socio---economic conditions. To this end, Vinaver employs televisual and filmic aesthetics such as flashbacks, flash---forwards and instantaneous set changes to parody the media, particularly film and television techniques and program format, and the television viewer's hypnotism by the televisual image.

The dramaturgical interest in televisual style as a critical instrument to question television and televisual culture that 'provokes the audience to become active critics of what they see'[95] was also manifested in British plays. Caryl Churchill uses televisual aesthetics innovatively, though not explicitly, in *Heart's Desire*, one of the two one---act plays in *Blue Heart*. The ways Churchill restructures the composition propose a critical perspective on the dramaturgical responses to mediatised culture, as section 3.3. will consider.

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[93] Ibid. p. 7.
[94] Kevin Elstob, 'Michel Vinaver and the Theatre of the Here and Now: *L'Emission de television*', *The French Review*, 66: 4 (1993), 628--- 637, (pp. 628).
[95] Ibid., p. 635.

3.3. *Heart's Desire* and Televisual Composition

3.3.1. Decoding Televisual Aesthetics

In Caryl Churchill's plays, socio---political concerns and formal experiments go hand in hand, as Elaine Aston and Elin Diamond highlight in their recent work: 'For Churchill, dramatizing the political is not just a question of content, but also of form. With the renewal of form comes the renewal of the political: new forms and new socially *and* politically relevant questions.'[96] Churchill's stylistic attempts, particularly in her later works, also manifest a far more fragmented narrative which, as Amelia Howe Kritzer argues, 'reorient[s] the audience from reception of an artifact to participation in a transformative process by making the creation process visible through breaks in narrative and style, rather than obscuring it beneath the surface of a consistently finished product.'[97] These formal strategies suggest readings from different perspectives, one of which is discussed here, relating to mediatisation, particularly televisual aesthetics and culture.

After her radio dramas such as *The Ants* (1962) and *Not Not Not Not Not Enough Oxygen* (1971), Churchill produced drama for television in *Turkish Delight* (1973), *The After---Dinner Joke* (1978) and *Crimes* (1982). Before working in television, Churchill indicated her interest in television and the possibilities it might offer for theatre, stating: 'There is no reason why the demands of the small screen ... shouldn't stimulate our drama as the technical requirements of the Greek and Elizabethan theatres stimulated them.'[98] Although Churchill's reference is writing drama for television, her interest in the medium nevertheless comes to the surface later in her theatre career, though in a different context. In *Heart's Desire*, televisual aesthetics, which Churchill previously criticised for their dependency on the realist tradition,[99] have become the means to *de---realise* dramatic illusion and theatrical action by incorporating the indeterminacy of televisual aesthetics into the form and content of the play.

Heart's Desire is one of two one---act plays collected as *Blue Heart* (the other is *Blue Kettle*). *Heart's Desire* is a domestic story dealing with male oppression of women, a recurrent issue in Churchill's work. In her plays, Churchill focuses on 'the painful realities of a world divided by those who "own" and those who are "owned" and the havoc this wreaks on the lives and communities of men and especially women'.[100] In *Heart's Desire*, she deals particularly

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[96] Elaine Aston and Elin Diamond (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Caryl Churchill* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), p. 2.

[97] Amelia Howe Kritzer, *The Plays of Caryl Churchill: Theatre of Empowerment* (London: MacMillan, 1991), p. 190.

[98] Caryl Churchill qtd. in Kritzer, *The Plays of Caryl Churchill*, p. 45.

[99] For detailed discussion on this, please see, Kritzer, *The Plays of Caryl Churchill*, p. 46.

[100] Aston and Diamond, *The Cambridge Companion*, p. 1.

with the familial relationships and the roles of women in the family as suppressed, abused, nagging, dissident or castaway, and fantasist. As shall be seen, Churchill engages with and highlights these themes through the play's dramaturgical structure, particularly through the reset format, and allows the reader/audience to see these issues in a new light. In the play, a family, the parents Brian and Alice, their son, and Brian's sister Maisie await the return of their daughter, Susy, from Australia. Although the story seems to propose a plain thematic framework, it offers more than a simple family drama. The plot structure undermines the traditional mode of plotline based on a coherent and mostly chronologically ordered narrative with a clear beginning and dénouement.

Churchill's play, by contrast, is composed through resets; the scenes continually stop and then go back to a previous instant and start again but take a different course. For example, the play opens with the scene where Brian enters putting on a red sweater only to exit and return on the same repeated cue, this time, with a tweed jacket. These two resets repeat the same conversation between Brian and Alice about Susy's delayed arrival. Then exactly the same scene is repeated, yet this time Brian is wearing an old cardigan instead of a jacket and the story moves slightly forward with Maisie's incongruous talk about the platypus, a semi---aquatic mammal.[101] Churchill uses such techniques as fast---forwarding and skipping parts of a conversation or event as a means to continue a scene and to end it in a different way. The audience is thus invited to seek out difference from the very beginning of the play.

The resetting, rewinding and fast---forwarding of parts of the scenes (I return to these in detail below) relate to video---recording (VCR) technology that preceded the invention of the now pervasive DVD in 1997.[102] Resetting in the context of VCR technology presupposes linear construction, since no matter how many times one resets or rewinds a scene as it is played, it continues to the next scene from when it was stopped. However, as will be shown, in Churchill's plot the resets suggest a fragmented structure, a montage of snapshots of scenes that are presented rather sporadically through jump cuts. Montage and jump cut techniques are widely used in TV editing and broadcasting as well as in film, and all feature in *Heart's Desire*. The play also hints at television genres themselves (sitcom, soap opera). Another reason why television, as opposed to film, is the central concern relates to the time Churchill wrote the play. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the years immediately preceding the mass accessibility of the internet, television was the most widely---owned medium and it correspondingly had an enormous influence on culture, art and consciousness (at least in the

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[101] Caryl Churchill, *Plays: 4* (*Heart's Desire*) (London: NHB, 2008), p. 65. All references to *Heart's Desire* are taken from this edition, and will be shown as *HD* in the footnotes.
[102] Bernadette Caset et al., *Television Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 249.

Western world). In fact, television is still by far one of the most prevalent technologies, making the focus of the analysis even more relevant.

Heart's Desire is structured in resets that function by the continually starting and stopping scenes. Every time the scene stops, it goes back to a previous instant, sometimes fast-forwarding or skipping parts of the conversation to continue the scene, yet each time the new scene ends in a different way. For example, the five following resets after the abovementioned ones start with the same reference to Susy's belated arrival: 'She's taking her time.' Yet, each culminates in a different incident such as Alice's abandoning home,[103] an accident in the tube,[104] Maisie's injuring her ankle,[105] and the appearance of Susy's brother Lewis.[106] After the last reset, Churchill presents another reset and asks it to be presented at double speed: '*all movements accurate though fast*'.[107] Throughout the play, the playwright incorporates fast- forwarded scenes in which the characters rewind and fast-forward. These instances are perceptible to the reader merely through the stage directions. As the play moves forward the resets become more frequent: while a scene opens with Alice's words, the subsequent reset starts with Brian's critique of Alice,[108] and is immediately followed by Brian.[109] The quick resets here do not start from the beginning of the previous one, but from near the end of it.

The rewinding and replaying of scenes evokes VCR technology. As mentioned above, resets and rewinds presuppose a linear construction; a scene or framework, despite being reset or rewound, always continues from where it left off and leads to the subsequent scene. However, in *Heart's Desire*, rather than following a causal, chronological and linear pattern, the resets recreate the previously presumed reality and offer disjunction rather than continuity. The discontinuous mosaic of scenes suggests an aesthetic pattern similar to the montage technique used in film and television. Like the succession of images, sounds and words in the televisual flow,[110] associated with one another but not necessarily in a strictly linear order, the scenes are presented in a disjointed manner. Moreover, the predominant use of jump cuts --- the cutting from one scene to another --- a typical structural principle of montage, reinforces the fragmented structure and emphasises the implicit link between the play and television. Churchill enhances the jump cuts between the scenes and the sense of discontinuity by interrupting some of the scenes with abrupt snapshots of absurd images such

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[103] Churchill, *HD*, p. 67.
[104] Ibid., p. 68.
[105] Ibid., p. 69.
[106] Ibid., p. 71.
[107] Ibid., p. 71.
[108] Ibid., p. 74.
[109] Ibid., p. 74.
[110] Stephen Heath, 'Representing Television' in *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, ed. by Patricia Mellencamp (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 1990), pp. 267- 302, (p. 267).

as 'a ten foot tall bird'.[111] In short, the safety or cosiness of a familiar television format is radically disrupted, confronting the reader/spectator with a mixture of the familiar and the unexpected.

Besides challenging the traditional dramatic narrative, the resets, as introduced earlier, reinforce the thematic content and critique of the play which focus on the power relations between men and women and the suppression of women. For instance, a close reading of the play reveals that the resets are mostly positioned in a way that illustrates patriarchal power over the female characters. When female characters speak for themselves or when there is talk concerning gender roles, the dialogue is cut and a resetting takes place, more abruptly or obviously than in scenes where male characters lead the conversation and are in control.

In the scene where Alice leaves the house, the scene ends right after Alice's exit, which shocks Brian as he does not take her seriously. The scene restarts but this time continues with Brian dominating the conversation and excludes Alice's revolt and independent decision, implying a critique of the predominance of the patriarchal system and the repetitive history of female oppression by using rewinds. Also, in the scene where Maisie gives her extended monologue about the reproduction of a mammal, Brian interrupts her monologue and takes over the conversation.[112] Likewise, shortly after Susy's roommate appears at the door instead of the long---awaited daughter and implies that there is a lesbian relationship between her and Susy, this non---conformist character disappears from the narrative. Daniel Jernigan explains this not as a simple point in the story line, but as an element of Churchill's social critique of the normalising attempts of 'misogynist heterosexism': 'this threat to misogynist heterosexism is [...] written out of all later versions [and] the scene is reset to earlier, more acceptable, moments, in which the patriarchy is firmly in control.'[113] These examples illustrate how the dramaturgical structure functions as a critical tool to highlight the themes of the play.

The unusual composition of the play due to the resets, however, does not indicate a complete lack of unity. The thematic content acts as a centre or a framework concerning a family waiting for the return of a daughter along with undertones of the oppression of women in domestic life and incestuous relationships. Furthermore, every rewinding or forwarding of a scene links to part of the preceding scenes, which again encompasses a sort of connection and coherency between the scenes. These aspects provide the play with a sense of coherency,

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[111] Churchill, *HD*, p. 91.
[112] Ibid., p. 65--- 66.
[113] Daniel Jernigan, '*Traps, Softcops, Blue Heart*, and *This is a Chair*: Tracking Epistemological Upheaval in Caryl Churchill's Shorter Plays', *Modern Drama*, 47:1 (2004), 21--- 43, (pp. 26).

though not in the conventional sense of firmly and logically linked scenes that develop to make the plot hang together and present a complete dramatic play with an identifiable story. Rather, Churchill's plotline works through a discontinuous montage of fragments. This undermines the past---present---future sequence of traditional dramatic form, and proposes a continually shifting temporal and thematic frame with no single and definite end or message that unites the preceding moments into a fully identifiable representation. The ever---changing story, therefore, becomes a site of epistemological uncertainty rather than logical unity; there is no clear indication of who the characters really are, what their motives could be, or indeed why there are constant interruptions in the scenes.

Churchill, in this regard, furthers Brechtian montage based on *Verfremdung*, on 'free[ing] socially conditioned phenomena from [the] stamp of familiarity which protects them against our grasp today.'[114] Brecht uses montage as a political instrument to raise awareness of social---historical reality. The political basis of his plays is that the world can be portrayed as tenable with a fixed sense of social reality. On the other hand, Churchill's use of montage, which she reinforces through television and video aesthetics, does not present social reality as stable. Rather, Churchill's plot structure implies the difficulty or impossibility in representing the world as a consistent totality with a fully identifiable social---political reality. It thwarts any attempts to pin down meaning or to directly relate to the 'real' world. Rather, it refers to a less surveyable world relayed by TV sets, a world based more on contiguity, inconsistency and fragmentation than continuity and unity. Consequently, this generates an epistemologically problematic structure.

Uncertainty within the play does not suggest a lack of critical ability to address social reality. On the contrary, it is through this sense of indeterminacy that the play offers a critique of the mediatised world and perception. The fragmented and multi---perspectival plot structure, which constantly erases and rewrites 'reality', represents the disorientation of the human experience in the current fast---paced, information---intense environment. The plot structure, particularly the reset device, reflects the power that the media exert on consciousness. In every reset, Churchill erases the preceding scene and replaces it with a new version, which seems to function as a form of censorship as it suggests the dominance of the current scene over the previous and seeks to erase a problematic past in favour of a perpetual present. This could be read as a reference to the idea that the media more often than not shapes 'reality' and perceptions of it, to how the media present a partial perspective of events in line with the

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[114] Bertolt Brecht, 'A Short Organum for the Theatre' (Section 43) in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. by John Willett (London: Methuen Drama, 1964), pp. 179---205, (p. 192).

dominant ideology and persuade people to accept this as the truth. The pattern of resets as a form of censorship also relates to the theme of patriarchal structures and the oppression of women. As discussed and illustrated above, in these instances the parts in which Brian speaks dominate over and replace the scenes where Alice or Maisie attempt to express their ideas. The formal tool of reset/replay therefore emphasises the thematic content of the play.

The way Churchill restructures composition affects other dramaturgical elements such as language and characterisation. Language in many parts of the play is repetitious, fragmented, associative and sometimes recondite. This configuration of linguistic material is in evidence in the scene reset to the opening scene --- 'She's taking her time' --- and presented as quickly as possible, with movements following the lines.[115] Here, the reader experiences a rapidly communicated linguistic collage, a mosaic of fragments of previously uttered dialogues and speeches:

> BRIAN: She's taking
> ALICE: Not
> BRIAN: We shouldn't have
> ALICE: We should not
> BRIAN: She'll be
> ALICE: She's a woman
> BRIAN: How can you speak
> ALICE: She's a
> BRIAN: You're so
> ALICE: She can travel[116]

Churchill's use of language is a linguistic reflection of the non---linear flow of fragments of images and quick shift of scenes on television. In a way similar to how television presents a rapid flow of series of frames and information, Churchill's language use presents a flow of fragmented utterances, rendering language incomplete.

However, the fractured language does not completely impede comprehension or present a meaningless torrent of words. The discontinuous utterances associate themselves with the preceding scenes and with the general thematic content. This allows the fractured language to imply some sort of connection with the central story of the parents waiting for their daughter, yet without developing these utterances to have coherent meaning. Hence, this problematises the representational role of language in the portrayal of the world as a manageable whole and does not provide the reader/audience with a sense of order. Rather, it substantiates the feeling of instability that the reset format has engendered. Restructuring language --- the oldest

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[115] Churchill, *HD,* p. 77.
[116] Ibid. p. 77.

medium through which the human perceives, defines and relates to the world and constructs an idea of the self --- in line with the workings of the plot, *Heart's Desire* hints at the changing mode of human consciousness and subjectivity.

The way in which language is treated also evokes the dissolution of human relations because, as opposed to its *de facto* function, Churchill's language presents as a non---communicative, dysfunctional medium. The utterances flow but do not necessarily engender communication. Rather, they imply a difficulty in human relations. Situated within the frame of televisual aesthetics, which hints at our mediatised environment and consciousness, the failure of language to make clear sense proposes and facilitates communication, critically speaks to the weakening of interpersonal relations in a globally connected, multiply mediatised yet increasingly isolated world. Furthermore, unlike the sense of clarity that traditional language use in dramatic plays can offer, Churchill's language refuses to spoon---feed the reader/audience and present them with a sense of order and certainty. Instead, it locates the reader/audience in the midst of a disordered and unstable flow of utterances. It disorients them through its 'no longer dramatic' plot structure, which withholds information and resists recognisable plotline and unified characterisation. Its aesthetic indeterminacy generates epistemological instability and complexity. This inventive structure based on the remediation of media aesthetics foregrounds the mechanics of mediation and dramaturgical expression, sensitises the reader/audience, and encourages them to gather these fragments and create their own readings of the piece.

Churchill creates her characters through words rather than actions. In the same way that the fragmented form of language subverts the dramatic role of language as a coherent and meaningful instrument, it frustrates dramatic characterisation. To begin with, Churchill's compositions and words do not generally present a coherent personal narrative or portray unified characters with individual motives, emotions or views. In her use of language, as Aston and Diamond suggest, Churchill 'has undermined the informational and confessional nature of dialogue by having characters speak over each other's lines, creating intermittent verbal cacophonies that subvert the convention of individualized dramatic character.'[117] Churchill's approach to language, more often than not, destabilises the once unified and consistent relationship between speech and character, and proposes language as a separate dramaturgical entity. Correspondingly, in *Heart's Desire*, the playwright subverts the notion of unified character by restructuring the linguistic medium into a fragmented, occasionally fast---paced and repetitious format. Due to the resets in the play, the utterances are in a continual loop,

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[117] Aston and Diamond, *The Cambridge Companion,* p. 9.

though not in a regular pattern. There is a constant repetition of the same fragments of utterances; for instance, the opening sentence 'She's taking her time'[118] is repeated four times in the first two pages of the play. This repetitive loop of utterances reduces the individuality of the language and renders it somewhat ordinary as opposed to a unique creation of an individual person. Language seems to be common property; in most of the play it matters less who the speaker is than what the utterance might indicate. Language acts as an element on its own somewhat separate from the subject speaking it. This implies that the words are, in general automatic and predetermined rather than articulated by individual subjects.

When considered in relation to the televisual aesthetics in use, the destabilisation of dramatic character may refer to the changing condition of the human subject and subjectivity in the mediatised world, as argued in Chapter 3. While the characters are depicted with so---called individual subject positions, --- names and roles ---, as the narrative moves back and forth, their relationship to the language becomes unstable and less self---directed. The characters do not have full autonomy over language; the repetitive loop of the language gradually implies that language is speaking the characters rather than emanating from them, raising the question of whence language originates. In this regard, Churchill's approach to language and character addresses the dissolution of human agency as the sole and determining source of language, thought and action.

Churchill undermines the notion of sovereign subjectivity by making the characters stereotypes. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, the media helps serve the ideological agenda of standardising people into deindividuated stereotypes under the pretence of individualism. Television, as one of the most pervasive media technologies, subtly promotes such labelling through stereotypes in different television genres such as soap operas or sitcoms, or celebrities, who stand as social icons while being no more than stereotyped subjects themselves (see section 3.3.2.). In *Heart's Desire*, characters are presented as types. For example, the parents Brian and Alice stand for a typical middle---class couple arguing about small things and in a continual power struggle with each other. Their roles as 'husband' and 'wife', or 'man' and 'woman' are a cliché and are easily recognisable to the audience. However, their 'hyper--- recognisability' does not bring simple identification with them because, unlike the types in dramatic plays, who hold a form of coherency within the narrative, Churchill's characters are deliberately incomplete, underdeveloped and superficial. Their strangeness thus functions as a means of stimulating our attention rather than our sympathy.

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[118] Churchill, *HD*, p. 65.

3.3.2. Reading *Heart's Desire* in relation to Televisual Genres

The stereotypical characters, the domestic setting, the familial context, and other aspects of Caryl Churchill's play invoke elements of popular televisual genres such as sitcom and soap opera. The intergeneric relationship here highlights the intermedial influence of television on theatre (plays) and foregrounds its mediatisation and theatricality even further. The sitcom genre can be structured through a complex and multi---stranded plotline to create farcical situations that often deal with or, more often, skirt around, taboo areas of sex, politics, religion and death. Yet although sitcoms can be formally complicated and politically oriented, they can also be, and more generally are, banal and structured through 'trivial storylines'[119] with minor plot development. Much output of the 1970s and 1980s confirms this and includes more pernicious shows. *Love Thy Neighbour* or *Mind Your Language* actively reinforced racial stereotypes. *Are You Being Served* and most domestic comedies entrenched clichéd gender relations. These types of sitcom are often located in a cosy, middle---class setting. As Jane Feuer suggests, in sitcoms '[t]he situation has always been a simple and repeatable frame on which to hang all manner of gags, one---liners, warm moments, physical comedy and ideological conflicts.'[120] Another prominent feature of the sitcom is its dependence on stereotypes, mostly those that foreground comic relations. Stereotypes are essential to the sitcom genre because 'for a character to be immediately funny that character must be a recognisable type, a representative embodiment of a set of ideas or a manifestation of a cliché.'[121]

In this respect, Churchill's play, set in the domestic milieu of Brian and Alice's kitchen, calls forth certain aspects of the sitcom genre. The domestic environment and the familial context with the evident stereotypical roles of husband, wife, mother, father, aunt, son and daughter, render the play akin to what Hartley defines as 'family sitcoms', a sitcom 'specialised in the drama of *family comportment*.'[122] Such stereotypes also indicate a gendered construct of the family that establishes the father as the voice of authority (as Brian is the only one who knows where Susy might be), although there is also a tradition of hen---pecked fathers in the genre, an implicit criticism of letting women get 'above their station'. The relationship between Brian and Alice is based on quarrels and frictions epitomising the classical confrontations of couples.

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[119] Brett Mills, *Television Sitcom* (London: British Film Institute, 2005), p. 22.

[120] Jane Feuer, 'Situation Comedy, Part 2', in *The Television Genre Book*, ed. by in Glen Creeber, Toby Miller and John Tulloch (London: BFI Pub., 2001), pp. 67--- 70, (p. 69---70).

[121] Andy Medhurst and Lucy Tuck, 'Situation comedy and stereotyping' in *Television Times: A Reader*, ed. by John Corner and Sylvia Harvey (London: Arnold/ Hodder Headline Group, 1996), pp. 111---116, (p. 111---112).

[122] John Hartley, 'Situation Comedy, Part 1', in *The Television Genre Book*, ed. by Glen Creeber, Toby Miller and John Tulloch (London: BFI Pub., 2001), pp. 67--- 70, (p. 66).

The play seems realistically set in the kitchen of a middle---class family with stereotypical roles referring to the monotony and ordinariness of domestic life through the resettings of scenes. However, this seemingly dull and familiar context, as mentioned earlier, is occasionally disrupted by the sudden appearance of various surreal or absurd characters (e.g. children rushing in, round the room and out again,[123] and of two gunmen bursting in and killing them all[124]) after which the scenes are reset and start over again. Such absurd instances might be considered elements of humour associated with the comic aspect of the sitcom genre. Churchill's use of absurd elements can also be associated with her interest in absurdist aesthetics as a means to frustrate the traditional dramatic representation of well---made, realistic plays, and challenge the audience's entrenched assumptions about theatrical experience and socio---cultural matters.

The sitcom genre mostly involves a happy ending and resolution generated by the ways in which a series of seemingly unrelated threads, incidents and absurd instances are brought together. The comic effect is therefore based more on this formal pleasure than on the resolution of thematic issues. At the end of Churchill's play, Susy comes back home and the family reunites. This might at first seem to be a resolution, a happy ending as the story ends in a sitcom. However, this closing scene is immediately followed by an indication that the play rewinds back to the opening scene. The connection between the scene and the televisual genre is limited because there is no clear resolution, no final dénouement or comic undertone in this last scene, but a reference to an unending and even absurd vicious circle due to the constant resetting of the scenes that do not allow a finale.

Alternatively, the scene and the play have features that might be associated with the soap opera genre. In soap operas, as Livingstone argues, 'endings are not consistently happy, disagreements may endure.'[125] Likewise, *Heart's Desire*, though it has some awkwardly humorous moments, is a story of tension rather than comedy. This is not only because of the incompleteness generated through the resets, which keeps increasing the tension, but also due to the furtive reason behind Susy's departure that is occasionally implied to be an incestuous relationship with her father. In addition, the episodic and complete form of the sitcom is not really in evidence in the play because it is composed of unfinished, interrelated fragments rather than complete and autonomous scenes. *Heart's Desire* draws on the narrative aesthetics

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[123] Churchill, *HD*, p. 74.
[124] Ibid. p. 77.
[125] Sonia Livingstone, Making Sense of Television: The Psychology of Audience Interpretation (London, New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 62.

of the soap opera, which as Sonia Livingstone proposes, 'consists of "endless middle"'.[126] Furthermore, soap operas do not offer absolutes: 'Narratives do not so much begin and end as weave in and out of each other, evolving from previous stories, remaining unfinished, full of the potential for future development or transformation.'[127] Likewise, Churchill's play neither follows a definitive order, nor offers clear and singular messages or solutions to the subject matter portrayed. It is structured through an incomplete loop manifesting an image of endless similarity, open-‑endedness and uncertainty.

The open-‑endedness typical of soap operas renders *Heart's Desire* an open text that demands reader/audience participation. However, as a televisual form constructed in accordance with television's ideological role, the openness of the soap opera is limited because, like the sitcom, it 'systematically excludes certain phenomena in its apparently general treatment of everyday concerns, particularly by redirecting attention from the political to the personal'.[128] In other words, it is more 'closed' than 'open' in that it imposes standardised beliefs, values of normality and patriarchy behind its light tone and open-‑to-‑interpretation structure. Nevertheless, by incorporating aspects of these televisual genres into her play, Churchill not only reveals and criticises the numbing effect of television, but also reverses this influence into a critical means that allows viewers to perceive the world as television, as a media-‑driven construct with its absurdities, inconsistencies, uncertainties and melodrama.

Churchill's formal experiments, here posited as displaying televisual aesthetics, frustrate traditional dramatic composition and propose an innovative formal approach to mapping the world particularly in relation to televisual culture. The unconventional form of the play disrupts the dramatic certainties that the reader/audience is used to. The plot structure presents the meaning-‑seeking reader/audience with indeterminacies and gaps, potentially leading them to a heightened awareness of the constructedness of human perception and experience in today's mediatised environment. Churchill's challenging technique opens the text to multiple readings and presents readers/audience with latitude in their approach to the text and the issues it implicitly raises through its plot structure.

As examined earlier, the mode of plot structure also reinforces the play's thematic content and sensitises the readers/audience to its critical concern with subjects such as the socially-‑constructed gender roles, patriarchal structures and the oppression of women. The dramaturgical structure of the play serves as a critical tool that not only reinforces the critique,

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[126] Ibid., p. 52.
[127] Ibid. p. 52.
[128] Ibid. p. 63 --- 64.

but also implies the role of the media, particularly television, in normalising societies and making them follow ideologically set norms and values. The implicit sitcom and soap opera contexts also emphasise the voice of the stereotyping patriarchal system since these genres, generally present gender---oriented types such as submissive mother, patriarchal and authoritarian father, "weird" lesbian, and so forth. This is not to suggest that the media are entirely normative and ideologically oriented. There are television programmes such as *Modern Family*, *Glee* and *Queer as Folk* that deal with queer culture, issues of heteronormativity and homophobia, and present queer culture in a palatable and unthreatening manner. Nonetheless, most television still predominantly manifest normative attitudes, illustrated through the heteronormative undertones in such programmes as *Friends, Desperate Housewives* or *Sex and the City*. Although there might be gay characters or references to gay culture in many of these television shows, they are often more token than integral.

The remediation of media aesthetics in the play's plot structure, therefore, is not a decorative or a merely thematic tool that is used to support the dramatic illusion. Rather, the implicitly mediatised form serves as a critical tool that undermines the conventional framework of dramatic representation and engenders epistemological complexity and indeterminacy. This structure renders the play capable of mapping the contemporary; it draws attention to the connections between the media, the ideological stance it reflects and the socio---cultural environment it generates. It also highlights the thematic content of the play. *Heart's Desire* allows the reader/audience to see their social---cultural environment and their position in it in a new, potentially more critical way. The inventive, 'no longer dramatic' form of *Heart's Desire* subverts the interpretive and representational limits of traditional dramatic theatre and the borders it builds around the stage and the audience. It opens the text to speculation and multiple readings, both on the stage and in the auditorium.

3.3.3. From Televisual Dramaturgy to Theatrical Performance: *Heart's Desire*[129] on Stage

Heart's Desire was first staged in 1997 at the Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds, before its transfer to the Traverse Theatre (Edinburgh) and then to the Royal Court (London).[130] *Heart's*

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[129] The analysis here is based mainly on the comments of several theatre critics from different magazines, newspapers and internet sites recorded in the *Theatre Record*, and on the researcher's unpublished interview with the director Max Stafford---Clark on 9th August 2010. The interview will be indicated as: Stafford---Clark in Ilter, 'Interview'.

[130] *Blue Heart* is a double bill that consists of *Heart's Desire* and *Blue Kettle*. The two plays were therefore staged together.

Desire was co---produced by Out of Joint and the Royal Court Theatre under the direction of Max Stafford---Clark. The setting was bare and stark: 'a white kitchen [...] filled with a blue light'.[131] As the director explained, the production was intended to be straightforward and minimalistic and did not involve the use of media technologies.[132] The focus of the performance, in relation to Caryl Churchill's text, was on the innovative narrative style, the startling plot tricks that deconstructed dramatic convention and the development of a linear narrative. Stafford---Clark associated this style with the playwright's concern about theatre's inability to change the world,[133] and in accordance with this reading, he built the stage interpretation of the play on the idea of futile repetition and frustration against the incapacity to change socio---cultural conditions and power relations, even in the domestic setting. Stafford---Clark's interpretation of Churchill's techniques did not necessarily take into consideration the possibility of a link between the play's structure and the mediatised culture, or at least consciously aim at a critique of social reality from this perspective.

Theatre critics had similar reactions to the production, focusing on various formal and thematic aspects, mainly with a particular interest in the absurdist aspects of the piece without referring to the implicit influence of mass media on the dramaturgical structure and staging technique. Critic Susannah Clapp focused on how the piece presented varying versions of a narrative 'swinging from domestic realism to absurdity'[134] and how the dramaturgical form was fragmented, arguing: 'None of these alternatives influence each other.'[135] A similar focal point emerged in Colin Donald's commentary when he argued that Churchill's play 'revive[d] a long---neglected tradition of English absurdism and combine[d] it with an inspired parody of stage domestic comedy.'[136] While Donald touched on the resets in his critique, he interpreted the technique as 'a loopy revelation of the randomness of life with a note of sublime melancholy, showing the supreme irrelevance of individual will on determining the course of events',[137] rather than the aesthetic influence of the electronic media on the production and its critical implications. Another critic, Ian Shuttleworth, read such aesthetic formulations in the performance as 'scenarios running through the heads of each of the characters: the exchanges and events they dream of occurring during the mundane business of waiting.'[138] The reviews indicated the common reception of the play as an absurdist piece.

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[131] Susannah Clapp, 'Review on *Blue Heart*' (*Observer*), *Theatre Record*, 17:19 (1997), p. 1192.
[132] Stafford---Clark in Ilter, 'Interview'.
[133] Stafford---Clark in Ilter, 'Interview'.
[134] Clapp, 'Review on *Blue Heart*', p. 1192.
[135] Ibid., p. 1192.
[136] Colin Donald, 'Review on *Blue Heart*', *Theatre Record*, 17:17 (1997), p. 1046. [Edinburgh Supplement]
[137] Donald, 'Review on *Blue Heart*', p. 1046.
[138] Ian Shuttleworth, 'Review on *Blue Heart*' (*Financial Times*), *Theatre Record*, 17:19 (1997), p. 1191.

Such interpretations emphasise important thematic and structural aspects of *Heart's Desire* and enrich the critical perspectives of the play and performance. However, the majority of reviews did not question the media---related aesthetic foundations of Churchill's play because Stafford---Clark's stage neither nodded to TV technology nor directly referenced the media. The director had little interest in the media dimension of the play and this was reflected in critics' responses. Among these reviews, almost all the critics mentioned the resets and the unconventionality of the form in *Heart's Desire*, and tried to explain these through different paradigms, while few made an association with televisual aesthetics or a critical reference to the mediatised, televisual culture. Whilst David Benedict connected the style to 'a rapid dramatic version of the parlour game',[139] suggesting some sort of an intergeneric relationship between theatre and games, Mark Fisher considered it 'the theatrical equivalent of a rap record scratch---mix'[140] that consists of incomplete and overlapping fragments of sounds and works through arbitrary interruptions. Sarah Hemming's critique suggested a similar link between the form and new electronic media and focused on the video recording style, arguing: 'the actors rewind and repeat their actions as perfectly as if on a video take'.[141] Another formal link with the televisual medium appeared in Nick Curtis's critique, referring to the sitcom---style and stereotypical characters of this televisual genre: 'the same scene featuring two bickering, sitcom---style parents.'[142]

Given the focus of some of the reviewers on the media---related form of the production, one might argue that there is a reference to the presence and impact of media technologies implicit in the aesthetics of Churchill's play. The reason why Stafford---Clark's production focused on the unchanging social structures, patriarchal dominance and the theatre's incapacity to change such social matters rather than the mediatised culture could be simply a matter of artistic choice. Another reason for Stafford---Clark's artistic interpretation could be due to the social and cultural setting of the 1990s. That is, although the 1990s marked the rise of new technologies and the beginning of a mediatised culture, media technologies such as the internet and mobile phones have started to become pervasively influential on everyday lives and human consciousness fundamentally since the 2000s. Given this, it would not be completely wrong to consider that Stafford---Clark's interpretation of the play did not deliberately overlooked the question of the media culture that the play's dramaturgy suggests. In addition, the fact that the reviewers' comments signal a media---related pattern without taking it further into a critique of the mediatised culture might be due not only to the

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[139] David Benedict, 'Review on *Blue Heart*' (*The Independent*), *Theatre Record*, 17:17 (1997), p. 1054---5. [Edinburgh Supplement]

[140] Mark Fisher, 'Review on *Blue Heart*', *Theatre Record*, 17:17 (1997), p. 1066. [Edinburgh Supplement]

[141] Sarah Hemming, 'Review on *Blue Heart*' (*Financial Times*), *Theatre Record*, 17:19 (1997), p. 1193.

[142] Nick Curtis, 'Review on *Blue Heart*' (*The Evening Standard*), *Theatre Record*, 17:19 (1997), p. 1192.

production's focus on different aspects of the play, but also to the incipient process of omnipresent mediatisation. One could only speculate on Stafford---Clark's artistic reasoning, yet it is in evidence, as implied by some of the reviews, that the play's dramaturgical structure contains media---related aesthetics and critical undertones. Another production could investigate these aspects in relation to the mediatised culture particularly in terms of the change in human consciousness and relations in view of omnipresent mediatisation.

4. Conclusion: Reviewing the Different Workings and Effects of Mediatised Plots

This chapter analysed *Helmet* and *Heart's Desire* to explore how they remediate – whether consciously or not – media aesthetics in their plot structures. It examined the ways the new modes of plot structure function and affect the critical capacity of the plays in relation to the contemporary mediatised culture they were written in. The analysis suggests that although both plays incorporate media aesthetics into their plot structures, they fundamentally differ in terms of the mode of dramaturgical remediation and the capacity to critically relate to contemporary society and consciousness.

The analysis has shown that both plays fundamentally share the rewind/replay feature in their approaches to the remediation of media forms in their plot structures. However, the ways in which they incorporate this feature into their dramaturgical form are significantly different, consequently leading to disparate formal and critical effects. Douglas Maxwell's approach to remediation is primarily based on the logic and aesthetics of dramatic representation. Maxwell situates the replays within a coherently evolving and recognisable plotline whereby every resetting reinforces the dramatic action and leads to a clear dénouement. *Helmet* portrays the world as a stable totality, knowable, expressible and thus representable. It presents us with unified characters in an easily identifiable setting and with realistic language, all within the borders of a coherent fictive cosmos. Like the use of medialects in the language of *Closer* (Chapter 2), the incorporation of media aesthetics in *Helmet*'s plot structure remains within the representational and interpretive limitations of dramatic theatre. Despite its overt use of videogame form and its direct thematisation of aspects of the mediatised culture, *Helmet* fails to relate to and address wider issues concerning contemporary social reality. This is mainly because the order and certainty in which Maxwell situates dramatic representation no longer corresponds to the epistemologically unstable environment of contemporary hyperreal, media--- saturated culture, an environment that the use of game aesthetics and motif of virtual reality as well as the play's content hint at. *Helmet*, in an Aristotelian manner, recoups a notion of order from the increasing indeterminacy, multiplicity and even chaotic state of the human

condition and consciousness. This sense of absoluteness seals off the play from the actual conditions of contemporary reality rather than representing it, and can delude the reader/audience into the idea of wholeness, keeping the critical potential of the play within the bounds of the surface story of two disillusioned characters in a game shop.

Caryl Churchill's use of rewinds/replays along with domestic and familial context and farcical elements evokes televisual aesthetics and genres. Unlike the replay model in *Helmet*, which is placed within a coherently structured and epistemologically stable framework, Churchill's looping replays do not follow a traditionally structured time line but rather rupture the chronology of events and the concept of time. The analysis indicates Churchill's dramaturgical structure, based on a discontinuous montage of fragments, changing constantly through rewinds/replays, fast---forwards and with little development, destabilises the coherency of traditional dramatic plot. There is no definite and fixed end but a suggestion of further replays, and no clear critical stance or complete picture to unite the fragments into an intelligible whole and specific interpretation. Instead, *Heart's Desire* proposes a continually varying landscape, undermining the epistemological certainty, interpretive clarity and unified mode of representation dramatic plays are based on. Churchill's plot composition produces multiplicity, instability and indeterminacy, associated with the mode of perception and lifestyle of fast---paced, information---intense culture. Churchill's technique brings disorder and indeterminacy into order---seeking human perception. It makes the changing aspects of human condition and perception in relation to mediatisation both intelligible and questionable, something that has eluded cognition due to the inundation of media technologies and images. In the same way, the play offers a critical response to the assumptions that plays and theatre are no longer able to relate to the rapid changes in society and perception under the influence of media technologies.

The different approaches to plot structure tend to influence the interpretation of the plays on stage. Also, the remediation of media forms in the plays, be it in the frame of a dramatic play or of a 'no---longer---dramatic' text, suggests potential for expanding the scope of the mediatised form of the texts further to accommodate the realities of contemporary culture. Thus, an imaginative director might decouple the text from its traditional dramaturgical roots or from its author's intentions, and bring out its potential in order to reconsider the plays' media---related aesthetics in relation to the phenomenon of mediatisation.

John Tiffany's interpretation of *Helmet* followed Maxwell's traditional dramatic model. The production integrated the game aesthetics entirely into the theatrical narrative to form a

coherent representation of a stable and identifiable fictive cosmos, which consequently increased the sense of immediacy, perfection of dramatic representation. Tiffany adopted Maxwell's model of unified characterisation and recognisable plotline; he fully blended the live (actors) and the mediatised (game figures) and settled the onstage action as a single 'truth', the truth of the fictional world. This not only separated the world of the stage from the social and perceptual reality of the outside world, but also placed the spectators within this elusive landscape promising meaningfulness and epistemological certainty, whilst such experiences generated no consciousness of mediatisation. Tiffany's production focussed on representing the stories of the two young characters in a game shop, not on exploring and reconsidering how the remediation of game aesthetics and the thematic elements may link to contemporary social reality.

The production of *Heart's Desire* seems mainly to have focused on the absurd aspect of the play and considered the innovative formal aesthetics along those lines, particularly as a critical reference to the theatre's incapacity to change the world and the futility of human endeavours to control their lives. The unconventional plot structure on stage situated spectators in a state of indeterminacy and instability, rendering them uncomfortably aware of the limits of their knowledge about the world they inhabit and the way they perceive the world. However, Max Stafford---Clark's production did not extend such suggestions concerning the contemporary moment to the impact of media on life styles, consciousness and relationships, which Churchill's plot structure hints at. The implicit link between the aesthetics of representation in the play and the questions about mediatised culture it brings about invites prospective directorial and performative approaches to explore this aspect of Churchill's play. This reading of *Heart's Desire* could be of interest to contemporary theatre---makers particularly when considered in relation to the increasing interest of theatre practitioners in the use and aesthetics of media technologies as well as in their socio---cultural impacts.

This chapter on mediatised forms of plot structure has demonstrated that both *Helmet* and *Heart's Desire* suggest an implicit tendency to define and relate to mediatised culture. Here, the central issue has not been whether Maxwell or Churchill shaped their plot structures deliberately in relation to media aesthetics. It is rather what each text as a form --- consciously or unconsciously mediatised – suggests, and whether the mediatised form on the page renders the text capable of accommodating aspects of contemporary culture that it thematises. The analysis of the plays has revealed that this tendency remains limited in the borders of traditional dramatic form in the explicitly mediatised structure of *Helmet*, and stops short of

corresponding to the circumstances of media---saturated culture. On the other hand, the implicit remediation of media aesthetics through the innovative form of *Heart's Desire* critically addresses a modern society in which all perception is fundamentally shaped by media technologies and culture. This connection does not comfort the reader/audience with an identifiable and stable environment or a fixed interpretation. Rather, it confronts them with a mixture of the familiar and the uncertain; it provides them with an epistemologically unstable state, something people in the current financially and politically unstable, fast---paced, technologised and globalised world are likely to relate to.

As a result, my analysis has revealed that simply because a play remediates a media form consciously and overtly, it does not necessarily follow that the play as a form has the capacity to relate to contemporary reality. Plays in a multiply mediatised world can relate to social reality and consciousness not simply through the direct thematisation of issues concerning contemporary culture, but through a more profound and dramaturgical as well as thematic engagement with the changing modes and conditions of perception. This engagement can occur primarily when the form of plays and theatrical performances destabilise the ingrained values and expectations of the readers/audience, creating disorientation and leading them to a realisation of their own existence and consciousness within mediatised culture.

CONCLUSION

The difficulty is to establish a line between the play and the media [...] guaranteeing the accessibility of the play from our knowledge of the world that is shaped by the media.[1]

This thesis has investigated the impact of mediatisation on a carefully chosen selection of English---language plays written since the 1990s. It has asked how plays have evolved in their structure and content in relation to a media---saturated culture, considering to what extent new modes of dramaturgy of text are able to map out and respond to mediatised society and perception. This thesis has responded to recent shifts in critical discourse, particularly those concerning increasing artistic and academic interest in the mediatisation of theatre in relation to performance rather than plays; misconceptions about postdramatic theatre as non---textual practice;[2] and the fallacy that play---scripts are unable to accommodate the new reality of the media.[3] In response, the thesis has argued that in an age in which the media increasingly shape socio---cultural, perceptual and symbolic structures, it is to be expected that plays are influenced by and change in relation to the media as much as performance does. To investigate the relationship between media culture and plays, the thesis has used the concept of mediatisation. It has extended the scope of the term into the field of playwriting and theatre---making through the notion of 'mediatised dramaturgy', which refers to the impact of the media and media culture on the fabric of plays. The analysis has focused on four major aspects: theme, language, character and plot structure. This research would be incomplete without the study of how the performative potentials of the texts are realised on stage. Therefore, besides the plays, the thesis has examined the first and/or most well known productions in order to ascertain how British theatre in the mediatised age responds to the new possibilities and the challenging formal tendencies that the texts offer.

1. Mediatised Dramaturgy: Patterns and Effects

The thesis has posited that forms of mediatised dramaturgy and their capacity to relate to socio---cultural and perceptual reality of the mediatised age vary according to their approaches to the mode of representation. I have argued that there are two fundamental patterns that

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[1] Patrice Pavis, 'Afterword: Contemporary Dramatic Writings and the New Technologies', in *Trans---global readings: Crossing theatrical boundaries*, ed. by Caridad Svich (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003), pp. 187---203, (p. 193).
[2] Ibid., p. 191.
[3] For further information, see: Axel Schalk, 'The End of Mimesis: Observations on the Theatre of the 1990s', in *Literature, Markets and Media in Germany and Austria Today*, ed. by Arthur Williams, Stuart Parkes, Julian Preece (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 253 ---272, (p. 269).

show the ways in which the plays relate to mediatisation: 'dramatic' and 'no---longer---dramatic' mediatised dramaturgies.

1.1. 'Dramatic' Mediatised Plays

This type of dramaturgy comprises plays that deal with mediatisation as subject matter without rethinking conventional dramatic form (e.g. *Chatroom, Video*), and plays that use media aesthetics within the frame of dramatic representation (e.g. *Closer, Helmet*). Such attempts to 'represent' mediatised culture --- the altered mode of social conditions and human perception in a high---speed, technologised and globalised environment --- restrict the plays' capacity to relate and respond to the experience of the contemporary. The act of dramatic representation retains text as recognisable, denotational meaning rather than engaging with the epistemological and ontological uncertainties of contemporary culture. The representation of the world and reality as a knowable, stable whole generates a sense of order and certainty. Such constructed determinacy may comfort the reader/audience whose perception of the world has become increasingly fragmented and multi---perspectival as a result of an information---bombarded, media---saturated culture. Representational comfort, based on the audience's acceptance of the dramatic illusion, lulls audiences into passivity. This effect, I would suggest, is not that different from the way that the mass media create a consciousness conducive to its own ends and desensitises people to elements outside the constructed reality. Dramatic mediatised dramaturgy overlooks the possibility that the aesthetics of representation actually align themselves with the social and perceptual dynamics of the mediatised age. The non---correspondence in these dramatic plays between the mode of artistic relation to the world and our perception of reality reduces the plays' capacity to take account of mediatisation and to present a responsive critique of the contemporary moment to which they thematically aspire. Dramatic plays do not present the world in a new light as such, but cloud the uncertainty of the 'real' with more fixed interpretive strategies. These are plays that tend to reassure the reader/audience with meaning and a sense of stability rather than texts that can approach mediatised culture, its instability, ambivalence and hyperreality. One might thus expect that dramatic plays such as these would receive interpretive, denotative performance. However, one should not forget that the possibilities the dramatic plays suggest through references to the media and mediatisation might well be revealed and treated critically in a creative performance, as was the case with *Faust*.

1.2. 'No---longer---dramatic' Mediatised Dramaturgy: Plays for the Age of Mediatisation

'No---longer---dramatic' mediatised texts, unlike dramatic plays, reconsider dramaturgical structure in relation to mediatised culture and perception. Their mode of sign usage frustrates interpretive, representational modes and locates references to the media and mediatisation in a non---representational form. The no---longer---dramatic aesthetics of these mediatised texts, which are based on indeterminacy and ambivalence, echo the ontological and epistemological conditions of the contemporary postmodern environment. References to mediatisation or use of media forms in more innovative structures add to this relation to the contemporary. This model of mediatised dramaturgy works through and exposes, to borrow Lehmann's terminology, a '*politics of perception*'.[4] The dramaturgical pattern emphasises how the media and mediatisation as a social process have inflected all forms of perception, and, accordingly, have shaped modes of representation in theatre. These dramaturgically innovative texts display 'aesthetic response---ability'[5] in acknowledging and responding to the altered socio--- cognitive circumstances in the age of mediatisation (e.g. *Attempts, Crave, Pornography, Heart's Desire*). Certain plays (e.g. *Crave, Heart's Desire*) relate to the phenomenon and implications of mediatisation in an implicit and perhaps unconscious manner. In these cases, the author might not have envisaged an analogy between the play's aesthetics and altered modes of perception or social---cultural conditions. Yet the text as a form can imply this link. Thus, this dramaturgical trend involves not only plays that overtly use media forms in their form and content, but also texts whose aesthetic subtleties correspond to mediatisation without naming mass media explicitly.

No---longer---dramatic plays respond to the contemporary moment by presenting recognisable media---related forms, themes and discourses in unusual, non---dramatic ways and/or by inventively restructuring formal devices in line with a politics of altered perception in the age of mediatisation. Here, the familiar form, content and discourse are made strange. However, unlike Brechtian *Verfremdung*, which suggests that definitive meaning is still attainable once ideological mystification has been overcome, non---representational sign usage refuses a clear interpretation of the object in question or a coherent representation of the world as a knowable, stable whole. Rather, with reference to a multi---perspectival, fragmented and unstable state of perception, which is fashioned by the media, these plays call our perceptive processes themselves into question without necessarily suggesting the link or

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[4] Hans---Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. by Karen Jürs---Munby (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 185.
[5] Ibid., p. 185.

offering a specific critical understanding or perspective on such questions. Rather than concretising aesthetically---created indeterminacy and ambivalence in a final meaning or a fixed ideological viewpoint, these plays open up information gaps and leave the reader/audience in a state of unknowingness with no definite or meaningful direction.

The sense of unknowingness, in contrast with today's information---rich culture, where information is easily accessible and the world *seems* knowable, potentially generates a disconcerting perceptual tension in the reader/audience between their sense of certainty in this culture and the unknowability of what the plays present. The deliberate suspense of meaning is unsettling because the 'no---longer---dramatic' text, unlike the dramatic play, refuses to comfort and leaves the reader/audience epistemologically adrift. The plays' innovative mediatised aesthetics destabilise the constructed fantasy of all---knowingness and omnipotence in the media age, 'a fantasy that creates the illusion of being able to preside quite calmly over all realities'.[6] The dramaturgical challenges to the entrenched modes of perception and representation, evokes Hans---Thies Lehmann's call for an '*aesthetics of risk*'[7] in contemporary theatre --- a transgression of taboos --- as a means to destabilise the anaesthetising climate of rationalisation and omnipresent media, and to point the audience to their subjectivity and socio---cognitive processes.[8] Likewise, the disconcerting impact of the dramaturgical models on the reader/audience can sensitise them, generate a heightened sense of awareness of and insight into possible perceptual and social rationales behind the mode of dramaturgical expression. The disconcertion of the reader/audience can potentially create a shift from a prior desensitisation in a media---saturated culture into sensitisation to an altered mode of perceptive processes and social conditions.

In cases where the use of or references to the media and mediatised culture are explicit (e.g. *Attempts*, *Pornography*), the reader/audience can easily become sensitised to the impact of the media on their perception and social circumstances without being vouchsafed a prescriptive meaning. In plays where the media or aspects of mediatisation are not overtly discussed or suggested (e.g. *Crave*), the reference to the contemporary might focus mainly on the epistemological and ontological context of postmodern culture rather than specifically on the role of the media on existence and perception. However, despite the absence of a discernible reference point to the media, these plays still relate to a mediatised mindset. Their resistance to dramatic representation of the world as a unified, knowable place, which has become increasingly untenable in the multiply mediatised, globalised world, hints at a link to

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6 Ibid., p. 185.
7 Ibid., p. 187.
8 Ibid., p. 186---7.

mediatisation. The presence of media influence in the foundations of perceptual processes and dramaturgical forms can be brought out and called into question in inventive, postdramatic performance decisions (e.g. by setting *Crave* in a TV talkshow).

The analysis of forms of mediatised dramaturgy offers a corrective to the overlooked position of play texts in comparison to the extensive academic and artistic interest in theatre---media interactions. Also, investigation into 'no---longer---dramatic' mediatised plays in particular challenges the idea that the old medium of text in theatre is no longer able to cope with media technologies and the socio---cultural conditions they have generated. Axel Schalk argues that plays for the stage have become 'obsolete' in their attempt to relate to the electronic image and culture, and to deal with the new realities of the mass media.[9] He expands this argument by claiming that 'a play which adopts the structure of a talkshow is deficient, it is unable to create a meaningful discourse with the media as its topic.'[10] Schalk then explains that theatre 'is structured time [whereas] the current state of society is characterized by a racing stasis.'[11] Thus, he argues, plays cannot cope with the altered coordinates of society and consciousness, and asks: 'how could they?'[12] Schalk's idea of theatre and writing for the theatre is clearly based on the traditional dramatic genre. Thus, his arguments are fundamentally questionable in the context of 'no---longer---dramatic' mediatised plays and in postdramatic performance. Schalk is right to argue that mimetic representation 'is suspended'[13] and 'threatened'[14] in contemporary media---determined context. However, claiming that there are no new forms in writing for theatre that are capable of coping with or responding to the changing conditions in a mediatised age is questionable in light of my findings.

The plays considered here do not attempt to 'replicate' the technological image or culture. On the contrary, they frustrate the idea of 'replication' or denotative representation. Rather, they propose new ways of relating to the contemporary. As opposed to being 'obsolete', these plays show a capacity to engage with the material and perceptual conditions of the mediatised age. Rather than comforting the reader/audience with a 'meaningful' representation, they tend to disconcert and sensitise them to the things they may have become insensitive to in a media---saturated culture. These texts are plays of and for the mediatised age and stage. They suggest new possibilities for theatre to take into consideration and call into question how media technology 'has rewritten and is rewriting bodies, changing our understanding of narratives

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[9] Schalk, p. 269.
[10] Ibid., p. 257.
[11] Ibid., p. 271.
[12] Ibid., p. 271.
[13] Ibid., p. 254.
[14] Ibid., p. 255.

and places, changing our relationship to culture, changing our understanding of presence."[15] As will be seen in section 2, these possibilities can be brought out in postdramatic performance or neutralised and reduced to a denotative representation in conventionally dramatic theatre.

1.3. Commonalities and Differences in Response to Mediatisation

The two forms of mediatised dramaturgy share common thematic concerns with mediatised culture, yet they deal with the themes through different dramaturgical approaches. The plays' essentially different formal aesthetics affects their capacity to take account of and call into question the aspects of mediatisation they thematically refer to.

The link between mediatisation and consumer culture is one of the common themes that the plays, for example Martin Crimp's *Video* and *Attempts*, focus on. In *Video*, a dramatic play where Crimp critiques the objectification of individuals by consumer capitalism through a satire on market research, the mode of characterisation represents contemporary humans as sovereign individuals. The critical reference to the flattening of individuality contradicts the individualised characters. The dramatic form of sign usage posits a unified idea of subjectivity while critiquing its destabilisation in contemporary culture. It promises stability and determinacy to the reader/audience about their sense and experience of the self.

Referring to similar themes, *Attempts* offers a different mode of sign usage. The form refuses to attribute individual character names to the text and foregrounds language as a predetermined construct delivered by subjects (text---bearers) rather than spoken by individual characters. This structure becomes even more salient when the unattributed language is a recognisable commercial---media discourse (e.g. discourse of advertising, Scenario 7), leading one to question the autonomy of the subject in view of capitalist systems and tools. Unlike *Video*, the satire in *Attempts*, though on the same subject matter, refrains from allocating a prescriptive meaning to the satirical tone. Unlike *Video*, *Attempts* does not provide the reader/audience with an 'illusion' of autonomous individualism, one of capitalism's ideological pillars. By accommodating a different conception of subjectivity in its form, the play can generate a disconcerting awareness of the dominant ideological discourse, and invites the reader/audience to confront their own 'constructed' subjectivity in a commercially---driven, mediatised culture. The challenging, non---representational aesthetics of the play offers possibilities for an associative, connotative performance that can foreground a thematic and

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[15] Tim Etchells, Certain Fragments: Contemporary Performance and Forced Entertainment (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 97.

formal response to mediatisation, and generate critical alertness and perhaps resistance in the reader/audience.

Patrick Marber's *Closer* and Simon Stephens's *Pornography* deal with the changing nature of interpersonal relations in a highly connected world of the internet, social media and other mass media technologies. Marber portrays the dissolution of human bonds through well--- structured characterisation, plotline and dialogue. Language in the play communicates and suggests a meaningful unity of plot and characterisation. Rather than formally embodying their failed attempts to establish closer bonds, the form surprisingly creates the sense that characters located in a modern urban context are well connected. The play's form does not take account of the social disintegration that it thematically critiques, reducing it to the recognisable, yet superficial and illusory representation of the social. Thus, the otherwise apposite critique is neutralised through a denotative dramatic form.

Stephens' *Pornography*, however, treats social disintegration through a fragmented plot structure in which the anonymous silhouette---like characters are disconnected and their narratives are disjointed. The dramaturgical form highlights the disintegration of social bonds. By presenting characters as nameless or numbered snapshots of information (e.g. in the last scene), the play hints at the objectification of the human as an underlying reason for social isolation and apathy. The mode of dramaturgical expression refuses to merely address social dissolution as a negative phenomenon of contemporary culture. Rather, the non--- representational, fragmented form stimulates the reader/audience to be more alert and critical, and to consider the theme in a new light. It calls our sense of the other and interpersonal relations into question, and can encourage us to become sensitised to and confront our social position and relations.

Some of the plays under discussion are also concerned with altered modes of perception in a high---speed, information---overloaded age. Mark Ravenhill's *Faust* and Sarah Kane's *Crave* speak to aspects of this theme by using different formal strategies. *Faust*, thematising hyperreality, portrays the increasing dependence of human perception on the mediated image in its relation to the 'real' and on the blurring of the boundaries between the image and the real. However, formally the play represents the world and reality as stable, knowable and, thus, representable. The represented perception of reality does not correspond to the theme or the perceptive processes of the reader/audience. The illusory representation of reality as a single unified whole clouds the play's relation to the social and perceptual reality of mediatised

culture, and potentially puts the reader/audience in a recognisable yet perceptually incompatible state for this very reason.

Crave deals with changing modes of consciousness through fragmented language which evokes multi--perspectival and fast--paced perception and short attention spans. The disjointed language with constantly shifting, non--corresponding utterances of one--dimensional characters refuses to allow for integrative cognitive vision or experience, a unified perception of the narrative and action. This epistemological indeterminacy disconcerts the reader/audience and calls their perceptive processes into question. Unlike in *Faust*, the influence of the media on these processes is not overt. Thus, the mode of dramaturgical articulation might mainly evoke the postmodern epistemological and ontological condition rather than contemporary mediatised culture, unless there are overt references to mediatisation on stage. *Crave*, like other 'no--longer--dramatic' plays, takes account of the social and the perceptual, and offers possibilities for non--representational, postdramatic performance that can bring out and respond to the media--determined culture and perception.

2. From Page to Stage: Performative Responses to Mediatised Dramaturgy

Some of the productions under discussion (e.g. Tim Albery's Attempts, *Crave*, Sean Holmes's *Pornography*) respond to the challenging form of the texts and take account of the potential references to mediatisation. The productions of such 'no--longer--dramatic' mediatised texts tend to share common postdramatic qualities: the dramatic idea of unified characterisation, temporal linearity and recognisable plot is destabilised. Non--representational productions problematise interpretive sign usage through connotative strategies, and refuse to provide the audience with fixed, denotative meanings. The productions therefore situate the spectators in a state of indeterminacy and ambivalence, which potentially liberates them from the interpretive limitations of dramatic representation. Postdramatic performances can foreground the formal and thematic references in the texts to the media and mediatisation. A postdramatic production can do this by using media aesthetics in line with non-- representational form, or by emphasising the analogy between the mode of theatrical expression and mediatised culture and perception. For example, the destabilisation of unified characterisation/acting through text--bearers delivering recognisable media discourses in *Attempts* evokes a media--determined subjectivity. The talk--show setting in *Crave* presents a direct link to media presence and influence, and the fragmented, non--corresponding utterances of the one--dimensional speakers in the show speak to the altered mode of perception and social indifference in contemporary culture. Holmes's *Pornography* addresses

the objectification of the human by the media by presenting actors as disconnected flattened speakers, and real victims of terrorism as snapshots of information through a projected text.

Considering these productions, I would suggest that it is fundamentally the 'postdramatic' take on the textual references to mediatisation that enables the productions to respond to the contemporary in an appropriate manner. The theatre engages with the socio---political reality through a postdramatic aesthetics that speaks to and acknowledges the politics of mediatised perception. The response to and engagement with the social in such postdramatic practices, as Lehmann argues, does not reside in theatre's content in the traditional sense, but in its approach to the mode and politics of perception and of representation.[16] These productions destabilise the deceptively comforting representation of reality as a unified whole, disorient the audience and sensitise them to 'the broken thread between personal experience and perception'[17] in an intensely media---driven culture, and to the altered consciousness, subjectivity and socio---cultural realities.

What allows the productions to offer a new theatrical language that can engage with and respond to mediatised culture is not merely their postdramatic media aesthetics, but also the very nature of the theatre. One might argue, as Schalk did, that the materiality and slowness of the theatre disables the stage from representing the experience of fast---moving images in film or on television and the racing pace of society and perception. It is correct that mimetic representation of the high---speed media technologies is problematic in the presentness and slowness of the theatre. However, the theatre's 'here---and---now---ness' and slow---paced form enables rather than disables the postdramatic stage to interrogate the processes of mediatisation. The reality of material time and space on stage contradicts and thus offers a pause from the high---speed media. This aspect of the theatre allows postdramatic performances to draw the spectator's attention to the influence of the media underlying not only the mode of artistic representation, but of perception as well.

Furthermore, the postdramatic practices I have considered here destabilise the effect of 'immediacy' that the mass media and dramatic representation aim to engender. Such practices use the ability of theatre (unlike pre---recorded media) to delineate or at least point to the edges between different types of representation. Some of the productions, such as Tim Crouch's, present fluid and multiple states shifting between fiction and reality through the character--- actor hybrid. Besides the media technologies he uses (e.g. prerecorded films, television,

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[16] For detailed information on politics of representation and perception in postdramatic theatre, see: Lehmann, 'Epilogue', in *Postdramatic Theatre*, p. 184---7.
[17] Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p. 186.

camera, iPod), Crouch's works tend to respond to the human condition and subjectivity in a mediatised culture through the blurred distinctions between reality and fiction, actor and character. Both the direct presence of the media and the aesthetic subtleties evoke changing social and subjective conditions, and relate the stage to the contemporary moment. Crouch's performances, though not postdramatic by definition due to their acknowledgement of unified plot and structured time, radicalise dramatic character presentation through the character--actor hybrid. With this model he unsettles the representation of the human as a unified individual that the audience would easily identify with. This disorients spectators, locating them in an epistemologically unstable state and sensitising them to the changing parts and processes of subjectivity, and potentially to their constructed subjectivity and reality.

Besides non---representational approaches to 'no---longer---dramatic' mediatised texts, there have also been tendencies to neutralise the innovative possibilities of the plays through the imposition of dramatic patterns and themes. The partly dramatic production of *Heart's Desire* and some scenes in Katie Mitchell's *Attempts* (e.g. the scenario 'Untitled (100 Words)' where the text is humanised through the look---alikes of Germaine Greer and Tom Paulin) overlooked the texts' radically open structure. In addition, most of the productions of the dramatic plays, which imply possibilities for formal reconsideration on stage in relation to media culture (e.g. *Closer*, *Helmet*), do not tend to destabilise existing dramatic patterns. Such interpretive approaches to innovative texts or plays can render the stage out of step with the altered mode of social conditions, subjectivity and perceptual processes in mediatised culture.

The propensity towards dramatic representation and the restriction of inventive approaches, I would suggest, are due to a systemically conservative culture of theatre---making in the British theatre tradition. The dramatic productions I have discussed illustrate the inability of the British theatre as an institution to deal adequately with challenging forms. The mostly privatised institution of UK theatre considers unfamiliar play forms and challenging forms of performance practice as a threat to ticket sales. There has been a financial concern that such practices would not be as equally attractive for the paying audience and therefore profitable for the institution as their traditional counterparts. As a result, the theatre as an institution creates a restrictive atmosphere for playwrights' artistic creation and directorial imagination. However, considering the strong adherence to entrenched dramatic aesthetics, one should also not underrate the formal challenge the plays present the theatre with. Thus, the dramatic approach to the formally innovative texts might also be due to the inability of directors or companies to respond to and deploy potentially postdramatic techniques. Nevertheless, having acknowledged the dramatic trend, one should highlight --- with reference

to the postdramatic productions discussed above --- that there is a growing ability and even perhaps willingness in the British tradition to confront and develop non---representational practices.

3. Mediatised Dramaturgy: Further Considerations

My research has raised various questions in need of further investigation. It proposes a framework and a set of questions concerning the changing role and genre of text in contemporary theatre that future studies can take further by examining recent plays with mediatised forms and motifs (e.g. Simon Stephens's *Wastwater* (2011), Caryl Churchill's *Love and Information* (2012)) in relation to emerging technologies and changing social---cultural and perceptual conditions.

Further research on the development of texts in relation to the media and mediatisation as a socio---cognitive process is important, because the general understanding of this subject is predicated on a superficial reduction of the media---text relationship to a thematic approach focusing on plays that use the media merely as subject matter. Matt Trueman's recent article in *The Guardian* entitled 'What can theatre say about the internet?'[18] illustrates such limited perspectives on theatre/drama in relation to the media. Trueman's piece argues that the theatre has 'rarely grappled with the subject [the internet]'[19] by mentioning some of the plays --- *Closer*, *Chatroom*, *Sugar Syndrome* – that overtly use virtual technology as a thematic reference. Trueman fails to consider the formal and implicit forms of engagement with the media and the phenomenon of mediatisation. Regardless of the innovative, mediatised form of *Love and Information*, Trueman suggests, the play 'hardly ever mentioned the web directly'[20] apart from scenes titled 'Google' and 'Twitter', and some references to the internet. In the article, it is mainly through Simon Stephens's words that there is a hint at a more radical form of media influence on theatre, shaping the aesthetics: 'It's [i.e. the internet is] in the metabolism of a lot of plays, in the background [...] affecting the way we write characters who are more dislocated and narcissistic.'[21]

Accordingly, my thesis has criticised and proposed an alternative view to the idea of direct thematisation of the media as the theatre's main way of relating to media technology and mediatisation. Further research can build on this alternative discourse by investigating the

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[18] Matt Trueman, 'What can theatre say about the internet?', *The Guardian*, 21 January 2013 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2013/jan/21/theatre---say---about---internet> [accessed 11 April 2013]
[19] Ibid., paragraph 2.
[20] Ibid., paragraph 5.
[21] Ibid., paragraph 11.

shifts in aesthetics and content in relation to media technologies through recent plays: *Bytes* – four short plays by Alia Bano, D. C. Moore, Nick Payne and Penelope Skinner – and E. V. Crowe's *Searched* (all produced at the Royal Court Theatre's Rough Cuts, 2013), for example.

Plays form only one aspect of the media---text relationship in the context of theatre. There are also, as I illustrate below, forms of theatre---texts that are produced for, during or after media---driven performances. These texts offer new possibilities and discourses for the theatre art and scholarship as well as redefinitions of the changing genre of text in multiply mediatised theatre. Future studies therefore could extend the focus of this thesis beyond the idea of text as *play---script* written for and before theatrical performance towards different forms of text to appreciate the changing idea, role and form of text in theatre in relation to media technologies and culture. For example, research on text as *postscript*, 'a relic of/for an event that has passed',[22] would investigate an aspect of this question. Also, further research could consider the writing that takes place before, during and after a performance that directly or implicitly incorporates the media into its aesthetics and/or content. Such research can look into works such as Chris Goode's *Hippo World Guestbook* (2007), a performance based on an edited transcript of a guest book on a real website where hippo fans shared pictures, facts and comments about hippos during the six years the website was functional. The guest book was never moderated and thus contained numerous messages and spam that shaped the theatre---text. These kinds of multi---authored, web---originated theatre---texts not only alter the notion of text in theatre particularly in relation to mediatisation, but also propose a different form of audience---playwright---performance relationship. Future research could also examine these kinds of artistic practices from the perspective of the author---audience who have become directly involved in the creative process through media technologies.

The use and form of text in performances that take place chiefly through the media could present another area of interest. Examples of this can be found in mixed---media theatre and online or virtual theatre which use the internet as the stage or employ a participatory creation process through rehearsal blogs or text messages. For instance, Blast Theory's interactive SMS drama *Ivy4Evr* (2010) took place via mobile phones and was shaped by the participants' responses to the SMS messages from the character Ivy. Also, the Twitter plays by the New York Neo---Futurists are composed of tweets posted by participants in response to the assignments tweeted by the company; the New Paradise Laboratories' online theatre piece *Fatebook* (2009) initially took place in a Facebook---like social media and continued in a physical space where audience and actors gathered. Research into the advent of different forms

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[22] Carl Lavery, 'Is there a text in this performance?', *Performance Research*, 14:1 (2009), 37---45 (pp. 37).

of theatre---texts that arise from media---driven, media---oriented performances could explore aesthetic design and influences, the changing role and genre of text and their political implications.

Considering the global spectrum of the phenomenon of mediatisation and the particular focus of the thesis on English---language plays, further research can be undertaken to determine the different and similar ways in which plays from different cultures respond to mediatisation and to identify the socio---political implications of formal traditions. This study could integrate the question of mediatised dramaturgy into the field of intercultural and political theatre, and benefit from the theories and methods of these domains.

The concept of mediatised dramaturgy relates to similar research interests in the field of theatre studies, particularly to the fairly new notion of mediaturgy, coined by Bonnie Marranca[23] to refer to methods of composition in theatre that incorporates media technologies. A more recent usage occurred in relation to the research project *Literature and Media Innovation: the Question of Genre Transformations* under the title of *Postdramatic Mediaturgy*.[24] The *Postdramatic Mediaturgy* project focuses on the interplay of media in theatre practice as a primary compositional strategy and aims to establish a narrative of genre transformations in theatre and examine their social repercussions.[25] This thesis has investigated some of the questions concerning postdramatic mediaturgy --- the forms, social contexts and the effects of generic changes in theatre – by focussing on the shifting form and content of plays in relation to the media and mediatisation. The focus of the thesis on plays and the focus of the *Postdramatic Mediaturgy* project particularly on performance complement each other. Such similar concerns in theatre studies, be they in relation to performance or to play/theatre---texts, not only show rising academic interest in the media's influence on the theatre, but also suggest there are questions yet to be asked and aspects of contemporary theatre to be explored.

This thesis contributes to this expanding field of endeavour through the notion and analysis of mediatised dramaturgy. More specifically, it has highlighted that plays, as well as the theatrical

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[23] For further information, see: Bonnie Marranca, 'Mediaturgy: A Conversation with Marianne Weems', *International Journal of Arts and Technology*, 2:3 (2009), 173---186. Also, see: Bonnie Marranca, 'Performance as Design: The Mediaturgy of John Jesurun's *Firefall*', *PAJ*, 96 (2010), 16–24.

[24] The research project is currently run by The Centre for Literature, Intermediality, and Cultural Studies (CLIC) at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel in relation to the IAP VII (Interuniversity Attraction Poles – Phase VII, funded by the Belgian Science Policy Office) research project on *Literature and Media Innovation: The Question of Genre Transformations*, an Interuniversity Program involving 4 Belgian (KUL, VUB, UCL, ULg) and 2 North---American partners (FIGURA---Montréal, and PROJECT NARRATIVE---Ohio State University).

[25] Information is provided by the directors of the *Postdramatic Mediaturgy* project, Prof. Dr. Johan Callens and Dr. Christophe Collard.

stage, have undergone considerable change, in some cases bringing forms that render the old medium of text eminently able to relate and respond to the new reality, consciousness and culture of the mediatised age. The thesis has shown that 'no---longer---dramatic' plays with mediatised dramaturgy, directly or implicitly, can take account of and respond to mediatised culture and consciousness. It has argued that the plays under discussion call our altered perceptual processes in a media---determined culture into question. The inventive mediatised form of the texts opens new possibilities for theatrical practice and suggested alternative ways of engaging with the media and mediatised culture besides explicit use of technologies on stage. This research has proposed a new way of thinking about contemporary plays in the light of a multiply---mediatised culture and the forms of perception it engenders. It may thus offer a model that future research on the media---theatre relation could take into consideration and explore further. This thesis opens the way for future discussions investigating the changing genre of text and innovative forms of dramaturgical expression in mediatised theatre. The advent of such forms and practices, without doubt, are only possible under an artistic freedom that the British theatre system should facilitate in order to keep up with mediatised age and mind.

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