

Speaking In and Out Of Turn: Narrators in Contemporary Australian Theatre

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SUMMARY:

Narrating is a widespread mode of performance in Australian contemporary theatre. Investigations into it are, however, limited. Theatre studies tend to theorise narrating in performance as either the fragmentation of character or the recovery of political identity. In recent years narratology has turned its attention to the narrator in theatre performance, but it remains committed to framing its investigations within a mimetic/diegetic binary.

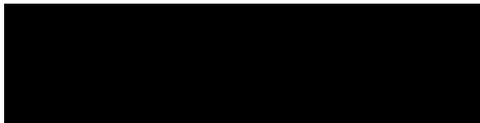
I propose a different approach. I examine the forms narrators in contemporary Australian theatre take, and I argue that they split into two distinct figures: one that supports the representation of dramatic action and the hierarchies that such a model demands, and a very different, non-dramatic figure that disrupts cause and effect storytelling through description and presentation. This figure unsettles the pairings that sit at the heart of dramatic texts and performances: showing and telling, acting and non-acting and character and voice. Furthermore, I argue that narratives emerge *out* of this disruption.

To pursue this argument, I have drawn on a range of critical theory in theatre studies, narratology and aesthetics. Jacques Rancière has especially influenced my thesis. Foundational to Rancière's thinking is what he terms 'the distribution of the perceptible', a system he argues partitions and shares what can be seen, heard and thought (2004). Rancière dedicates much of his thinking to declassifying normative divisions in art, politics, history and education. I draw on his methodology to help identify the categories that have shaped the way narrating in theatre is considered and used. However, I question Rancière's theory on three counts. He promotes the anarchic potential of art, and argues that its potency lies in ambiguity and indeterminacy, but he does not account for the positive role rigour, practice or skill play in its development and presentation. Secondly, he allows little room for category, certainty or consequence as productive artistic qualities. Thirdly, Rancière argues that the representational system that supports dramatic texts and performances has been dismantled. I maintain that this dismantling continues.

Dramatic structure has not left the stage, but its presence is conditional. For it to occur, it must have its rules of action, character and speech playfully exposed, and one of the ways in which this occurs is through the intrusion of the unruly narrator.

DECLARATION

‘This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution and I affirm that to the best of the my knowledge the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.’



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Noel Maloney

1 November 2015

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Theatre critic Alison Croggon argues that in recent years, a ‘profound cultural realignment’ has taken place in Australian theatre. She points to a diversity of form and genre, a healthy disregard for aesthetic category, transnational and trans-cultural influences, growing audiences and a desire amongst many theatre makers to place their work in an international context, as particular strengths worth noting. She also singles out a desire by theatre makers to invigorate form through a ‘focus on theatre’s relationship to its audience’ as integral to this sea change (Croggon 2010b).

Croggon’s arguments are part of a national conversation about theatre performance that has been gathering pace in recent years. The biennial Australian Theatre Forum (2013),¹ Playwriting Australia,² and many of the state theatre companies, together with the ‘Artistic Vibrancy’ project created by the Australia Council (2014), all attest to a growing desire to reflect and deepen artistic debate. Together with this, state theatre companies such as the Melbourne Theatre Company have become more adventurous in their programming. In 2013, the MTC launched ‘Neon’, a curatorial season that opened up opportunities for local theatre companies to experiment and present work that would otherwise fail to make it onto the main stage (2013).

There are various ways in which we can investigate the diversity, dissent and invigoration of form that Croggon champions. We can look to relationships between audience numbers and programming. We could examine the structures and activities of theatre companies. Arts funding policy may be another indication of the theatre’s dynamism. However, we can also go to theatre work itself and examine in detail what adventures Australian theatre makers are undertaking.

One adventure is to be found in the use of narrating as a performance mode. Once thought about as an occasional monologue, a messenger speech or a Brechtian device to estrange the audience, narrating has become something far more complex. Whether it is the intricately woven monologues in Jane Montgomery Griffith’s theatre adaptation of Dorothy Porter’s verse poem, *Wild Surmise* (2013), Hayloft’s seductive involvement of the audience to tell the story of Oedipus in *By Their Own Hands* (2013), Rimini Protokol’s *100% Melbourne* (2012) with its multiplicity of voices speaking to the audience or Roland Schimmelpfennig’s *The Golden Dragon* (2011), which uses direct address and commentary on the action to sculpt a narrative and constantly disrupt its dramatic structure, narrating has become a highly sophisticated performance mode.

Scholarship on narrators and narrating in theatre performance, however, is limited (Richardson 2001). Contemporary theatre studies tend to explain the rise of narrating in performance by applying postmodern

¹ The Australian Theatre Forum 2013 was a Centenary of Canberra project, supported by the ACT Government and the Australian Government.

² Playwriting Australia is a peak national body supporting the development of plays through workshops and readings.

notions of multiplicity (Lehmann 2006), difference (Fuchs 1996) or polyvocality (Pavis 2013). Within narratology, theatre performance has traditionally been equated with drama and drama has been seen as purely mimetic (Genette 1988). As a consequence, narratology has until recently ignored narrating in theatre (Jahn 2001). However in recent years, it has embraced transgeneric approaches to the study of narrative (Fludernik 2009) (Herman 2009). Narratologists are now showing an increasing interest in theatre and its use of narrating, although it continues to be studied within a diegetic/mimetic paradigm (Nunning and Sommer 2008).

Where it is examined in Australian theatre scholarship, narrating often appears to be considered as part of a deliberate strategy to reshape identity narratives about race, gender, sexuality and nation (McCallum 2009). In many theatre performances from the 1970s onward, narrating is interpreted as a conscious recovery of the language and speech of those who had been historically marginalised or silenced. Much of this scholarship argues for narrating as a means of interrupting traditional, mimetic theatre by recasting identity (Gilbert 1999). In this way, speech, language and story are harnessed to a project of rupture and reconfiguration. Narrating points to, names or renames those who have been shrouded or occluded (Fensham et al. 2005).

Notwithstanding these various interpretations of narrating, there is little attention given to the way it is structured as a mode of performance. Postmodernism and the politics of identity aside, how do contemporary Australian theatre makers use narrating to produce performances? This is the central research question in this thesis.

Using a combination of case study and practice-as-research (PaR) methodologies, I explore this question by analysing four very different contemporary Australian theatre productions that have taken place over the past four years, including a production of my own work.

These productions are:

- *Bare Witness*, by Maree Lourey, directed by Nadja Kostich, La Mama, Melbourne (2010).
- *Intimacy*, performed by Ranters Theatre, written by Raimondo Cortese, directed by Adriano Cortese, Malthouse, Melbourne (2010).
- *Beyond the Neck*, by Tom Holloway, directed by Suzanne Chaundy, Red Stitch Theatre, Melbourne (2012).

In addition to examining these works, I have written and produced a workshopped reading of my own play, *P.O.V. Dave* (2013), in collaboration with a dramaturge/director and performers, as a practice-as-research (PaR) approach to investigating narrating. The critical commentary of the workshopped draft of the play text, and its performance, forms the fourth case study. (Both the text and the DVD of the performance are included in this thesis.) An appendix documents the play's development, and references the drafting, dramaturgical conversations, workshops and reading.

From this research I make two discoveries. Firstly, there are not one, but two, types of narrator in contemporary theatre, each of which operates out of different modes of performance. One serves the needs of dramatic structure and its reliance on cause and effects story by heightening conflict and hastening story. It withholds information in order to engage suspense and set up the climax to come. It moves the story across time and place in order to build dramatic urgency and deal swiftly and economically with exposition. I call this figure the orderly narrator because it maintains the dramatic hierarchies of action, character and speech.

The other narrator is characterised by an aesthetic of language, bodies and spaces. It suspends dramatic action through timeless description. It plays with language and animates the stage through its very appearance. It creates dissent, ambiguity and uncertainty and disrupts the binary relationships of telling and show, acting and non-acting and character and speech upon which dramatic structure relies. It is essentially a figure of disagreement. I call it the unruly narrator.

Secondly, these productions make narratives *out* of this dissent. In blurring boundaries and creating uncertainties the unruly narrator, and the tensions it creates, produce themes these productions explore. *Bare Witness* uses narrating to present characters that are torn between perpetual cause and effect action and timeless observation. In *Beyond the Neck*, narrating enlivens the *mise-en-scène* with a multiplicity of voices, and explores tragedy as a story to be told both collectively and individually. *Intimacy* uses narrating to deliberately remove dramatic structures from the stage, and in so doing, raises questions about reality and theatre performance. My own play, *P.O.V. Dave*, foregrounds storytelling itself as both a subject and strategy. In this work, narrating controls, frees and binds. On the one hand, the play depends upon an intricate dramatic plot.³ However, the play also uses narrating to deliberately challenge the limitations of dramatic logic.

Each case study comprises observations of these productions, close readings of the texts, and interviews with the writers, directors and performers who discuss the specific challenges they faced in using narrating. They represent a cross section of contemporary Australian theatre makers in terms of

³ My experience as a television screenwriter no doubt played some part in the play's plotting and development. It was only when I had developed a satisfying dramatic structure could I then experiment with non-dramatic modes of narrating.

experience, artistic interests and training. They are supplemented by observations and readings of other Australian, British and American theatre productions, play texts, reviews, reports and debates.

The use of narrating in each production resulted from collaborations between writers, designers, performers and directors and it is thought about as both a textual instance *and* a mode of performance. This complex view of theatre as the collaborative making of both text and performance over time is integral to the way I approach narrating in these case studies.

My arguments are at odds with some contemporary formations of the narrator, which continue to use the binary arrangement of mimesis and diegesis as a way of examining narrating function (Nunning and Sommer 2008). I argue that this binary is the domain of the orderly narrator, as I have defined it, because it maintains a focus on Aristotelian principles of action and cause and effect (Aristotle 2000). In this domain theatre makers ask, ‘at what point should the narrator cease to speak in order for the story to advance?’: ‘What does the audience need to do and how should it be instructed?’ and: ‘And how does speech correspond with action and character?’ In this domain, narrating also compresses places, time and actions in order to manage stories and provides a meta-commentary on the dramatic narrative.

By contrast, the unruly narrator produces playfulness, uncertainty and ambiguity. It disrupts unities of action, character and speech and the correspondences upon which they depend. If the orderly narrator supports a dramatic logic of time and place, the unruly narrator is untimely and displaced, and often presents as an impossibility. Classical dramaturgy authorizes the orderly narrator to speak only if it supports dramatic structure (Freytag 1900). The unruly narrator has no such authority.

My argument is also at odds with some who argue that narrating’s prolific use has rendered it monologic and polemical, in that it presents voices that efface debate, argument and dialogue. With specific reference to the work of Robert Wilson and Anna Bogart, Ron Erickson leads this charge and argues that much contemporary avant garde theatre is guilty of a tendency towards monologism in the way it uses fragmented speech, polyvocality and metatheatrical techniques to produce a singular, partisan view of the world (2003). For Erickson much narrated theatre gives us performers who become talking machines, and productions that lack a genuine capacity to produce truth, and which empty out ‘negative capability’(176).⁴ By contrast, Erickson points to the work of David Mamet as having a genuine capacity to present real conflicting dialogue between characters with different world views. As Erickson argues in relation to the avant garde:

⁴ Negative capability is a term originally attributed to Keats, who defined it as the capacity to be in uncertainty yet receptive to the world, without submitting to predetermined categories of knowledge (Keats 1899: 277).

...what we have had for many years seems only to be simultaneous or serial monologues, without any pretense of communicative desire. Or even the absence of monologue in the sense of narrative intelligibility replaced by language as a series of discreet non-sequiters, tics and hysterical responses. I wonder if splitting one monologue into many parts really *does* end up producing ‘multiplicity’ or whether it ends up indicating the opposite: a weird kind of conformity ... (179).

Erickson’s arguments are echoed in a more popular form, in *The New York Times*’ theatre critic Charles Isherwood’s critique of narrating in contemporary American theatre. In an article titled, ‘Stop Talking to Me’, Isherwood decries much of the current interest in narration and argues that it is often an excuse for playwrights wanting to avoid conflict (2012).

Both Erickson’s and Isherwood’s arguments pose a series of challenges to contemporary theatre. Does narration empty out negative capability and conflict from the stage, and leave it as nothing more than a place of deconstruction that offers only a singular world-view and preaches conformity? No doubt many contemporary productions using monologues produce a monologic view of the world and preach to the converted. However, in the productions I profile in this thesis narrators produce complex and dynamic narratives that are diverse and challenging. They demonstrate that, contrary to Erickson, creative conflict is not dependent upon dramatic dialogue.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

In order to explore and defend these arguments, I first provide a background to the analysis and debate about narrating in theatre by reviewing classical European dramaturgies, contemporary theatre and drama studies, and classical and postclassical narratology. I maintain that in general, contemporary scholarship in theatre deals with narrating as either a complete break with the dramatic or as a diegetic resistance to mimesis. I argue for a different model, one that identifies within narrating in contemporary theatre two oppositional figures: one dramatic, the other non-dramatic. This chapter also provides an overview of Australian theatre scholarship’s engagement with diegesis, as well as a short history of it as a performance mode in Australian theatre. It offers a brief overview of the various forms narrating takes in contemporary Australian theatre and demonstrates how diverse the form has become.

In the third chapter, I describe my research methods and methodologies and provide working definitions for the terms ‘narrating’ and ‘dramatic’, which are of central importance to this thesis. As well, I detail my theoretical concept of the ‘orderly’ and the ‘unruly’ narrator. Jacques Rancière’s theory of artistic regimes (2004) has provided a valuable theoretical framework for my argument, and I discuss both its benefits and its problems.

The central chapters of thesis adopt a case study approach to support its arguments. The productions were chosen partly to indicate the diversity in Australian theatre. They range from completely devised work, to theatre that began as a performance text, from a project that was produced by a writer, to work that originated out of an existing theatre company.

Development and collaboration have contributed in a major way to the integrated use of narrating in each of these productions. *Beyond the Neck* (2012) had already been produced twice, in Sydney and Hobart, prior to its Melbourne performance. In the Red Stitch production, the director worked with the writer to further edit the script. *Intimacy* (2011) was born out of a highly collaborative process that has become the hallmark of Ranters' theatre. *Bare Witness* (2010) was developed over a period of two years prior to its production. My own work, *P.O.V. Dave* (2013) had nine drafts and two separate workshops before it then went through dramaturgical development prior to its rehearsed reading, which is presented as part of this thesis.

Furthermore, these productions have continued to be redeveloped. *Bare Witness* was remounted for a national tour and *Intimacy* (2011) was redeveloped for a European tour. Since the workshopped reading of *P.O.V. Dave* a new director, Beng Oh, has picked up the script for a full production in September 2015 at La Mama Theatre in Melbourne. Preliminary conversations with that director and other members of the production team have produced further changes to the way narrating is used in the text, and these changes will be considered in the chapter on this play (Beng Oh and Maloney 2015).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This thesis examines how contemporary Australian theatre experiments with narrating as a performance mode. In doing so, it develops a theory of narrating that lifts it out of both a simple, textual category and a dramatic framework of cause and effect so that we can engage with it not only as a textual instance or a dramatic plot device but as also something lyrical and visual, as both part of a representational system of correspondences *and* poetic sensibility. I argue that in contemporary Australian theatre we find two distinct narrators who, through their co-existence, produce artistic tension. I name these the orderly narrator and the unruly narrator. The former supports dramatic structure or educates an audience, while the latter disrupts dramatic order through poetic description, image and play.

Metalepsis (transgression of the boundaries between diegetic levels by characters and narrators), direct address (prologue, epilogue, aside, summary, soliloquy), and transgeneric narrative strategies such as storytelling, montage and reversals of chronology are just some of the ways in which narrating manifests in contemporary Australian theatre. However narrators do more than simply further a story. They disrupt cause and effect storytelling by questioning traditional boundaries between character and voice, text and bodies, showing and telling and acting and passivity.

In this chapter, I review the literature that helped produce these arguments. I provide a brief dramaturgical history of narrating in European theatre, and explain how this history continues to influence the uses of narrating in dramatic texts and performances. I then summarize the contemporary research conversations about narrating in theatre performance and narrative studies, both internationally and locally. Most importantly, I establish the need for this performance mode to be researched further in Australian experimental theatre within the category of the aesthetic.

2.2 Narrating - A Dramaturgical History

Plato, one of the first to discuss the performance of narrating, was particularly concerned with the manner in which it was delivered. He differentiated between narrating delivered in the poet's own voice and the poet imitating the speech of another. For Plato, the latter was problematic for two reasons. It suggested identity was performable rather than fixed or innate. As a consequence, it could encourage ideas of social mobility that would be disruptive and destabilising. At the same time it could license the expression of dangerous and disruptive emotions. For Plato, artifice removed us even further from understanding the truths that informed our existence (1974). In response to Plato, Aristotle removed issues of truth from his model and instead, constructed a theory of imitation. If certain human actions were imitated appropriately, spectators would identify correspondences between fate, action, damnation and salvation.

All poetry, he declared, imitated actions in one of three ways: poets might narrate entirely in their own voice; they might narrate in their own voice and in that of another character; or they might represent the entire story through the actions of characters, ‘as though they were actually doing the things described’ (2000:46). In so doing, Aristotle removed narrating from tragedy, and limited its function to epic poetry. Tragedy imitated action through plot character, diction, thought, spectacle and melody, in that particular order of importance. Certain types of characters correlated with certain types of actions to speak and act in ways deemed appropriate for their station (57).

Roman poet Horace followed Aristotle in prioritising enactment over narration, but also emphasised image over voice:

An episode is either acted on the stage, or reported as having taken place. However, the mind is less actively stimulated by what it takes in through the ear than by what is presented to it through the trustworthy agency of the eyes – something that the spectator can see for himself (1965: 85).

Nonetheless, Horace made certain allowances for narrating: if spoken well, it was useful for reporting events that would be improper to represent on stage:

But you will not bring to the stage anything that ought properly to be taking place behind the scenes, and you will keep out of sight many episodes that are to be described later by the eloquent tongue of a narrator (85).

Debates about impropriety were also central to Renaissance and Classical dramaturgy, and they produced divisions between what could be shown and what could be said on stage. For the sixteenth century polemicist Ludovico Castelvetro, the representation of violence was a particular problem and narrating was a means of resolving it. At stake were both the dignity, and the believability, of drama. Castelvetro argued that murder, in particular, should be narrated, not because violence might have a negative effect on audiences but because it tended not to be performed ‘with dignity’:

Because of the difficulty of representing actions and making them verisimilar (*sic*), dramas do not present on the stage murders and other things that it is difficult to present with dignity, and it is proper that they should be done off stage and then narrated by a messenger (2000: 110).

Like Castelvetro, the seventeenth century theatre critic, John Dryden, noted the problems posed by the representation of death or violence on stage, and looked to narrating as a solution:

That is, those actions, which by reason of their cruelty will cause aversion in us, or by reason of their possibility, unbelief, ought either wholly to be avoided by a poet, or only delivered by narration (1918: 36)

While Dryden advocated narration to resolve issues of verisimilitude, he was opposed to it in general, classifying it as ‘unnatural’ (27) in the way it disrupted dialogue and distracted the audience:

...indeed it is somewhat unreasonable that they should be put to so much trouble, as that, to comprehend what passes in their sight, they must have recourse to what was done, perhaps, ten or twenty years ago (35).

However, unlike Horace or Castelvetro, Dryden also attributed to language and narrating a power to provoke an imaginative response in the spectator:

The words of a good writer, which describe it lively, will make a deeper impression of belief in us than all the actor can insinuate into us, when he seems to fall dead before us: as a poet in the description of a beautiful garden, or a meadow, will please our imagination more than the place itself can please our sight (35).

Samuel Johnson, on the other hand, had no tolerance for narrating on stage at all. For Johnson, it was simply passive:

Narrating in dramatic poetry is naturally tedious, as it is unanimated and inactive, and obstructs the progress of the action: it should therefore always be rapid, and enlivened by frequent interruption. Shakespeare found it an encumbrance, and instead of lightening it by brevity, endeavored to recommend it by dignity and splendor (2000: 48).

In this brief survey of Renaissance and Classical dramaturgy, the influence of Aristotelian poetics is clear. Theatre’s task is to represent action, and to do so with decorum. By contrast, narrating is seen as passive. Only when certain actions threaten this task is narrating deemed appropriate. Consequently, the messenger has been typically seen as a bit player in tragedy and drama. Brian Richardson argues that the bias against narration that began to emerge in Renaissance dramaturgy, particularly the monologue, represented a shift towards a more mimetically-orientated drama, designed to end interaction between actors and audience, and promote decorum (1988: 201). Two key binaries are inherent in this dramatic system: action/passivity: and showing/telling. Speech must represent action and indicate character. Only that which is deemed inappropriate to see, can be narrated. An understanding of these binaries is of

particular importance to this thesis, because it will be argued that they remain central to how narrators function in contemporary theatre, either in the way they support or disrupt them.

In the history of European comedy, melodrama and pantomime, narrating has played a livelier role. In Restoration comedy prologues, monologues and asides to the audience created satire and irony, as in William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (2014), while in the later sentimental comedy, they became homilies designed to frame the moral message of the play, as in Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1967), whose opening prologue ensures the audience of the play's virtuous intent. In nineteenth century melodrama monologues revealed back story and promoted irony, as in the work of Dion Boucicault (1984), while pantomime often used asides to the audience for satirical effect.⁵

For all its variety of use in traditional European theatre, narrating remained overall an occasional mode of address right through to the early twentieth century. However, with the advent of theatrical modernism, narrating became something far more central in European dramaturgy (Puchner 2002: 21). From the early to mid-twentieth century theatre, in the dramaturgical work of theatre makers such as Vsevolod Meyerhold, Erwin Piscator, Bertolt Brecht, Joan Littlewood and others, narrating became a means of proclaiming the illusory nature of theatre and a way of gesturing to the realities of the world beyond the stage.

Meyerhold was one of the first European theatre directors to experiment with narration in a dialectical manner. In his production of Emile Verhaeren's *The Dawn* (1916), actors spoke directly to the audience and a chorus commented on the twists and turns of the dramatic action. Two weeks into its season, an actor raced onto the stage to announce a victory by the Red Army at the battle of Pereko. As the applause died down, a lone voice began to sing the revolutionary anthem, 'As Martyrs Fell'. The audience sat in silence. Meyerhold was so impressed by this event and its effect, that he decided to incorporate it into the dramaturgy of the production (Braun 1982:163). In Germany, Erwin Piscator was a major exponent of narrating techniques such as direct address and projected commentary to create theatre out of historical events, in productions such as *Fahnen* (Willett 1979: 57).

Inspired by Piscator, Brecht incorporated narrating into his dramaturgical practice. For Brecht, it disrupted illusion and alerted the audience to theatre's artificiality. In his epic theatre,⁶ actors used narrating to interrupt imitation with explanation (1964g: 126), or narrate the stage directions (1964h: 138), in order to educate the audience about 'the new social scientific method known as dialectical materialism' (1964f: 193). Brecht also favoured narrating in the form of interstitials:

⁵ In late nineteenth century Australian pantomime, comic asides to the audience helped colloquialise the narrative in order to ride the wave of growing national sentiment, as in W. C. Williamson's production of *Mother Goose* (Wood and Collins 1902).

⁶ Brecht later dropped the term 'epic theatre' in favour of 'dialect theatre' (Brecht 1946d: 281).

The episodes must not succeed one another indistinguishably but must give us a chance to interpose our judgment. ... The parts of the story have to be carefully set off one against another by giving each its own structure as a play within the play. To this end it is best to agree to use titles. The titles must include the social point... (1964f: 201).

Brecht's impact on subsequent generations of playwrights has been well documented. In the UK, Joan Littlewood applied similar narrating techniques in her ensemble productions. In the production of *Oh, What a Lovely War* (Littlewood et al. 2006), Littlewood and her company used news ticker to continually display the statistical losses of the first world war and song to satirise its politics (Sweet 2014). Other playwrights inspired by Brecht include Howard Brenton, Edward Bond and Caryl Churchill, all of whom experimented with narrating to offset mimesis (Gruber 2010:85) (Reinelt 1994:207).⁷

Running parallel with these uses of narrating to promote a critical reaction in the audience is monologue theatre, a form most often associated with the minimalist works of Samuel Beckett, in which characters populate abstract landscapes and perform actions of waiting, remembering, sorting and repeating. Nonetheless, European monologue theatre is complex and varied. It reaches back into the nineteenth century with August Strindberg's *The Stronger* (2014) and through to more recent, abstracted works such as Marie Brassard's *Peepshow* (2006). This thesis, however, does not focus on monologue theatre as a genre for special attention. Instead, it looks at narrating more broadly and considers how it intersects with other performance modes in a selection of contemporary Australian theatre productions. Monologue is but one way in which these productions use narrating.

A more recent form of theatre, verbatim, draws heavily on narrating to reproduce participant accounts of significant events. Prominent verbatim productions include Alana Valentine's *Paramatta Girls* (2007), which uses narrating to provide a dramatised account of the real life stories of ex-inmates of the Girls Training School, Parramatta. As with monologue, this thesis does not focus on verbatim as a genre, although it does acknowledge the verbatim origins of Tom Holloway's play, *Beyond the Neck* (2008). It does so in order to investigate how the latter play uses narrating with other modes of performance to blur the boundaries between history and fiction.

Finally, there is an emerging dramaturgy that points to a deliberate foregrounding of storytelling in contemporary theatre. Mateusz Borowski and Malgorzata Sugiera argue that this particular trend is the

⁷ Brecht's impact continues to be felt in contemporary Australian theatre today. In a recent nod to Brecht's idea of 'knotting', Melbourne theatre company Hayloft's production of Seneca's *Thyestes* used interstitials to relate the major plot points of the play and reverse the chronology of key events (2011).

result of both non-Western storytelling traditions exerting more influence, and an ongoing resistance to traditional European dramaturgy (2010: xxvii). In reference to his work *The Golden Dragon* (2009), German playwright Roland Schimmelpfennig justifies his extensive use of storytelling as a form of play, rather than as a means of delivering a message:

There's no value you can take home. The play makes you think in an aesthetic way. Playfulness is an essential education (2011).

Playfulness of story is something used by Ranters Theatre Company's production of *Intimacy* (2011), to explore the boundaries between theatre and life, with this latter production forming one of the case studies in this thesis. It is this emerging use of narrating, as something that is used as both the subject of a performance *and* its strategy, which has partly inspired this thesis, and the making of my play, *P.O.V. Dave*.

Contemporary Research

There are two main bodies of scholarly research, which investigate narrating in European and Anglo theatre performance: theatre studies and narratology. Each contains conversations specific to their fields, although recently some overlap has begun to occur. For brevity, I identify the main conversations that emerge from each of these disciplines regarding narrating.

2.3 Theatre Studies

Of central importance to much contemporary theatre studies has been the unstable category of the subject after modernism, together with the collapse of traditional certainties of representational drama and dramatic structure. In this branch of theatre studies, the emphasis is often on fragmentation, difference and the impossibility of representation. The role narrators and narrating play in this project tends to be implied rather than explicitly explored.

2.3.1 Instabilities and Fragmentations

In *The Death of Character* Eleanor Fuchs argues that allegory, meta-theatre, and Brecht's critical dialectics are three principle 'vehicles' that compensate for the diminished status of psychologically-based character, from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards. In her account of the demise of character, she alludes to the role narrators and narrating play in this project rather than singles out the diegetic for specific mention (1996:10).

In her seminal work, Fuchs takes as her starting point the postmodernism of Jean Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard, with their respective emphasis on the impossibility of representation and the use of

simulacra as a metaphor for dissociation and eclecticism. She navigates her way through traditional criticisms of the postmodern as relativistic, to advocate for an American theatre that questions the notion of a stable subject. Within this context, she traces the rise and fall of dramatic character, from its second tier status in the plot-centred theatre of Classicism to its elevation in Romanticism, where consciousness replaced action and character and became both subject and structuring principle (149). Fuchs then tracks its demise from the late nineteenth century and argues that theatre makers increasingly embraced the perception that there was nothing ‘out there’ or anyone ‘in here’. Fuchs argues that this embrace produced a conclusion that one could no longer be represented. Instead, theatre increasingly turned to itself as a subject (150).

For Fuchs, postmodernism is at its most productive when taken to be the collapsing of boundaries, between cultures, sexes, arts, disciplines, performance and text, sign and signified. She argues that it is this aspect of postmodernism that has been most attractive to theatre (150). Her case studies reflect this project. Of Richard Foreman’s Ontological-Hysterical Theatre, she observes that it disintegrates human identity into discrete sentences and gestures. She also notes that Strindberg is a harbinger of the postmodern, in the way he describes in his preface to *Miss Julie* his ‘souls’ as ‘characterless,’ ‘patchworks of past and present stages of culture...pasted together from scraps of human lives’ (150).

One of the most common metaphors Fuchs calls on to describe the postmodern theatre of which she writes is ‘fragmentation’. In her conclusion she states:

Perhaps we are actually coming to perceive ourselves as the fragmented, ephemeral constellations of thought, vision, and action that the Buddha saw as the truth of human nature (156).

While Fuchs references monologues and prologues in her survey, and gives them particular attention in the work of artists such as Karen Finley and Annie Sprinkle, narrating as a functional performance mode is not awarded specific attention. Instead, she points to theatre’s active renunciation of certainty and argues that we are looking at the end of drama and the emerging form of a post metaphysical theatre (90).

Nonetheless, Fuchs often draws on Aristotle’s poetic schema, whether it is to note the persistence of reversals or recognitions in contemporary theatre or to argue that his poetics still has a certain resonance, even if its order has been reversed. As she notes, music, diction and spectacle have overtaken action and character (155). As was mentioned earlier, Aristotle placed the diegetic within his mimetic schema (though it was excluded from his definition of tragedy). Given that Fuchs finds Aristotle’s categories so useful, why did she not include the diegetic as a way of describing what is such a common performance mode in contemporary theatre?

Perhaps it is because much of Fuchs' focus is on the deconstruction of text and the presentation of reading and writing on stage. In welcoming Jacques Derrida as her guide, Fuchs reprises his arguments against presence and notes the emphasis on the 'literalization' of contemporary theatre, tracing its emergence from Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Becket and Peter Handke through to artists of the late twentieth century such as Adrienne Kennedy and Elizabeth Le Comte. Narrating is cast as an act of reading rather than as a specific performance mode of telling or storytelling. Even in her account of the Wooster Group's *L.S.D. Just the High Points* she considers it a performance about reading, writing and the importation of documents in theatre, rather than about narrating as such, even though this production relies heavily on narrating and explores telling as an act of meaning-making:

... (the Wooster Group)... has not only made a practice of 're-reading' classic modern texts, but has done so by staging the very mechanics of reading itself ... The Wooster Group introduced into their performance pieces variations on the performance of reading...(65).

It is the presentation of text as an overarching category, rather than the delineation of particular modes of presentation, that concern her. Elsewhere she argues that:

The text has become an actor. The text comes out from the wings as a separated theatrical element (91).

Another reason why the diegetic is absent as a category may be due to Fuch's emphasis on difference as a core principle of the postmodern. In her examination of the landscape as an organising principle in postmodern theatre performance, she argues that the human figure is only one of several elements, served up on a plane of perpetual difference:

... the spectator's focus on this stage is no longer convergent: it is darting or diffuse, noting some configurations, missing others, or absorbing all in a heterogeneous gaze (72).

To identify telling as a performance function worthy of specific attention, and to explore its aesthetics, runs counter to the postmodern relativism Fuchs champions here. Her principal argument is that the stability of the subject stands little chance in the face of a philosophy that subscribes to fragmentation, repetition and difference as its core principles.

Fuch's analysis of character's demise is a rich and detailed account of twentieth century American avant-garde theatre performance. However, her arguments also provide departure points for this thesis. As this

explication of Fuch's work suggests, one of the basic themes of postmodernism, which drives her observations of contemporary theatre, is that of the unrepresentability of our times. In this respect, Lyotard is one of her primary influences and it is worth teasing out his arguments, given the influence they have in Fuch's work in particular, and theatre studies in general.

Central to Lyotard's thought is his opposition to grand narratives and their claim to universality. For Lyotard, the duty of the postmodern is to destabilise modernism's consensus on taste and order:

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself: that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to import a stronger sense of the unrepresentable (1984: 81).

Lyotard draws on the totalitarian conflicts of the nineteenth and twentieth century to power his arguments against claims to universality, which he equates with sentimentality:

We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and communicable experience. The answer is: Let us wage a war on totality: let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name (82) .

Lyotard's polemic is clear. Art's duty is to testify to the impossibility of presenting concept or idea with any validity. All art can do is attest to difference and its inability to think. The spectator in Lyotard's postmodern is one who can only bear witness to that which cannot be thought or communicated. Lyotard emphasises the capacity of the postmodern to shock, rather than to encourage a reintegration of thought.

Implicit in Lyotard's arguments, is that postmodern art is an autonomous and self-contained project that requires little from the audience, other than witnessing. Given that the emphasis is on a disturbance of sensation and the impossibility of representation, all one can do is silently observe the absence of any reason. There is no possibility to engage through disagreement, for there is nothing to disagree about. Following this line of reasoning, we can think of the diegetic in theatre, whether it is a tale of ordinary life, or a thundering denouncement, as simply another expression of difference within the overall *mise en scène* of a performance, whose task it is to deconstruct presence.

Fuchs defends this relativism when she argues:

In the theatre of difference, each signifying element - lights, visual design, as well as plot and character elements - stands to some degree as an independent actor. It is as if all the Aristotelian elements of theatre had survived, but had slipped the organising structure of their former hierarchy (17).

However, such an argument presents a dilemma. If narrating, or indeed any other part of theatre, is treated as but one of many relativised, autonomous units of expression, it becomes difficult to identify what holds the parts of a performance together, or to extract an overall truth from it. It is for this reason, that I examine narrating in theatre performance holistically, as intricately connected to aspects of production, both in its development and its presentation.

2.3.2 Subversive Telling

Elin Diamond, in her complex study of mimesis in theatrical and dramatic discourse, and the possibilities of challenging its limitations through mimicry, addresses this problem of difference in a very particular way by conceptualising narrating as a form of subversive ‘telling’.

Diamond counters the traditional concept of mimesis with a particular reading of Brechtian *gestus*:

To read a gesture, a line of dialogue, or a tableau gestically is to draw into analysis the author’s history, the play’s production conditions through which stage action might be read (1997: xiv).

For Diamond, *gestus* is a sort of telling about social structures. This echoes Bertolt Brecht’s notion of the *gestus* as a matter of ‘overall attitudes’ (1964e: 104). Diamond’s chief enquiry is into the possibilities of a feminist mimesis and to this end, she poses a series of key questions in regards to power: ‘Who is speaking and who is listening? Whose body is in view and whose is not? What is being represented, how and with what effects? Who or what is in control?’ (ii)

Diamond differentiates between what she identifies as a logo-centric version of narrativity in theatre performance, and performance itself, which for her dismantles textual authority, illusionism, and the canonical actor in favour of the ‘polymorphous thinking body’ of the performer (84). Narrating as a function is subsumed within this overarching category of performance. She provides detailed descriptions of American feminist performers such as Annie Sprinkle, and playwrights such as Adrienne Kennedy, both of who use narrating in their performance, but she does not dwell on the aesthetics of narrating in their work. Instead, Diamond is interested in theatre that uses the ‘I’ of storytelling to create a dialectic between the socialised body and its ever-present re-invention on stage. She points to the ‘dangerous

bodies' of feminist playwrights and performers such as Robbie McCauley, Deb Margolin and Peggy Shaw who have used storytelling to simultaneously refuse unitary presence and the authority personal experience can confer, and instead perform identity as something constantly struggling to appear (152).

For Diamond, narrating as a constant dismantling of the past and deferral of presence can be a radical act of challenging any transcendental idea of the self, one that reveals self as a performance rather than as predetermined. Diamond's focus is on the gestures, voices and words of the performers, and on images that reject what she describes as the 'I' of the 'dumb closed self'. She critiques their performances as 'a wild collision of past and present, as embodied and socially mediated, always private and public, esoteric and exoteric' (181). If narrating has a purpose, it is to support this gestic project, which for Diamond is to illuminate the subtext of capitalist order. Diamond, like Brecht and Benjamin, pins theatre's hopes on the pedagogical, a place where spectators can see into the world, to identify the crisis of the present and significantly, to read it and in so doing, to be liberated from their 'dumbness'.⁸

This thesis turns its focus on narrating in a slightly different direction. While narrating as a Brechtian, gestic device is examined in the production of Nadja Kostich's production of Maree Lourey's play, *Bare Witness*, I point to narrators in a wider sense, as bodies, language and images that can poetically disorder the representational rules that govern the dramatic, particularly the binaries of acting/passivity and showing/telling that inform these rules, and I look to a theatre in which these intrusions become a means of exploring the nature of storytelling itself.

2.3.3 Theatre and Anti-Theatre

Martin Puchner, in his examination of twentieth century theatricality and its detractors, offers one of the few concentrated studies of the diegetic in contemporary theatre. He puts forward a compelling argument that much diegetic use in modernist drama is offered as an anti-theatrical gesture, designed to control actors (2003).

The diegesis of modern drama is, for Puchner, essentially textual. He argues that Bertolt Brecht, Gertrude Stein and Samuel Beckett among others held theatre in disdain and it was through their writing that they sought to limit theatre's effects. Diegesis was one of their chief strategies. In particular, Puchner argues that Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre uses literary techniques to control the stage and its actors (27).

⁸ There is a large body of Australian feminist theatre that enlists narrators to deconstruct gender, question received forms of representation and reclaim histories, as in Home Cooking Theatre Company's *Running Up A Dress* which uses narrating as a method of presenting multiple selves to satirise stereotyped images of the perfect mother (Spunner 1988). Jane Montgomery Griffith's *Sappho...In 9 Fragments* (2010), which uses monologue to question identity and its origins, or Merilee Moss's verbatim play that challenges received histories of prostitution in St Kilda, *If Looks Could Kill* (1984).

However, Puchner admits that while diegesis indicates a resistance to theatre, it also contains that which it opposes:

Stage directions and diegetic narrators do not leave theatrical mimesis alone but fold it back into the literary either as a text or as diegetic speech (27).

In other words, anti-theatrical drama, through its use of the diegetic, ends up producing its own form of theatre.

While Puchner's arguments are compelling, there are some problems with mapping them against the arguments I pursue. In the case studies of recent theatre productions included in this thesis, diegesis is certainly referred to by directors, writers and actors as a means of finding truth on stage, but they did not suggest any anti-theatrical bias. Certainly, several of the theatre makers interviewed for the thesis spoke of narrating as a means to critique some forms of theatricality. Adriano Cortese, director of Ranters' *Intimacy*, one of the projects included as a case study in this thesis, spoke positively about how simple, straightforward narrating was an antidote to false acting (A. Cortese 2011b). Nadja Kostich, director of *Bare Witness*, another case study used below, described how she wanted the production's moments of narrating to be simple and truthful, and to sit in contrast to its otherwise highly theatrical elements (2011). However, all those interviewed spoke positively about theatre. If there is a bias in these interviews, it is more towards the theatrical rather than against it. Each of the theatre makers I interviewed expressed in varying ways a desire to be theatrically innovative, and they each saw narrating as a means of doing so.

More recently, Puchner has attempted a recovery of the term 'drama', by proposing its expansion to include not only dialogue, but diegetic plays as well (2010:124). This is a very different project to his earlier work on the role the diegetic played in modernist anti-theatricality. In his later work Puchner argues for the recognition of what he terms a Platonic theatre, which he claims counters relativism and corporealism through the presentation of ideas. Diegesis in Puchner's more recent work is seen as part of a theatrical tradition that holds mimesis to account and which tries to 'frame and distance what happens onstage through narrators and other techniques' (254). I argue that Puchner's broader project, of tying diegesis to a wider anti-mimetic project, is more useful. It is more productive to see diegesis in Australian theatre as a means of theatrically questioning representation, rather than simply as an anti-theatrical gesture.

2.3.4 The Postdramatic

If Puchner aims to retain and expand the dramatic as a category, Hans-Thiess Lehmann frames it in a

paradox. For Lehmann, contemporary theatre can be defined through its complete abandonment of the dramatic. At the same time, his definition of this new age is still dependent on that from which it has broken away (2006). Lehmann takes as his starting point Peter Szondi's thesis that drama grew from a newly self-conscious culture in the seventeenth century that sought to mirror individuality on the basis of interpersonal relationships alone. This, according to Szondi, resulted in 'absolute drama', which excluded anything external to the dramatic world (1987: 195). Szondi argues that this model reached a crisis in the late nineteenth century, when absolute drama failed to be an appropriate mirror of the external world (197). Szondi privileges Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre as a major breakthrough in its ability to produce dialectical narratives that better framed history (139). Lehmann, however, rejects Szondi's thesis because it remains focused on a text-based model of theatre that still privileges a self-enclosed narrative structure (2006: 29). He argues that the focus on theatre must shift away from the authority of the dramatic text and towards performance, because in practice this is what theatre has been doing since the 1960s. He bases his conclusion on a wide body of evidence that suggests theatre no longer privileges the dramatic text (30).

For Lehmann, drama is partly teleological. It depends upon a preconceived outcome. The dramatic story already has its end in mind, which it then withholds from the audience in order to heighten suspense and emotion:

Drama is a conflict of ethic attitudes, in which the dramatic person is completely identifying with an objectively founded 'pathos' (34).

This 'pathos' is a revelation, the result of suspended knowledge. The postdramatic theatre by contrast offers 'process', 'manifestation' and 'energetic impulse' (85). Like Eleanor Fuchs and Elin Diamond after her, Lehmann's concern is with presentation. Lehmann does not reject the text outright, but argues that it is only one of many performance elements in the postdramatic. For Lehmann, presentation is a leveler of dramatic hierarchies.

Unlike many theatre studies scholars, Lehmann singles out narrating as part of the new aesthetic order of theatre and argues that it is an essential trait of the postdramatic. The theatre becomes the site of a narrative act, or oscillates between extended passages of narrating and occasional episodes of dialogue. In contrast to Brecht's epic narrator, Lehmann argues that post-epic forms of narrating foreground the personal and are about:

... the self-referential intensity of this contact: about the closeness within distance, not the distancing of that which is close (110).

For Lehmann, narrating and narrator seem to fold into one single mode of presentation. Narrating is not something to help the audience identify the knots of a story, or educate them to the world beyond the theatre, but to disturb and unsettle at a more visceral level. In this way, Lehmann rejects the idea of a pedagogical narrator who directs the audience's attention and understanding. Implicit in his theory is a very particular idea about the audience's relationship with postdramatic performance. Lehmann's ideal narrator in the postdramatic removes the gap between spectator and performer. Throughout his writing, there is an emphasis on postdramatic theatre's immediacy, directness and urgency, and there is a distinct sense in Lehmann's writing that the postdramatic shocks audiences out of their passivity. In general, culture has enslaved our perceptions.:

We find ourselves in a spectacle in which we can only look on - bad traditional theatre (184).

The antidote for Lehmann is a theatre that is constituted:

...to hurt feelings, to produce shock and disorientation, which point the spectators to their own presence precisely through 'amoral, 'asocial' and seemingly 'cynical' events (187).

I counter Lehmann's postmodern model with my own theory of the unruly narrator as a poetic figure at play. While his narrator works within predetermined categories (for instance as a provocative agent designed to produce certain effects such as 'shock'), my unruly version is predicated on its capacity to produce unpredictable outcomes. The language produced by the unruly narrator as I frame it, is let loose to roam at will, rather than to perform certain predetermined actions. In other words, I argue that story is a third thing, something that for a time occupies a space between the teller and the spectator, and through this occupation, allows audiences to react in their own way. In this way of thinking, the audience needs no rousing from its slumber. It is already awake and ready to receive and interpret freely. For instance, narrators in Tom Holloway's *Beyond the Neck* (2012) at times suspend dramatic time to poetically and playfully reflect on the ordinary things of their lives and in so doing, present the audience with an opportunity to freely imagine with them. Furthermore, I argue that story is not *only* an embodied experience. Stories precede, as well as follow on, from their presentation, and in this way they can be wayward and unpredictable.

2.3.5 Emerging Dramaturges

In recent years, European theatre studies have taken what might be called the 'storytelling' turn. Cathy Turner and Sarah Behrndt identify narrating as a form of storytelling within theatre performance that simultaneously makes the audience aware of the story and at the same time, keeps the act of telling centre

stage. A particular focus for them is what they refer to as acts of ‘live narrating’ in theatre in which narrating becomes a subject of the performance narrative (2008:108):

While we have not seen a return to the drama, we have seen ways in which theatre is finding a new relationship with representation – one in which stories can be told, while the modes of telling, the tellers and even the stories themselves may be suspect, ambiguous and multiple (187).

This suggests a return to Brecht’s dialectic, but Turner and Behrndt argue for a post-Brechtian theatre. While this form of theatre still seeks to make the audience aware of the story, it is ultimately concerned with exploring the process of telling itself.

Turner and Behrndt look to a theatre that explores the performance of storytelling. One of the works they reference is Conor McPherson’s *The Weir* (2013) in which a group of men compete through the telling of ghost stories to impress a new arrival in town.

On the basis of this and other recent works that explore the nature of telling, they conclude that:

We seem to be seeing a strategic re-entry of narrative, textuality and even of representational strategies existing, perhaps paradoxically, alongside an increased awareness, even valorization, of theatrical presence...(188).

Turner and Berndt draw on the work of Jean Pierre Sarrazac, who coined the term ‘rhapsodic theatre’ (1981) to account for the so-called hybridity of contemporary theatre performance. For Sarrazac, rhapsodic theatre is one that shifts between the dramatic, the epic and the lyric, embraces a range of genres and presents what he describes as ‘dynamic montage’. It is characterised by:

...a voice other than that of the characters... the hesitant, veiled, stammering voice of the modern rhapsode... a voice of questions, doubts, palinodes, multiplication of the possibilities (1981:201-202).

The rhapsodic writer, or auteur rhapsode in contemporary theatre, is one who deconstructs old forms and reconfigures them. Sarrazac argues for a shift of attention away from dramatic plot and consistent character and towards a theatre in which narrating is but one of a whole range of strategies that playwrights will use to liberate theatre from traditional structures and modes, in order to respond effectively to the fragmentation of the modern world. Sarrazac’s theorizing is not dissimilar to Fuch’s

postmodern conception of theatre as ‘fragmented, ephemeral constellations of thought, vision, and action’ (Fuchs 1996: 156).

I question the usefulness of these postmodern theories of hybridity. In the productions I analyse, the stage is not ‘liberated’ from the dramatic, nor is the dramatic completely fragmented. There are voices *and* there are characters. There is fragmentation *and* there is dramatic structure. There is a narrator that poeticizes the stage *and* there is one that supports the dramatic. Even Ranters’ *Intimacy* (2011), which prides itself on being non-dramatic, makes something out of keeping the dramatic off the stage, and its attempts to do so become part of the production’s fabric. I point to a theatre that produces narratives *out of* co-existing, incompatible forms, between the certainties of dramatic structure and the ambiguities of poetic speech and image. For instance, I argue that *Beyond the Neck* (2012) uses narrating to present the communal experience of tragedy as a dynamic one that shifts between individual, dramatically framed stories and poetic, transcendent moments that suspend dramatic action.

In *Worlds in Words: Storytelling in Contemporary Theatre and Playwriting*, Mateusz Borowski and Malgorzata Sugiera introduce what is one of the first scholarly anthologies to look in detail at the recent growth of storytelling as a theatre performance mode. Their focus is on European theatre and like Turner and Berhndt, they argue that it has developed a specific interest in storytelling as a performance mode (Borowski and Sugiera 2010).

They are nonetheless critical of Sarrazac’s rhapsodic model, which they argue fails to question the foundations of mimesis. Instead, they propose a polyphonic model to describe the storytelling turn in European theatre. In what is a slight variation on Lehmann’s postdramatic, they argue that contemporary theatre has embraced storytelling as a strategy to explore its relationship to the audience (xxvi). Their metaphor of polyphony is echoed through much contemporary European dramaturgy concerning diegesis. Jean Paul Ryngaert, in analysing contemporary French theatre, adopts the same metaphor to account for the rise of narrating (2007: 25).

However, the stage is not only partitioned according to what can be heard, but also by what can be seen. The orderly narrator has traditionally supported the rule of speech over image. In classical theatre, what could not be shown was described. The unruly narrator by contrast disrupts sanctioned arrangements of speech and image. In Nature Theatre of Oklahoma’s *Life and Times Part 1*, narrators progressively populate the stage to sing the life story of one of the company members (2013). As they dot their stories with stutters, ‘ums’ and ‘ahs’, and deviate into non-sequiters, it is tempting to interpret the entire performance as polyphonic. Yet, as more and more narrators occupy the stage until it is filled with a chorus of 15 performers, and as they accompany their lyrics with awkwardly executed gymnastic

manoeuvres, it is clear that this performance is not simply challenging what can be said on stage, but also what can be shown.

In the same anthology, Nina Ticklenberg examines recent theatre productions in Berlin that invite spectators to participate in an interactive form of storytelling. In examining productions such as Uwe Mengel's *2 ½ Millionen* (1996), which encourages the audience to question performers about the fictional world on offer, Ticklenberg differentiates between the use of storytelling in Brechtian theatre, and its application in more contemporary examples. She notes that whereas in epic theatre the playful interaction between actors and spectators momentarily interrupts the coherency of the story in order to teach a lesson, *2 1/2 Millionen* invites the audience to co-create the fictional world about them.

Ticklenberg, like Lehmann, notes that this more contemporary application of storytelling is more about the exploration of closeness between performance and spectator:

Here, an empathy with the story on the one hand and an interaction with its production on the other hand do not present contradictory poles...they depend on each other (Tecklenburg 2010:49).

Yet, Ticklenberg's notion of narrating as 'co-creation' strikes a very different note to Lehmann's use of narrating to destabilise. It suggests a greater capacity for audience members to freely play with what they see and hear, and in this sense her concept aligns itself with my definition of the unruly narrator as one that allows for unanticipated results.

2.4 Narratology

In this section, I profile some of the main theories that have emerged from narratology as they relate to narrating. While it is defined broadly as a collection of narrative theories that aim to understand, analyse and evaluate narratives (Bal 2009: 4), narratology typically works with a distinction between story as a collection of events, and its representation through a presentation or narration of events (Culler 2001: 184). It would be reasonable to therefore assume that narratology has investigated the narrator in theatre performance. However, classical narratology has neglected drama as a narrative discourse and as a consequence it has ignored narrating within dramatic performance (Richardson 2001) (Fludernik 2008). It is only with its recent 'transmedial' turn that narratology has turned its attention to narrators in theatre (Alber et al. 2010: 9). In working to overcome the limits Genette set on narrative investigation, narratologists have begun producing valuable theories into narrating in theatre performance. In the following section I provide a brief account of its historical bias against theatre, these more recent developments, and their usefulness in relation to this thesis.

2.4.1 The Informative Text

It was Gerard Genette, among others, who quarantined theatre from narratological investigation. He rationalized this by declaring that, as a mimetic art, drama was a ‘non-narrative’ mode. He argued that it lacked a narrator’s voice (1988: 16) and that there is a ‘truly insurmountable opposition between dramatic representation and narrative’ (41). Consequently, drama was of no interest to narratology. For Genette, narratology should be solely focused on the relationship between narrative and story, narrative and narrating and story and narrative (1980: 29). Furthermore, Genette argued for textual authority, rather than performative function in texts. Narrative is about information as text rather than text as representation (let alone text in performance).

I believe there is no imitation in narrative because narrative, like everything (or almost everything) in literature, is an act of language. And, therefore, there can be no more imitation in narrative in particular than there is in language in general. Like every verbal act, a narrative can only inform - that is, transmit meanings (1988: 42).

For Genette, narrative does not represent story, but ‘recounts it’, or signifies it through language. By contrast, drama imitates without a narrating discourse. In drawing such a distinction, Genette cut off any possible investigation of narrators in drama, or dramatic performance.

The obvious gaps in his knowledge of theatre aside, Genette’s model imposes a schema on narrative that fails to account for inconsistency or ambiguity. It emphasises category over contradiction. As Mieke Bal has noted, classifying texts as a method of analysis is a circular form of reasoning, and promotes a disconnection between classification and understanding (2009:226).

Any theory that sees boundaries as fluid is incompatible with Genette's model. His model, with its intention of categorising text, is worlds away from my conception of the unruly narrator that blurs boundaries in performance. However, Genette does offer a language for identifying and naming point of view in performance. In Genette’s textual model, homogeneous narrators are characters in a story, while heterogeneous narrators sit outside of the story, looking in. What they see and hear is dictated by their viewpoint. These terms are useful for identifying consistency of convention in theatre performance. In redrafting and developing *P.O.V. Dave* (2013), Genette’s terminology proved invaluable in creating a system for point of view.

2.4.2 The Functional Text

In recent years, narratology has made a concerted effort to overcome Genette’s limiting taxonomies that produced such an artificial separation of drama from narrative. Of particular note is the work of Seymour

Chatman, who extended the idea of narrative agency and argued for a more functional concept of the narrator that was not limited by linguistic or textual criteria. His modeling lays the ground for what has since become a transgeneric narrative theory that has embraced narrators and narrating in and to a certain extent, theatre performance.

Chatman urges a distinction between the terms ‘story’ and ‘discourse’ to extend the range of narratology (1978). Story for Chatman represents a chain of events related by cause and effect, combined with characters or ‘existents’, while discourse is the means by which this content is communicated. In other words, story is the ‘what’ that is represented while discourse is the ‘how’. Using this system, he argues for a ‘transposability’ of story, which allows for narratives to be independent of medium (20).

In his later work, Chatman argues that the distinction between narrative and other text-types is of a higher order than the diegesis/mimetic or telling/showing binary. In diagrammatic form, he proposes that within the category of narrative, there are both diegetic (novel and epic) and mimetic forms (plays, movies). For Chatman, all fictional texts devoted to storytelling share narrative features such as time, characters and setting. Novels and plays have similarities, and these are more important than the different ways in which these stories are told or shown. This difference is secondary to the distinction between narrative and non-narrative text types.

Plays and novels share the common features of a chrono-logic of events, a set of characters, and a setting. Therefore, at a fundamental level they are all stories. The fact that one kind of story is told (diegesis) and the other shown (mimesis) is of secondary importance. By ‘secondary’ I do not mean that the difference is inconsequential. It is just that it is lower in the hierarchy of text distinctions . . . (1990: 117).

Chatman is generous in his embrace of dramatic writing as narrative. In his structuralist account of narrative he argues that:

Dramas written for performance differ from other narratives only in their actualisation: that is, theatrical production... In that sense, drama is not a class that competes with narrative: rather it is simply one of the narrative kinds (117).

While Genette identifies narrative with diegesis and drama with mimesis, Chatman argues that story can be transmitted by both showing and telling, thus opening the way for narratology to recognise narrating in drama (113). However, Chatman prefers the terms ‘to present’ rather than ‘to narrate’, arguing that the latter is ‘too fraught with vocal overtones’ (113). Chatman's presenter presents a story through a

combination of 'showing' and 'telling'. This broader conception of the presenter can include an overall sense of a narrator as one that is either recognisable or 'not performed by a recognisably human agency' (115):

A presentation argues a presenter whether human or not, whether vividly dramatised or not. Once we allow the possibility of showing a narrative, we perforce recognise the existence of a shower, even if not a human one (117).

In arguing this, Chatman opens up rich possibilities for investigating narrators in theatre performance. Rather than equating narrating with diegesis, and framing drama as mimetic, his model recognises how theatre mixes the epic and the dramatic. Yet at the same time, he limits these possibilities by insisting that every narrative is narrated by a presenter, whether visible or not. For Chatman, a presentation implies a presenter (116). So we can allow for a mixture of the diegetic and the mimetic in theatre performance, but we must tether both modes to the existence of an overall presenter. Such a move then requires that we consider how a visible, human narrator in a theatre performance relates to, or is an expression of, the production's overall narrator or presenter.

It should be noted that Chatman's project is still structural: he aims, like Genette before him, to locate meaning in narrative structures that are assumed to be ahistorical. The assumption of a presenter/narrator serves this project well: it allows schematic relationships to be drawn between the presenter and its manifestation through either telling or showing. But for Chatman, in particular, and narratology in general, these structures have been inherently textual.

As a consequence, Chatman does not fully investigate where the overall presenter of a performance narrative resides. It is assumed to lie somewhere in the text. Yet, theatre making is a collaborative activity that takes place over time. Theatre makers will debate and negotiate the story they are telling as they develop and perform a production. An agreement around the story to be told ensures clarity and consistency. Performers, director, designer and so on can be at one on this point, and perhaps it is this agreed story in which Chatman's presenter resides. Certainly one can semiotically 'read' a story in a production by pointing to a system of signs in its language, movement and spatial design. However performance narratives are mutable, not least because they are always a unique event, appearing and disappearing over time, with performers and audience engaged in a complex process of presentation, reception and interpretation that has the capacity to disrupt meaning, as much as produce it. Chatman's presenter has little place in this complex dynamics of theatre performance, which involves bodies, spaces and language.

Building on Chatman, Manfred Jahn asks to what extent drama, like epic narrative, demonstrates a narrating instance or a narrative voice. In working with this question, he first outlines three competing narratological positions in regard to the play text. There is the text-based position of traditional drama poetics; there is the performance bias of theatre students; and there is the reception model favoured by the 'Reading Drama' school which argues that an ideal recipient is both a reader and a theatre goer (Jahn 2001:662). This latter position is typified in the term 'virtual performance' and it is one that Jahn embraces. He argues that this approach allows for both the dramatic text and its performance to be considered as media in their own right. Crucially, the narrator need no longer be considered an absence.

As Jahn has noted, in Chatman's model, the narrator need not speak and may have no voice at all (670). The implications for this approach are vast. Instead of simply answering Genette's question 'who speaks?' the narrator is empowered to decide what is to be told and how. The narrator determines the point of view, action sequence and omissions, whether he or she is visible or not.

Adding to Chatman's argument that epic and dramatic narrative share commonalities, Jahn notes that there is a whole area of functional genre correspondences, including mutual crossover techniques of dramatisation and epicalisation, that merit closer exploration. To acknowledge this, Jahn separates out the play text as a literary document, from its use as a performance text and proposes a category called 'playscript mode' in which stage directions, speech prefixes, and speeches are treated as things to be performed (674). This approach allows Jahn to not only acknowledge intradiegetic narrators in drama texts, but to also argue for a play's 'narrative world'. Consequently, the play script can be treated as a 'readable' medium sui generis. In arguing for two distinct categories of play text as either 'written' or 'performed', Jahn challenges the diegetic/mimetic binary in a very particular way. With Genette, narratology deemed plays purely mimetic (675). By contrast Chatman's and Jahn's theories resolve many of the problems classical narratology sets for itself. Instead of a focus on a text as a discourse of information, they animate text through a theory of function, and significantly, they differentiate between text as literature, and text that functions as performance. Instead of conceiving narrating as a textual instance, their theories offer us a possibility of seeing it as function.

There are, however, problems with Jahn's concept of the text for performance. At what point does the play text cease to be literary and become performative? If Jahn wishes to conceptualise a version of the play as a performance text, then he needs to recognise a whole host of realities involved in the making and presentation of theatre and the way in which it processes text. Because a play is nearly always destined for a performance, it inevitably passes through many hands, is scrutinised by countless pairs of eyes and critiqued by many with, or without, the playwright present. The text will occupy someone's

solitary reflection, or be the subject of heated debate. This activity will produce para-texts, such as notes that the playwright or performers may choose to incorporate into subsequent drafts. All this occurs before it even reaches the rehearsal space. The performances that form the case studies in this thesis are a case in point. They comprise scripts that went through several drafts, performances and rewrites. Jahn's notion of the play as both fiction and performance fails to take into account the behaviour that gathers around a play text from its inception onwards. Rather than focus on the dynamics of theatre making, and the way they impact on the performance text, Jahn instead continues to obsess about the concept of narratorial agency in the performance text, and the notion of the implied author. Yet, in so many cases, the author of a play text, implied or otherwise, is called into question through the development of a performance. Playwrights may lose their status, relinquish it, negotiate it, or abandon it altogether. It is more accurate to say that a play text, far from offering a stable structure, is a document that is continuously rewritten by those who perform it and indeed, apprehend it. It is worth noting that while narratology struggles with the relationship between text and performance, theatre studies is well ahead on the matter, as W. B. Worthen makes very clear with his eloquent use of the terms 'archive' and 'repertoire' to account for the perpetual disappearance and reimagining of drama (2008: 28).

2.4.3 Narrativity

One of the most significant moves in narratology in recent years is towards a cognitive basis for the study of narrative. Monika Fludernik, with her concept of 'natural narratology', is one of the key thinkers in this field. While Fludernik accepts that narrative is constructed, she argues for universally valid cognitive components, or what she terms 'cognitive frames' such as 'agency' and 'goals', to describe how we naturally experience an event and determine its meaning (1996:26). Central to Fludernik's thinking is the concept of 'narrativity', which she argues should be detached from its dependence on plot and redefined as the representation of experientiality. For Fludernik, actions, intentions and feelings are part of human experience that is reported and evaluated in narratives and therefore narrativity can be established in all media, including theatre performance (2009:109).

Fludernik's theories are a major departure from the structuralism of Chatman. Her concept of 'natural' narratology grounds narrativity as a qualitative measure within the representation of experience. For Fludernik, narrativity is a function of narrative texts and centres on experientiality of an anthropomorphic nature. Furthermore, Fludernik argues that narrative is a deep structural concept and is not restricted to prose and epic verse (1996: 26).

Fludernik notes that narratology has traditionally reduced the dramatic to a text, thus ignoring its performance and visual qualities. In a move that recognises the complex nature of theatre performance, she locates narrators in contemporary dramatic performance in a range of forms, including on-stage

figures, voice-overs as well as experimentation with monologue and flashbacks (1996: 262). She argues that by replacing the traditional criteria for defining narrative (event sequence, narrating and the story vs. discourse dichotomy), with the notion of experientiality, evidence of narrativity in theatre becomes more plentiful:

Thus, monologic drama qua monologue can be neatly described as the situation of a character whose physical appearance on stage already vouchsafes the basic experientiality of the setup (1996: 276).

More specifically, Fludernik argues for five categories of narrative elements in theatre performance, and these are very useful for articulating the various ways in which the orderly narrator works:

- elements that relate to the drama's narrativity, such as the fictional world, character and plot
- elements in the fictional world that relate to narrating: messenger reports, characters telling one another stories
- elements that introduce a narrator figure or narrating frame
- elements that display a mediational function, such as prologues or monologues, or if one looks at the text, stage directions
- metadramatic features, such as heterodiegetic or homodiegetic narrators, interior monologues, extended narrating by characters and the narrating of stage directions (2008: 367).

Fludernik denies sequentiality and logical connectedness the central role that they usually hold in most discussions of narrative:

The specific aesthetic effect of narrative need not rely on the teleology of plot, on how all the episodes and motives contribute to the final outcome, but can be produced also by the mimetically motivated evocation of human consciousness and of its (sometimes chaotic) experience of being in the world (1996: 31).

In other words, narrators and narrating can produce a recognisable state of consciousness to which spectators will relate, without having to pursue a linear logic. They are not reliant on the existence of story and they do not have to be tethered to an overall presenter, as they are in Chatman's model.

In addition, Fludernik makes a useful distinction between the discourse of the play and that of its performance. If one studies the former, one can analyse the selection of scenes as an indication of authorial narrating. If one studies the latter, design elements among other things can be examined at the

performed level. However, she notes that for the audience, both discourses are equivalent. The audience extrapolates the plot and the fictional world from each simultaneously (2008: 362). It is this distinction between text and presentation that Chatman fails to distinguish. It is one that Jahn attempts, but his model privileges the play text over its performance.

Fludernik's model is useful in that it acknowledges the teleological nature of dramatic plot, but permits the narrator to be independent of it. It recognises that narrating as an aesthetic is potentially anarchic, given our sometimes-chaotic experience of the world. In this sense, Fludernik's narrativity is similarly to Rancière's concept of 'literarity' (Rancière 1998:8), by which he means the contradiction between the status of the written word, and its capacity to freely circulate. With narrativity, as with literarity, there is no accounting for the journey it may produce.

However, Fludernik fails to acknowledge one of the key projects in contemporary theatre performance, which is a deliberate disordering of genre, and the role unruly narrators play in this. I argue that narrators function as agents to support the dramatic on the one hand and to disrupt it on the other. As the case studies in this thesis demonstrate, contemporary theatre mixes the poetic and the dramatic together to deliberately confuse and destabilise genre, without removing it completely. In this sense, narrators are less an expression of the overall narrative of a performance, and more a deliberate means by which a performance dissects itself on stage.

2.3.4 Generative Narrators

In a series of journal articles published throughout the nineties, Brian Richardson championed the role of the narrator in contemporary drama texts and performances. Richardson follows Chatman and Fludernik in identifying the narrator by function rather than simply as an expression of a vocal or textual instance, and he provides a valuable catalogue of narratorial functions in theatre performance. However, he goes one step further by arguing that, in order to appreciate how narrators in postmodern dramatic texts and performances exceed the limits of individual consciousness, we need to resist equating narrative agency with a hypostasised (or real) narrator figure. As he points out, the voice can be severed from what it speaks, and even from itself (2001: 681). He further points out that postmodern drama inevitably contains a complex mix of diegetic and mimetic modes. To pursue these arguments, Richardson investigates a range of memory plays such as Paula Vogel's *The Baltimore Waltz* (Vogel 1996), in which the play reveals itself to be a fabricated narrative, produced by a woman imagining what memories she might have had, had she traveled with her brother prior to his dying of AIDS. Richardson explores what he terms 'generative narrators' who produce story on stage, off-stage narrative voices such as those found in Margeurite Duras' *India Song* (1998) and he argues that narrative voice can be a composite entity of many different voices (2001: 689).

The value of Richardson's arguments are threefold: he acknowledges the fragmentation of dramatic structure in contemporary theatre without dismissing it as a category altogether; he identifies the use of unreliable narrating in performance; and he demonstrates the dissolution of character and its separation from voice as some of the chief characteristics of contemporary theatre performance. In doing so, Richardson aligns himself with contemporary theatre scholarship in a way that puts him well in front of many other narratologists. His general argument, that narrating in performance is not dependent on traditional arrangements of dramatic action and character, provides a conversation that is further developed in this thesis. By first accepting that narrating is a function rather than simply a textual category, that the narrating voice is not dependent on character for its agency and that single voices are paradoxically multiple in iteration, it can then be argued that narrating both dramatises but also blurs and fragments, thus contributing to a productive confusion of dramatic form. I argue that in much contemporary Australian experimental theatre, narrating disrupts the order by which bodies are organised and spaces are delineated, as well disrupting relations between status, appearance and speech. Tom Holloway's *Beyond the Neck* (2008) does just this, in presenting a chorus of voices that constantly challenge character point of view and this play lends itself to an interpretation of its voices as both singular and multiple.

Building on Fludernik's conception of narrativity as a function of human cognition, Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer (2008) propose a scalar model that differentiates between mimetic and diegetic narrativity by degrees. With Fludernik's reception-based model as a starting point, they argue that mimesis is a projection of sequence and event, while diegesis is a projection of storytelling (338). By this they mean that each form is innately understood at a cognitive level, and that this understanding then enables us to differentiate between mimetic and diegetic modes in narrative. In addition, they expand the definition of the diegetic in drama to include montage, scenic narrating, sous titres and analepsis (340). Not only does diegesis provide exposition, suggestion, compression and address, it also facilitates 'interdiscursive experimentation and encourages self-reflexivity' (345). Nünning and Sommer further propose that drama can be seen as a complex blend of the mimetic and the diegetic. This scalar model opens up greater possibilities for identifying not only the instance of diegesis in theatre, but the way in which it is so often entangled with representational forms.

However, while they detail experimentation with this blend in contemporary theatre, they work within the category of the dramatic, and assume it and theatre to be essentially the same thing. This is a problem in their analysis because theatre, as evidenced in this thesis, may use narrating techniques to question dramatic form. In addition, they do not explore the historical contingencies that have traditionally determined the way the mimetic and the diegetic within dramatic texts and performances have been used.

They note that the diegetic has long been a performance mode in European theatre and at the same time, they acknowledge how Bertolt Brecht used the diegetic for ideological purposes (341). However, the use of the diegetic has always been historically contingent in European theatre. Traditionally, the relationship between diegesis and mimesis has been governed by rules concerning verisimilitude and decorum, the suitability of action to character and speech, and an assumption that the audience is passive. The Renaissance concern with decorum and verisimilitude, the Neo-Classical obsession with the so-called unities of time, place and action, Diderot's proposal of the fourth wall or naturalism's concern with drama as a representation of the real are all cases in point. Each of these definitions of drama, and their associated rules and recommendations, are historically contingent.

Nonning and Sommer's model is ahistorical, and does not differentiate between dramatic elements, the rules that bind them together or the dissolution of these rules that have allowed contemporary theatre to challenge dramatic structure with other performance modes. However, this is a gap in their research they readily acknowledge, and they identify the potential for a diachronic exploration of narrating in dramatic text and performance (348).

This brief survey of classical and contemporary narratology offers several key ideas for further theorizing about narrating. Firstly, it offers frameworks with which to conceptualise narrators as distinct, functionary beings in theatre performance. Narrators are no longer textual instances but identifiable, active characters. As such, we can identify them across media and genre. Secondly, narrators can be seen to have a generative function. They make narrative happen on stage. Thirdly, the act of narrating is something we recognise by virtue of our own cognitive frameworks. As such, narrators and narrating are methods of engaging our minds and imagination not only in an educative or rational sense. Fourthly, narrators disrupt. They have the capacity to cut into dramatic arrangements and produce narratives out of this intrusion.

There is another function that has yet to be considered: the expressive capacity of narrating to produce vocal and visual effects on stage. In *Peepshow*, Marie Brassard reprises the fairy tale, *Little Red Riding Hood*, as a series of monologues (2006). In her one-woman performance, she distorts her voice through real time synthesising to indicate the other characters she is quoting. The technical manipulation produces a complex vocal arrangement: we hear her voice and the voice of her characters simultaneously. This arrangement has a lyrical effect as much as it supports the dramatic structure of the stories she tells. It is both poetic and representational and I would argue, a clear example of the unruly and the orderly narrator co-existing to produce artistic tension.

2.4 Australian Scholarship

There appears to be a reluctance in Australian theatre scholarship to investigate narrating as a performance category. Narrators occasionally get a nod but overall they are implied rather than singled out for specific attention. Narrating as a specific performance mode is not widely investigated either dramatically or aesthetically. Instead, diegetic forms such as direct address and monologue are considered as part of a wider project to deliberately repopulate the stage with lost or unacknowledged voices.

In this section, I summarise some of the major contributors to Australian theatre scholarship in order to profile what has, and what has not, been said about the diegetic as a mode of performance. Overall, Australian theatre and drama scholarship tends to reference narrating in two ways:

- As a performance of multiple identities and/or;
- As a way of teaching the audience about social structures and the illusory nature of theatre.

What is notable about much Australian scholarship in this field is that it has traditionally tended to locate its research in the written text. Plays tend to be the main primary reference. There is, however, an emerging scholarship that offers an aesthetic account of contemporary Australian theatre, and in doing so, provides new opportunities for narrating to be considered as a separate, identifiable and functional mode of performance.

2.4.1 Identities

Australian theatre has often been researched in terms of its struggle with racial, national and gendered identities. The role narrators and narrating play in such critical frameworks tends to be implicit rather than explicitly spelt out.

For instance, John McCallum theorises that Australian playwriting began as a search for identity and ended up celebrating diversity. He argues that the non-mainstream theatre from the 1960s onwards was characterised by a ‘new theatricality’ that cut through realism. While he does not directly acknowledge the rediscovery of narrators and narrating in his assessment of this period, they make a covert appearance nonetheless. They are there in his appraisal of Dorothy Hewett’s *The Chapel Perilous* (1973) which he describes as:

... a remarkable play... the first Australian play to exploit the new theatricality without losing richly poetic language; and the first to create characters who were placed in their time and social milieu but were also mythic and unconstrained by the everyday realism of the tradition (2009:117).

He argues that, with its poetry, song, theatrical show pieces and lyrical heightened speech, Hewett's play owes much to Elizabethan drama and that it stands 'like a bridge over the New Wave, linking the vision of Patrick White to the post-naturalistic, epic work of 1980s writers such as Louis Nowra and Stephen Sewell' (117).

Narrators are also implied in McCallum's assessment of Patrick White's *The Cheery Soul* (White 1985) with its Brechtian narrating, and he credits Jim Sherman's non-naturalistic production of the play for finally realising its theatrical potential (100). They are also implicit in his brief mention of Brecht's influence on Australian theatre from the 1950s onwards, beginning with the formal adoption of Brechtian philosophies by Wal Cherry at the Emerald Hill Theatre between 1962 and 1966, and later with his production of *Mother Courage* at the Melbourne Theatre Company (145). Narrators also hover about McCallum's history of the groundbreaking productions of Jane St, La Mama and the Australian Performing Group (APG). He references Bob Ellis' and Michael Body's *The Legend of King O'Malley* (1974), which is heavily dependent upon polemical address to the audience in order to satirise issues of the day such as conscription (163).

When McCallum comes to the 1980s and a theatre that he argues is characterised by 'identity politics', narrators receive some specific attention. He notes the influence of Bertolt Brecht on writers such as Stephen Sewell and Louis Nowra and argues that:

In this new theatre of identity politics, the larrikin forms of the New Wave also provided theatrical and dramaturgical techniques, including direct audience involvement, songs, physical comedy and mime, and non-realistic theatricalist modes of address (265).

McCallum also mentions feminist, gay, lesbian, community theatre and theatre-in-education as having an enormous influence on the Australian performance landscape. The diegetic, however, as a performance category in this theatre is barely noted. This is surprising, given that many of the plays he references, such as Alisson Lyssa's *Pinball* (1983) and Tim Conigrave's *Holding the Man* (2008) rely heavily on monologue and direct address.

By contrast, Geoffrey Milne gives more attention to narrating, particularly in the form of monodrama. Milne's investigations of Australian theatre are framed by an economic analysis. He argues that the story of post-war Australian theatre is essentially one of subsidy and along with this, proposes that its history is seen in waves of companies and infrastructure that have risen and fallen. The first of these waves professionalised theatre along British lines, while the second revolted against this in the name of a more genuine Australian identity. The third wave marks the growth of community, regional, alternative and

fringe theatre. It is in this economic and policy context that he explores narrating as a performance mode (2004:234).

Milne notes the role monodrama plays in Australian theatre, particularly in the second and third waves, and argues that its use can be differentiated according to gender. With references to plays including Jack Hibberd's *Stretch of the Imagination* (1973), Ron Blair's *The Christian Brother* (1976) and Steve J. Spears' *The Elocution of Benjamin J. Franklin* (1989), Geoffrey Milne notes that the male monodramas are often marked by an obsession with decay and death. He argues that, by contrast, monodramas by women examine multifaceted characters 'in the act of fulfilling or enriching their lives' (373). He references Tess Lyssiotis' *A White Sports Coat* (1996) and Sarah Cathcart's and Andrea Lemmon's *The Serpent's Fall* (1988) as examples of the latter. Milne notes that while monodrama allows an economically viable avenue for artists to work outside the mainstream, its success can also be attributed to its ability to allow disempowered or dissenting voices to flourish and that it offers 'a deeply satisfying expression of individual humanity against the homogenisation of contemporary life' (373). Milne does not elaborate on this last point, but there is an assumption that diegetic theatre has a capacity to 'humanise' by producing heterogeneous subjects.

Maryrose Casey gives monodrama specific attention in her analysis of Indigenous one-woman performances (2005). She examines a range of Indigenous monodramas including *Ningali* (1994); *7 Stages of Grieving* (1994), *White Baptist Abba Fun* (1997) and *Box The Pony* (1997). Casey argues that these works function in a range of ways. They present successful women but more specifically, successful Indigenous women. They offer both role models and exceptions. They actively challenge representations of Indigenous women as silent and powerless, collective and fixed (229).

In an earlier formalist account of Australian drama, Peter Fitzpatrick argues that it is caught in an ongoing conflict between a dominant, naturalistic style of presentation as represented by Ray Lawler's *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, and more adventurous experiments with theatrical language such as Louis Nowra's *Inner Visions* (1979:178). Yet, despite a detailed and rigorous focus on form, Fitzpatrick offers few specific references to the diegetic as a category of performance. Brecht is mentioned only in terms of his overall influence on the work of Jack Hibberd and Nowra. However, there is one particular, tantalising exception in Fitzpatrick's analysis. He provides an analysis of the opening prologue of Patrick White's *The Ham* in which he notes how it 'clears a theatrical space in terms which anticipate, more mildly, the audience-abusing openings of writers like Peter Handke' by challenging fourth wall conventions (50).

Narrating has also been a prominent mode of performance in Australian community and educational theatre, although scholarly investigation of it in this context is only occasional. In his detailed account of this form of theatre, Geoffrey Milne notes that these forms of performance peaked in Australia in 1980s and 1990s and argues that it can be characterised in two ways: either as theatre devised by communities with the assistance of professionals; or as professional theatre produced for communities (2004: 222). In Milne's analysis of community theatre, narrating is implicated rather than investigated as a specific mode. It is there in his description of John Romeril's didactic sketches written for the Australian Performance Group (223). It is implied in his description of the Victorian TIE company, Crosswind's production, *They're Right on Yer Back* (1980), which drew parallels between Ned Kelly and contemporary events, in the form of a participatory bush dance (226), and it is noted in his account of Geelong community theatre company, The Mill, and its semi-documentary *The Wool Game* (1978), a history of wool production, which involved audience members as shareholders in the wool company (214).⁹

Like dramatic narrators, narrators in community and TIE theatre order ways of seeing and hearing, but they do so in a particular way. They point from the theatre to the world beyond, in order to inform and teach. Narrators in this form of theatre are highly accountable to the communities in which they perform. The stories they tell are required to be historically accurate, as well as accountable to those who might have offered them. This is orderly narrating of a particular sort. These narrators fed back histories to communities. More so, this form of narrating justifies itself according to the needs of the community.

I have mentioned previously that this thesis does not investigate narrating within specific performance genres. Rather, it looks to a series of case studies in which narrating works with, or against, other modes of performance to produce distinctive theatre narratives. The projects investigated by this thesis were produced for wider audiences and did not originate out of specific communities. Nonetheless, there are instances within these productions in which narrating does have an occasional, educative function. Mari Lourey's *Bare Witness* and Tom Holloway's *Beyond the Neck* are two such examples, in that they use narrating to, at times, direct audience attention to historical events, but I would argue that overall, these plays do not aim to serve the needs of specific communities.

⁹ A particular branch of community and educational theatre, theatre-in-education (TIE), used narrating extensively, especially as a form of direct engagement with their audiences to frame the performance and organise participation. The emphasis of TIE was always on education, and TIE theatre companies were usually funded by state education departments to provide theatrical experiences that would support curriculum. In the first year of its existence, Ballarat's Four's Company, which grew out of Melbourne-based Bouverie Street TIE, drew heavily on UK theatre practitioner Dorothy Heathcote's model of theatre in education, which called for actors to facilitate student participation through what was commonly known as 'in role' (Heathcote and Bolton 1995). This form of theatre had economic advantages. A small number of actors could produce epic stories with large numbers of participants and the model could attract educational funding by promoting itself as a teaching method. Narrating was used as a quick and easy means of introducing the performance to students, organising their participation and ensuring the relevance of the performance to the curriculum. An example of this type of production was Four's Company's production of David Young's *Eureka!* (1979). Students were 'enrolled' as either miners or police, while actors played the roles of key historical figures who, using narrated speeches, directed the course of the production. David Pammenter argues that TIE projects were 'largely to do with creating the forum for the stimulation and development of the imagination of the child, the development of social behaviour and the extension of creative play' 'Devising for Tie' (1993: 38).

2.4.2 Formal Disruptions

As well as arguing for their capacity to produce multiple identities, Australian scholarship has also noted how narrators in Australian theatre have been responsible for disrupting traditional modes of perceiving and organising the world. Their disruptive capacity has been especially noted in feminist analysis of theatre performance.

As Rachael Fensham and Denise Varney argue, Australian theatre from the 1990s onwards has brought women's narratives to the forefront and it has done so not only through paradigm shifts in content but also through experimentation with form (2005). They imply that diegesis is part of this experimentation, both in the more general arguments they make about formal experimentation and the use of hybrid dramatic forms in the works of playwrights and theatre makers they profile including Hannie Rayson, Joanna Murray Smith and Katherine Thomson, but also more specifically in their analysis of the work of Jenny Kemp. In analysing Kemp's *The Call of the Wild* (1989) they note how the amalgamation of dialogue and monologue in a 'vocal choreography' produces 'a sense of intense simultaneity' (71). They argue that Kemp's work equates image, space and action with the spoken word and that it is in this context, of a poetic rendering of female subjectivity in the *mise en scène*, that they specifically observe the use of the diegetic in Kemp's creations.

Thus, Australian theatre through Kemp's body of work has become a place in which women, or the multiple aspects of the female self, can give flight to the unconscious patterns and rhythms of their desires for a different world (108).

In noting how Kemp uses the diegetic within a poetically conceived *mise en scène*, Fensham and Varney implicate the unruly narrator and its capacity to disrupt traditional dramatic form.

Peta Tait explores how genre and feminism are 'inextricably connected', particularly through the 'interactions of female bodies transgressing culturally defined boundaries of behaviour' (1994: 3). Tait conceptualises theatre as a social space in which cultural and individual identities are explored physically, comically, structurally, spatially and representationally (2). Of crucial importance to Tait is the notion that gender as a category is unstable, which in turn invites a concept of identity as multiple and changing. It is from this post structuralist position that she examines feminist theatre in Australian in the 1980s and 1990s, including its use of narrating. While her focus is on the connections between form, structure, physicality and their roles in the production of meaning, she finds Brecht's 'gestus' problematic in that his questioning of relationships between language and class in theatre failed to acknowledge gendering as a process of subjectivity (13).

In her detailed analysis of Melbourne-based The Home Cooking Company and its various productions in the 1990s, Tait notes how its performers broke down traditional dramatic sensibilities by experimenting with theatrical form, including narration, in order to explore and express feminist concepts.

Its efforts to locate a dynamic female subject in a theatre text which has neither plot nor characters but is still a thematic and structural whole represents a significant artistic and aesthetic shift in Australian women's theatre (174).

According to Tait, key to this company's experimentation is the treatment of language as something expressive, rather than as an element within traditional dramatic structures.

Spoken language is used like a soundscape, which reinforces the physical actions of the performers. The verbal text creates a layer of associated rather than interpretative significance surrounding the physical actions (181).

Tait notes the opportunities solo performances, including monologues, afford women performers. As well as offering economic advantages, one-woman shows provide an opportunity for women to be more in control of the work they produce and to explore multiple identities (84). Again, there is the suggestion here of the unruly narrator and its capacity to produce the multiple and the simultaneous.

In her revisioning of Australia drama within a postcolonial framework, Helen Gilbert notes narrating as a means by which time, space and body can challenge our historical thinking about otherness.

Self referentially, storytelling in theatrical contexts foregrounds the role of the audience in describing orality, as it nearly always situates viewers and/or listenings on the stage as well as in the auditorium (1999:93).

Gilbert includes narrating in a broad category of metatheatrical interventions that help rethink the very nature of theatrical representation itself (169).

2.4.3 Dissenting Re-Arrangements

In *Transfigured Stage: Major Practitioners and Theatre Aesthetics in Australia* (McCallum 2009)

Margaret Hamilton applies postdramatic theories to her study of experimental theatre in Australia through

the 1980s and 1990s and also situates these developments in an international paradigm. Hamilton's main thesis is that companies such as The Sydney Front and practitioners such as Jenny Kemp, represented a fundamental break from traditional dramatic theatre in Australia, and that this break can be located in the way their productions appropriated bodies, spaces and texts. Her project is to articulate these forms of theatre as new.

Hamilton's work is significant because, like the theatre she examines, it too traverses new territory. Gone is the focus on identity politics that was crucial to so much theatre analysis of the mid to late twentieth century in Australia. Instead, there is an assumption (not entirely stated), that the aesthetic of these ground breaking works is itself political, in the sense that it challenged long held conventions about what theatre should do with narratives, bodies and spaces.

This thesis enters into the conversation started by Hamilton, and with her argues for a focus on contemporary theatre that is in a process of breaking away from the dramatic, without it disappearing from the stage entirely. I argue that one of the ways in which this theatre is negotiating this break is with a mixed use of narrating. Narrating is generative, reflexive, disruptive and confusing. It is part of the *mise en scène* of the production as much as it promotes the narrative. It is at once an embodied and spatialised practice, as it is a way of moving linear time. Breaking up, however, is hard to do. The productions examined in this thesis suggest that the break from the dramatic is far from complete. On the contrary, they depend upon this very conflict, and produce stories out of it.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has reviewed dramaturgies of narrating in European theatre and has surveyed key theories and critiques in two major bodies of scholarship: theatre studies and narratology. It has done so by examining some of the key thinkers in these fields. This approach has enabled me to engage with their work in a detailed way, and in so doing identify points of difference and departure that have in turn helped clarify my own critical thinking.

For a good part of the twentieth century, narrating was largely investigated as a written phenomenon. With a few exceptions, narratological research into fictional worlds has been mainly literary, influenced by structuralists such as Vladimir Propp (1968), Gerard Genette (1988) and Roland Barthes in his earlier work (1967). Even then, its interest in drama and the dramatic has been minimal, with a refusal to acknowledge narrators in theatre. Now that narratologists have begun looking to the performative, they have opened up rich debates about the status of narrators in theatre performance. Of particular relevance for this thesis is Monika Fludernik's concept of narrativity, which sees audiences as having the cognitive

capacity to co-create, and Brian Richardson's dynamic and disruptive conception of narrators, which untethers character from voice.

From the late twentieth century theatre studies have noted narrating as a means of challenging fixed narratives of gender, sexuality, identity and race. Australian feminist theatre scholars recognise that 'telling bodies' can produce a transgressive aesthetic that unsettles conventional hierarchy. More recently, European theatre studies have begun investigating storytelling in theatre as both a subject *and* a strategy. There remains a tendency in theatre studies, however, to pursue postmodern concerns with the fluidity of meaning, the fragmentation of the subject and historical accounts of drama's demise. The problem with this often-relativistic approach is that it can fail to take into account specific tensions between opposing forms in theatre, and the holistic narratives these tensions can produce.

I argue that one of the ways Australian theatre invigorates itself is through a use of narrating that is thick with purpose. It puts the mode to work in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways, both as a means of supporting representational cause and effect poetics and as a way of disrupting it through description, play and image. This capacity of narrating to both support and disrupt dramatic structure, and to in turn produce narrative out of these sometimes-intrusive activities, is a central feature of the case studies in this thesis.

CHAPTER 3: THEORY, TERMS AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I provided a brief dramaturgical history of narrating in European theatre, and summarized the contemporary research conversations about narrating in theatre performance and narrative studies. In doing so, I established the need for this performance mode to be researched further in Australian theatre, within the context of theatre aesthetics.

In this chapter, I explain the design of this thesis. I describe the theory I have drawn on to shape its argument and the key terms and definitions I have used that sustain it. I then detail and defend my use of case study and practice-as-research (PaR) research methods.

3.2 Theorising Narrators

The main argument of this thesis is that the theatre narrator in contemporary Australian theatre splits into two different identities: the ‘orderly narrator’ that supports dramatic structure and the non-dramatic ‘unruly narrator’ that disrupts cause and effect storytelling by using image, language and sound in playful ways to unsettle relations between showing and telling, character and voice, and action and passivity. The co-existence of these two different narrators produces performance narratives.

In developing this argument for co-existing frameworks of operation I have been influenced by the work of post-structuralist thinker, Jacques Rancière, and his theories of artistic practice. In this section, I profile his theory relevant to this thesis, outline its application, explain how it helps delineate my arguments, but also argue its limits.

Rancière’s starting point is simple: everyone speaks and everyone thinks (Hallward 2005: 26). These capacities, and what they produce, are then either controlled and limited, or shared. At the heart of Rancière’s philosophy is what he terms ‘the distribution of the perceptible’ (*le partage du sensible*) (2004: 39). Importantly, the French term ‘partage’ has two meanings: to partition and to share (Tanke 2011: 2). Rancière’s ‘partage’ describes how objects and phenomena are structured to be seen or unseen, heard or unheard. The ‘partage’ also determines how perception is thought about: it shapes what is deemed possible and impossible. In other words, the ‘partage’ deals with how we perceive or sense something *and* how we make sense of it, how things appear and how their appearance is thought about and ordered. Participation in the world is governed through the sharing and exclusion of perception. In this, we see a key relationship in his thought between what he terms the ‘police’ (2010: 95), the mechanism that orders and categorises perception and what he argues is the true meaning of ‘political’: the appearance or speech of those who have no part in the policed order (2010: 37). That which has no

part is deemed illegitimate on the one hand, and acquires political agency on the other. This relationship between the police and the political extends throughout Rancière's thought.

The distribution of the perceptible underpins Rancière's theory of artistic practice. He posits three historical regimes or modes of sensible thinking about art: the ethical, which he draws from Plato's arguments on image making; the representational, which he locates in Aristotle's *Poetics*; and the aesthetic, which he traces back to the literary revolution of the early nineteenth century in Europe (2010: 37).

Rancière's regimes, like Michel Foucault's epistemes (Foucault 2002: 168), describe general bodies of knowledge and the rules and capacities that limit them. They structure fields of perception and experience and govern visual, verbal and textual arrangement. However, Rancière differentiates his epistemic approach from Foucault in several key ways. Unlike Foucault's epistemes, Rancière's regimes are both historical *and* ahistorical. While the thinking that underlies them can be traced to key thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle or Schiller, they are not mutually exclusive or historical in the way they operate but instead intermingle with each other (Rockhill 1998: 7). This co-existence and interrelating of artistic regimes is key to the way I theorise the operation of narrators in contemporary Australian theatre. They can support traditional hierarchical poetic structures *and* depart from them, within the one performance.

Rancière takes as his starting point for the ethical regime, Plato's critique of imitation and the place image making should have in the community. According to Rancière, Platonic thought promotes a particular ethical relationship with images by subordinating art to the needs of the community (2004:16). Examples that might illustrate Rancière's thinking could be theatre-in-education (TIE) practices, in the way they rationalise performance according to the requirements of educational curriculum, or community theatre that justifies its operations according to the requirements of a particular community's ethos.

Rancière traces the representational regime to Aristotle's *Poetics* and argues that it responds to Plato's rejection of theatre by proposing a system of representation that restricts the practice of imitation to serious actions performed by worthy subjects (32). In this way, so Rancière argues, Aristotle can justify theatre as having an ethical purpose. This system prioritises the fable or plot. The visibility of the theatre is reserved for the transmission of speech, which in turn supports a story. The representational regime regulates the imitations of action, character, genre and the ideal of the spoken word. Characters speak according to predetermined type and character development and language are subordinated to the requirements of action. In the representational regime, according to Rancière, one can assess the effectiveness of a work by how well it represents a story of certain types of characters pursuing certain

types of actions, and how effectively a plot arranges actions and withholds information in order to produce emotion (17).

For Rancière the representative regime safeguards the forms of poetic mimesis from the Platonic suspicion of imagery as artifice.

...Poetry (Aristotelian poetics) owes no explanation for the 'truth' of what it says because ... it is not made up of images or statements, but fictions, that is to say arrangements between actions. The other consequence that Aristotle derives from this is the superiority of poetry, which confers a causal logic on the arrangement of events, over history, condemned to presenting events according to their empirical disorder (36).

Rancière's reading of Aristotelian poetics accords with the definition of the dramatic I have framed above, in its emphasis on the arrangement of cause and effect action or fictional plot over character and speech. However, it usefully highlights the degree to which plot and genre constrain speech and image in this order or regime of sensibility: they are governed by the requirement that things not be revealed too much, too soon, in order to produce pathos. Rising conflict, fuelled through reversals and recognition, move the narrative before all else. Characters must be motivated in order to act, and their speech must reveal the conflict that propels their action. Unmotivated speech is irrelevant. Behaviours that are out of character must somehow be rationalised in terms of the dramatic story being represented. In addition to all this, Rancière's concept of the 'partage' frames the dramatic as a way of partitioning what can be seen, heard and thought, and how it does this hierarchically. Speech follows character, and character supports action. This way of thinking continues to govern the way live and mediated dramatic text and performance is thought about. In many instructional texts on playwriting and screenwriting for instance, action remains the guiding principle for narrative making.¹⁰

It is Rancière's insistence on the hierarchical nature of the representational regime that I find particularly useful in framing the orderly narrator. The appearance and speech of the orderly narrator is primarily judged against the needs of the dramatic plot. This is why, when Mari Lourey was developing her play *Bare Witness*, she was told by a dramaturge with whom she was working to 'show' the dramatic action through dialogue, rather than have characters 'tell' stories (2011).

As the case studies in this thesis will illustrate, there are essentially three ways in which orderly narrators function, in order to preserve dramatic integrity. They may provide information essential for the action to proceed, either through privileging the audience with observations or revelation, moving the story to

¹⁰ Robert McKee subtitles his popular how-to-write manual *Story* as 'substance, structure, style', and draws heavily on Aristotelian principles of action (1997).

another time or place, revealing events beyond the stage or by directing the audience's attention to a particular part of the stage. In other words, they organise the fabula of the dramatic structure. For instance, I used the rapid fire announcement of places, times and characters in *P.O.V. Dave* to speed up the dramatic action (Maloney 2012a). Secondly, orderly narrators will sometimes challenge the audience to rethink their values. Such challenges can take place without disrupting the dramatic shape of the story, as Lehmann has remarked in relation to Brechtian theatre.¹¹ Thirdly, they can reveal internal character conflict through monologue or soliloquy, in order to heighten dramatic tension. The timing of these moments is critical. The Old Man's revelation in *Beyond the Neck* of what he saw on the day of the shootings at Port Arthur, and the traumatic effect it had, is a crucial moment in the play's tragic structure (2012).

Rancière opposes the discourse of the representational and its emphasis on units of action, with the aesthetic regime. The term 'aesthetic' has several meanings in contemporary cultural criticism. It has been considered within a Marxist framework as inextricably linked to the ideologies that shape the practice and reception of art (Eagleton 1990:3). It can also describe a particular relationship between art and life. For scholar Isobel Armstrong, the aesthetic is a form of life itself, an experience common to all and grounded in play, thought and affect. In *The Radical Aesthetic*, Armstrong aims to recoup the aesthetic as a creative and cognitive practice:

... the components of aesthetic life are those that are already embedded in the processes and practices of consciousness - playing and dreaming, thinking and feeling. Or, put another way, ceaseless mediation endows language-making and symbol-making, thought, and the life of affect, with creative and cognitive life (2000: 2).

There are echoes of nineteenth century Romanticism in Armstrong's description, especially in the aesthetic as play. Friedrich Schiller's argument, that '...Man only plays when he is in the full sense of the word a man, and he is only wholly Man when he plays (2004: 80)', is not far away. Like Armstrong (and Schiller), Jacques Rancière uses the 'aesthetic' to refer to a transcendent experience, one rooted in individual play. However, he also reinvents the term by locating it historically, as a form of thinking about art that began in the early nineteenth century and continues today. Ushered in by Romantic literature, the aesthetic regime for Rancière equalizes subjects and promotes an independence of style. Art discovers the ordinary and takes freely from life, but at the same time it requires new forms to separate it

¹¹ In the interviews I did with writers and directors, drama is barely mentioned as a method or genre with which they were working, although many of the problems they discussed in the making of their work were essentially dramatic, such as motivating characters and building conflict. Also, dramatic elements are present in much of their work. In *Bare Witness* (2010), *Beyond the Neck* (2011) and *P.O.V. Dave* (2013), events force characters to make decisions they would not normally make, and in so doing, they heighten internal, interpersonal and extra personal conflict. In each play, through cause and effect and conflict, stories progress from a beginning (the character's world is established and an inciting incident forces the character into conflict with herself and others), through a middle and onwards to a predetermined end. In these plays, knowledge is withheld and then revealed to produce an emotional effect.

from life. It breaks with the Aristotelian causal sequence of action 'according to necessity and plausibility' (2004: 34). In the aesthetic regime, language frees itself from the rules of fiction, genres are dismantled and narratives freely circulate through diverse places and publics. The principle of decorum, or taste, is overturned by an indifference to style. So, to follow Rancière, we can watch the American theatre company, Nature Theatre of Oklahoma's *Life and Times* (2013), which performs, verbatim, the content of a telephone interview with one of its company members about her life from young childhood onwards and we can apprehend the way in which the performers enact a subject's life through song, movement and image. Instead of dramatic conflict there is playful repetition and in place of crisis there is an increasing intensity in the choric delivery. While this work relies on ordinariness and fidelity to fact, its presentation is highly artificial. Rancière defines the aesthetic paradoxically:

The aesthetic regime asserts the absolute singularity of art and, at the same time, destroys any pragmatic criterion for isolating this singularity. It simultaneously establishes the autonomy of art and the identity of its forms with the forms that life uses to shape itself (2004: 22-23).

In other words, art takes from the world around it, but to do so, it must become something other than that from which it takes, but there is no longer any privileged medium for it to do so in.

In the aesthetic, art's meaning remains unsettled and cannot be fully decided: while art itself is not autonomous, our experiences of it are. This regime of art presupposes a gap or interval between itself and the spectator. This is no accounting for the way in which a work of art will be perceived or considered. Aesthetic art distances itself from the representational logic that attempted to determine the effects a work would have on its spectators. Art creates a gap between sense and the meanings made from it, and through this arrangement, produces new, unanticipated capacities. More so, the aesthetic regime invalidates normative meaning attributed to bodies, spaces and language. Because of this, it is political (2004: 8). Rancière's concept of the political is grounded in an impossibility. The political occurs only when those without authority appear or speak. Politics has no proper place or natural subjects (Rancière 2010:38). The political is that which challenges a consensual arrangement of voice and image. Therefore, those least 'empowered' by the state to speak are those with the greatest political capacity (2004: 97). It is this conception of the political, as something that intrudes into the state of image and sound, which ties it to the aesthetic. The political and the aesthetic are two sides of the one dissenting moment. The state, or what Rancière terms the police, exerts authority by partitioning what can, and what cannot, be seen and heard, shown and said (93). Unauthorised appearance or speech intrudes. Or to put it another way, the aesthetic introduces dissent, or disagreement, into the world of shared appearances and meanings.

In his articulation of the aesthetic regime, Rancière has informed my construction of the unruly narrator in three ways.

- Disruptive play: Unruly narrators play with the distinctions between telling and showing, and disrupt correspondences between action, character and speech, which are fundamental to dramatic structure. Their speech is not required to represent character motivation in order to propel conflict, but can exist as an expression of language in its own right. In so doing, they refuse to prioritise the representation of action and dramatic story, which as Rancière argues, sits at the heart of traditional poetics (2004: 17).
- Free association: In all of the productions I analyse, narrators are, at times, part of a free association of forms. For instance, the main narrator in Ranters' *Intimacy* moves back and forth between live and mediated performance. This association makes little sense dramatically because this movement is not motivated by conflict. Unruly narrators may describe qualities, create vocal effects or simply observe in ways that have nothing to do with dramatic action. When the characters in *Bare Witness* line up to tell the audience about their small pleasures, their language, their choreographed bodies, the images they produce, the way they are lit and the music that accompanies their poetic reflections become important, rather than the dramatic narrative from which they have temporarily departed. So while they are telling us something, they are showing themselves as well. They make a sudden, unmotivated appearance, display a temporary indifference to the play's dramatic narrative and playfully and poetically describe memory and sensation. This capacity of the unruly narrator to freely arrange itself on stage can be understood through Rancière's idea that in the aesthetic regime, there is no privileged medium or normative criterion for the use of form.¹²
- Autonomous perception: Rancière argues that while there are paradoxical relations between art and life, our experience of the aesthetic is autonomous.¹³ There is no accounting for the way spectators will receive a performance, yet theatre will at times be predicated on the need to inform and educate the audience. For instance, narrating in Brechtian style theatre has often been accepted as a means to somehow empower the audience with knowledge. While Brecht's theatre has often been interpreted as political, I argue that his use of narrating in what he initially termed 'epic theatre' is predicated on the belief that the audience is passive and in need of education (Brecht 1964c: 71). In Rancierian terms, this use of speech fails to have a political effect because it requires the audience to accept a predetermined schema for examining the world, and thus disempowers them from forming their own perspectives.¹⁴ It stultifies.¹⁵ Rancière's conception of the aesthetic provides a means of differentiating between a theatre

¹² In Rancière's aesthetic regime, art is singular, free from hierarchies, normative subjects or genres (2004: 14).

¹³ The spectator in Rancière's aesthetic regime is an active translator and interpreter of what they see and hear (2009: 22).

¹⁴ For Rancière, Brecht's theatre is pedagogical (2004: 14).

¹⁵ Rancière uses the term 'stultification' to oppose emancipation. To stultify is to adopt a position of mastery over another, in order to maintain inequality (2009: 9).

that overtly expresses political content and a theatre that is political by virtue of its intrusive and dissenting nature, and which allows meaning to remain unsettled and subject to disagreement. For Rancière, speech is truly political when it opens up unanticipated possibilities. It is this conception of the aesthetic that helps me distinguish between the Brechtian narrator, which I argue remains orderly in the way it serves the needs of Brecht's polemic, and the unruly narrator, which is not tied to a predetermined narrative and instead, allows for a more imaginative response. Rancière's configuration of the aesthetic regime assumes spectators perceive and think in their own way, and it acknowledges as inevitable the unpredictability such freedom produces. In Rancière's thinking, the political is not a self-conscious political statement, but an intrusion into an existing order that opens up unexpected possibilities of seeing, hearing and thinking.

Of course, drawing on another's frame of reference to help articulate an argument runs the risk of using terminology as a form of evidence. In this regard, art critic Hal Foster raises a fundamental concern about Rancière's philosophy by questioning the usefulness of the regime as an epistemological concept. Foster notes that regimes and their like have the habit of turning themselves into agents in their own right. In Foster's mind, they risk lacking any real grounding in historical fact (2013). He argues that such observations can explain a lot and a little at the same time, that they can be 'so general as to appear at once momentous and obvious' (Foster 2013: 15).

Foster is right to warn against the circulatory nature of epistemic theories. In using Rancière's concepts, I have been mindful not to make universal claims. Instead, I have used them as a means of further articulating the results of the explorations I have made of specific works. However, regarding Foster's criticism of generality, I argue that Rancière goes to great trouble to locate his regimes historically. He anchors the beginnings of the aesthetic regime in the work of early nineteenth century novelists such as Balzac and Flaubert, who in their writing discovered a paradoxical relationship between purity and worldliness (Rancière 2004: 57-60).

Foster also argues that art is no match for the way in which capitalism manipulates images and signs and in effect, he claims that Rancière's 'aesthetic' is a lie (15). Far from having the ability to disrupt, Foster maintains that 'aesthetic' acts have no agency to disrupt the distribution of the perceptible, which is the term Rancière assigns to the mechanism with which culture both shares, and excludes, what is visible and heard (2004: 7).

On the one hand, Foster's nihilist position on capitalism leaves no room for thinking about the transformative power the mundane and the ordinary might have on our perceptions. It is one thing for a narrator in a self-conscious political gesture to unveil the workings of capitalism or attempt to shock us

with its horrific effects and proclaim that all is broken and beyond repair. It is quite another thing to represent the experiences of capitalist life in such intense, poetic detail, or play with mechanisms by which the sharing of perception is governed, so as to allow for the possibility of a shift in perception.

However, Foster's critique does raise an important question: how enduring might such a shift be? In celebrating dissent and ambiguity as essential features of egalitarianism, and with an emphasis on play as a means of staging politics and disruption, Rancière's philosophy presents certain risks, not least of all a refusal of certainty. Art in Rancière's aesthetic regime relies on blurring the boundaries between what it is, and what it is not. Actors can play with assumptions and presuppositions about where and who they are, and it is this 'play' that becomes the stuff of art itself:

The life of art in the aesthetic regime of art consists precisely of...playing one linkage between art and non-art against another such linkage (2002:150).

This is also Rancière's point of departure from Plato. Where Plato railed against ambiguity,¹⁶ Rancière promotes it as emancipatory. Put simply, Rancierian freedom lies in our capacity to dissent, fragment and declassify. As he states:

Equality is the power of inconsistent, disintegrative and ever-replayed division (2002: 150).

Emancipation is momentary and improvised. Categorical certainty, not to mention planning, practice and skill, have little place in Rancière's thinking. Yet theatre, if it is to be staged successfully, must draw on category and certainty at some point in its presentation. By the same token, theatrical narration, if it is to have impact, needs to be categorical in its purpose, planned in its staging, well-rehearsed in its timing and overall impact, and repeatable. On the other side of the lights, a well-crafted speech can sometimes feel like a special event. It can galvanise opinion and give rise to an enduring consensus about the truth it seems to bear. What then for play, dissent and disintegration? Or as Peter Hallward pointedly asks, how consequential is Rancière's project without decisive commitment (Hallward 2006:8)? Indeed, this thesis defends the categories of the orderly and the unruly narrators in order to pursue its argument. As will be shown, the problems Rancière's concepts of play, inconsistency, fragmentation and division present have particular relevance to the critical analysis of my play, *P.O.V. Dave*, in Chapter 7. While Rancière's thinking allows a productive critique of the play, it also has its limits. In the play, unruly narrating resists the oppressive culture of the play's world by being indeterminate and ambiguous, but how consequential is this resistance? As well, the play's final moments present an ethics of narrating that Rancière's thought fails to accommodate.

¹⁶ In *Republic*, Plato argued that ambiguity and doubling prevented us from knowing true beauty (1970:154).

3.3 Terms

There are two terms that are central to the argument of this thesis: ‘narrating’ and ‘dramatic structure’. Below, I define each of these in detail.

3.3.1 Narrating and Narrators

‘To narrate’ is generally defined as the act of giving a spoken or written account (Stevenson 2010). It comes from both an early 15th century French word, ‘*narraçion*’, which means an account, statement, a relating, recounting or narrative tale, and it was at times used as a legal term. It also comes from the Latin *narrare*, which again means to tell, relate, recount and explain, and this in turn comes from the root *gnarus*, which means ‘knowing’ (Onions 1966). Narrating then is to tell *and* to know, although it could be added that there are also associations between truth and narrating, given its legal uses.

Traditional European theatre equates narrating with diegesis and following Aristotle, opposes it to acting, mimesis or direct imitation (Elam 2005). Patrice Pavis provides a more nuanced definition. While he accepts the limited role narrators play in dramatic theatre, he widens his definition to include the epic character-narrator that addresses the audience through commentary, summary, transition and song, character as chorus, the narrator as a master of ceremonies and the ‘actor-narrator’ who can share with the audience the *fabula*¹⁷ of the performance and a perspective on characters (1998: 234).

Pavis’ definition is useful in that it embraces the complexity of narrating in theatre performance, while at the same time it conforms to the basic definition of narrating as telling. Narrators tell us what is happening, or has occurred, or tell us to reconsider what we are seeing. As masters of ceremony they can also tell us what to see and hear. However, there are two things to consider in Pavis’ definition. Firstly, even though narrators tell us about events, they do not necessarily tell stories. ‘Narrating’ and ‘storytelling’ are often treated synonymously, and narrators are typically considered storytellers. There are, however, subtle but important differences. A story, as Jahn argues, requires characters as well as events (2005). While a narrator can tell the audience that ‘it is four o’clock’, this is not in itself a story, unless the narrator ascribed a clock striking four with agency, or we were told that someone had struck the clock. For this reason, I treat storytelling as something narrators do not necessarily do. This telling/storytelling distinction is important. Even though narrating has often been accepted as synonymous with the epic, narrating in contemporary theatre not only tells story but also at times deliberately subverts it. For instance, in Ranters’ *Intimacy* (2011), performers deliberately leave stories unfinished and fragmented, something I explore in more detail later on. Secondly, narrating and describing have an uneasy relationship historically, but one that is central to this thesis. Chatman notes

¹⁷ Pavis provides a complex definition of *fabula* as either material anterior to the play’s composition or as the narrative structure of the story (1998: 138). Narratologist Mieke Bal defines the *fabula* more simply as the chronological arrangement of events that is then arranged into a story (2009: 76).

that classical tradition considered description secondary or derivative to narrating, and that it got in the way of story (1990: 23). Certainly, traditional theatrical narrators serve the progress of dramatic action, which does not tolerate lengthy description. However, contemporary theatre is full of narrators who relate not just the sequence of events, but describe qualities, and often do so in order to suspend dramatic action.

Classical narratology treats narrating as a textual instance (Genette 1980: 27) and this bias presents a problem for investigating narrating in theatre performance. Theatre is a complex process developed over time, sometimes involving the writing and redrafting of texts, research, development, rehearsal, conversations, design and performance (Worthen 2008). When performed, plays become part of a complex exchange between text and performance (Turner 2009). What exists on the page will become something quite different in a performance space and in turn, affect the way the play text is subsequently understood (Tomlin 2009). Texts produce ideas, which in turn shape bodies on stage. Narrating in theatre then, is not simply a textual instance. It is also an embodied and spatialised performance. To return to the example of the clock, a play text may call for a narrator to announce the time to the audience. On the page, the narrating instance may seem clear enough. However, when this is performed on stage, a whole host of decisions will come in to play. Perhaps the narrator is off stage and only their voice will be heard? While the text calls for a single male narrator to make the announcement, a chorus of women might do so in the performance. Maybe the announcement is not presented as a live moment at all, but a film of the chorus of women making the announcement of the time, which is then projected on stage. Nonetheless, the audience is still being told something.

In order to produce a coherent and systematic account of the way narrators present in contemporary Australia theatre, I define narrating as a textual, embodied or mediated function that tells about, or describes, things, people, events or stories to other performers and audiences. This definition is broad enough to take into account the varied ways in which narrating is used in traditional and contemporary theatre, while specific enough to differentiate it from other performance modes such as dialogue.

3.3.2 Drama/Dramatic

Dramatic structure (or ‘dramatic’ for short) is a term I use throughout this thesis to refer to a set of principles shaping the representation of action and plot in certain play texts and performances, which are encountered, negotiated, embraced or disputed, by theatre makers. In this section I want to clarify the use of the term, and to separate it out from the term ‘drama’, which traditionally refers to a literary genre.

The word ‘drama’ is Greek in origin and means ‘to do or act’ (Stevenson 2010). Of course, in popular, contemporary usage the terms ‘drama’ and ‘dramatic’ often merge, and can be applied to everything with heightened stakes, from politics to sport. Historically, however, ‘drama’ refers to a genre of play text first

conceived by 18th century philosopher Denis Diderot, to describe an emerging theatre that sat between traditional comedy and tragedy, a form he divided into three categories: ‘the serious genre’, ‘domestic middle class tragedy’ and ‘drama’. The latter focused on ‘domestic misfortune’ and extracted a moral from its narrative (2000: 194).¹⁸ Drama has been treated traditionally as a literary form, distinct from the making of dramatic performance (Aston and Savona 1991).

Peter Szondi theorises drama as an ‘absolute’ system that reproduces ‘interpersonal relations’, and he begins his genealogy of the form at the time of the Renaissance (1987: 195). Drama, for Szondi, is essentially literary, relational and represented through dialogue (197). It is ‘absolute’, in that it is forever in its own present and permits nothing to intrude into its world (196). Lehmann agrees with Szondi, to the extent that he argues drama is primarily textual and relies on a linear story involving a closed world of individual characters driven by conflict, staged over time and dependent on a resolution (2006: 30). He departs from Szondi, however, by maintaining that drama can occasionally breach conventions of closed dialogue by incorporating devices such as choruses, narrators, and interludes, including Brecht’s epic techniques, without losing its essential character or sacrificing its central tenets (22).

I follow the definition of drama as essentially text. However, I will use the term dramatic structure to refer to a set of principles that bridge text and performance. As Pavis notes, dramatic structure in its classical sense comprises an event that occurs in front of spectators and shapes it through crisis, development, denouement and catastrophe (1992:120). However, he makes the point that there is no longer any such thing as a universal dramatic shape. As he argues, what was considered dramatic up to the twentieth century is no longer an essential condition for a text to be staged (120).

Nonetheless, principles of dramatic structure, which align with Aristotelian poetics, continue to influence theatre making in Australia. These principles are clearly evident in three of the case studies presented in this thesis: the play texts of *Bare Witness*, *Beyond the Neck* and my own work, *P.O.V. Dave*, and in the development of these texts into theatre performances. This is not to say that these texts and performances are dramas. They are by no means ‘well-made plays’ in the sense that William Archer would have used the term (1912). Rather, they use dramatic elements to make theatre. They each, in their own way, pursue cause and effect narratives in which changes of circumstances, or turning points, force characters to act in ways they normally would not. In the process, these characters are shown to undergo profound change through moments of conflict and recognition. On occasions, these ‘dramatic’ stories are presented as closed, absolute events contained in dialogue. The other production examined in this thesis, *Ranters’ Intimacy*, uses these elements not so much to shape its narrative, as to provide a departure point. The production creates a narrative out of its active refusal of dramatic structure.

¹⁸ Diderot proposed that characters should be true to their ‘social station’, and this should serve as the basis for drama. Significantly, Diderot felt this new genre of drama should contain soliloquy, which would provide characters with the opportunity to reveal moral dilemma (2000: 196).

This is not to say that there is something essential about the notion of dramatic structure. As Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis illustrate, the ‘irreducible idea of the dramatic’ was a construct that held sway in European drama analysis of the mid twentieth century, but was subsequently challenged (2004:58). What I *am* saying is that, to a greater or lesser degree, there appears to be a reasonably consistent understanding, amongst the theatre makers and performances I reference in this thesis, of what dramatic structure means.

In the context of the above discussion, I will use the term ‘dramatic structure’, to refer to a set of specific correspondences between story, action, character, speech and story information that can be identified in both play texts and performances. Dramatic structure:

- concerns the telling of a fictional story over time, in which characters and events conspire to use internal, interpersonal and extra personal conflict to produce relational changes. It depends upon ‘in-betweens’: between internal life and external event, between the present and the future to come, and between character and action.
- prioritises action. Characters are acted upon and must also act to alter and resolve their circumstances.
- uses strategies such as set-ups and pay-offs to manipulate story information in order to produce emotional effects such as irony, curiosity and suspense.
- uses dialogue as a principle means of revealing action.
- organises itself categorically and hierarchically. Speech and character serve the needs of action, and action is segmented into variously named sections that introduce the dramatic problem, heighten it and resolve it.
- opens out to the audience on various occasions through various narrating techniques, but these are assessed according to how well they serve the needs of dramatic action.

3.4 Research Methods

In order to show how contemporary Australian theatre invigorates itself through experiments with narrating as a performance mode, I chose to explore narrating in two ways. Using a case study approach I studied three separate productions that occurred between 2010 and 2012, each of which used narrating distinctively. In addition to this, I wrote and produced my own play, *P.O.V. Dave* (2012a), with narrating as the predominant mode of performance. I framed this production with a practice as research (PaR) methodology. The seventh chapter in this thesis is a critical study of how my play's development and performance respond to the research question.

3.4.1 Case Studies

This research project began by asking how contemporary Australian theatre makers use narrating to produce performances. Implicit in this question is the assumption that narrating is not only a textual instance, nor just an event: it is also an embodied performance practice, developed collaboratively over time within specific productions, and influenced by a range of ideas and constraints.

These assumptions suggested a case study methodology. This approach favours investigations of contemporary phenomenon within a real life context, in which the boundaries between the phenomenon under study and the context in which it occurs are indeterminate, and several sources of evidence are used (Yin 2014). It acknowledges the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project through exploring in depth, multiple perspectives (Simmons 2009). In addition, it allows a phenomenon to be studied both as both process and event (Meyrick 2014).

I was curious to know how theatre makers thought about narrating, applied it and what challenges it posed. In doing so, I wanted to approach narrating in all its manifestations: as a written text, as a received theory or idea, as a problem, image and speech, and to be aware of complex interactions between writing and performance (Worthen 2008). As a performance mode, narrating is entangled with other activities, constraints and goals and it is impossible to extract it completely from the bodies that received it as an idea, think about it and perform it, or the space and time in which its development and performance occurs. As well, the making of a performance is itself composed of narratives. Theatre makers have stories to tell about how they develop and present performance, over time.

To explore these entanglements and histories, I researched specific productions by interviewing writers, performers and directors, and analysing play texts, performances and reviews. I used a combination of ethnographic interviews and performance analysis. Interviews were semi-structured, using a questionnaire that encouraged writers, directors and performers in each production to discuss how they experienced using narrating as a performance mode, but allowed room for interviewees to also contribute freely and make observations and insights that a more structured interview may have inhibited. I was wary of isolating narrating as a category, and discouraging observations about how it is interconnected with other performance elements.¹⁹

I also observed performances as an audience member and drawing on a performance analysis approach developed by Gay McAuley (1998), I noted the delineation of the performance space, audience and actor relationships, stage design and the segmentation of narrative content, with specific attention to the use of

¹⁹ I had aimed to interview Daniela Farinacci from *Bare Witness* but she was unavailable. However, I was able to source an interview she did with an educational website about the production, and I reference this in the case study.

narrating. I coded these observations, along with the interview transcripts, to produce categories and themes, from which I then drew my argument and theory.

Such an approach deepened my enquiry by producing additional questions about how narrating related to other modes of performance, how it sat within the *mise en scène* and how it posed creative problems for writers, directors and performers, and it led me to theorise that there was not one, but two, narrating figures in contemporary Australian theatre.

I chose four contrasting productions. They differ in the way they were developed, produced and presented. *Bare Witness* (2010) began its life as a script that was developed over two years, and was then rehearsed over another year. It then went on to be given a revival. *Intimacy* (2011) was developed out of a close collaboration between performers, writer and director, a style that the company Ranters has developed over a period of years. *Beyond the Neck* received two different productions (2007, 2009) prior to the Red Stitch season (2012) that is the focus of the case study in this thesis. My own work, *P.O.V. Dave* (2012b), began as a response to the way in which the media handled the outing of the then NSW Minister for Transport, David Campbell (Price 2010), with the intention of finding innovative ways of using narrating theatrically. Through several drafts, workshopping, dramaturgy and readings, it grew into a distinct and dynamic production that could not have been anticipated.

These case studies also differ in the way each of them includes narrating as a performance mode. *Bare Witness* uses narrating to document the reality of journalists working in war zones, moving across places and times and creating poetic moments out of story fragments. *Beyond the Neck* explores the differences between choric commentary and monologue. *Intimacy* uses storytelling to make the boundaries between theatre and life ambiguous and *P.O.V. Dave* uses story as both its subject and its strategy.

Case study methodology however, has its limitations. Case studies in, and of themselves, do not support generalised conclusions about the phenomenon under investigation (Thomas 2011). This thesis is composed of only four case studies and it does not make quantifiable claims about the use of narrating in Australian theatre, nor are these cases ‘samples’ of what might be a larger study. However, there is a difference between drawing statistical conclusions and making analytical generalisations (Yin 2014: 40). The latter approach allows case study research to theorise more broadly and to test the arguments drawn from the case studies in other contexts. This is the approach I take. In each of the case study chapters, I apply the argument I developed from the interviews and performance analysis to other contemporary theatre productions in order to test its validity and application. I also defend my argument by comparing it to rival theories.

3.4.2 PaR

My argument, that narrating in contemporary theatre is at times composed of two distinct narrators that can co-exist with each other in a state of productive tension, is also drawn from a practice-as-research (PaR) research enquiry. I began my research for this thesis by questioning how contemporary Australian theatre experimented with narrating. My play, *P.O.V. Dave* (2013), both as a text and a performance, is a practical response to a slightly different, though related, question: how can *I* experiment with narrating through theatre performance? The first question turned me towards others' work, while the second allowed me to respond to the same inquiry practically and collaboratively. The seventh chapter in this thesis comprises a critical commentary that examines how the writing, developing and performing of *P.O.V. Dave* addressed my practical interest in narrating, from its initial drafts, workshops and dramaturgical conversations, through to a collaborative process with a director and performers and its eventual presentation in the form of a workshopped reading. The play text and the video documentation of its workshop are included as appendices in this thesis.

Essentially this process I undertook is composed of three forms of knowing: intuitive practice, referencing external frames of knowledge and, developing new knowledge through reflection and argument. It involved a back and forth movement between making (creative writing), researching (reading and observing) and consolidation (reflective and argumentative writing). At times these activities overlapped each other, while at other times, one took priority over the other.

Practice as research (PaR) scholarship theorises the relationships between these three forms of knowing in various ways. Barbara Bolt proposes the term 'material thinking' to argue for a 'double articulation between theory and practice, whereby theory emerges from a reflexive practice at the same time as practice is informed by theory (2007: 29)'. My PaR experience bears out this claim to a certain extent, in the way I moved from intuitive, creative writing and collaborative discussion, to reflective and argumentative writing about my experience, and then back again. Bolt's 'double articulation' does not take account of the sometimes awkward and difficult ways in which I found myself moving from one form of knowing to another. Performance deadlines would take over from research and reflective writing. University reporting milestones at times demanded I shape my project rhetorically. Research would provoke a rethinking of argument.

Robin Nelson offers a slightly more nuanced approach by configuring intuitive practice, external referencing and reflection into a simple but elegant praxis model, in which he terms experiential, performative and tacit knowledge as 'know how', externally referenced conceptual frameworks and propositional knowledge as 'know that' and critical reflection as 'know what' (2006). I found Nelson's model of particular use. It acknowledges the way in which ideas take time to develop, but it also acknowledges the demands critically reflective writing make in an academic setting (63).

In my experience, however, the movement from ‘know how’, to ‘know that’ and to ‘know what’, was not simple. It involved a messy process of entanglement and unknotting. Early on I was faced with a decision as to whether to tether the writing to the research question, or allow it to take its own course for a period of time. I chose the latter. Although this produced a chaotic and uncertain period in the developing of the play, it did allow for certain moments of insight. Throughout all of this, I continue to be heartened by Graeme Sullivan’s assurance that for PaR to make good use of the relationship between creative and critical process, a certain amount of chaos and mystery is required (2009).

In writing my play, I applied a range of knowledge, some of which I referenced internally and some of which I derived from external sources. I brought a working experience of narrative structure to the project that had accrued through several years of professional television drama writing, and more recently theatre writing. As a playwright I have been interested in finding new ways of using narrating to create theatre performance. In addition to my own experience, my research into new forms of dramaturgy and play-making have influenced the way I developed the narrative, and this research has been pivotal to the play’s development *and* to the arguments that I have drawn from it. I depended heavily on my own intuitions to develop *P.O.V. Dave*, but it would not be what it is now without this external research. As well, my research into historical and contemporary scholarship allowed me to place my practice within a broader conversation and to contextualise my understanding of narrating historically. In addition, I workshopped several drafts of the play and engaged in a dramaturgical process over 12 months to develop the final draft in greater depth. In doing so, I referenced responses from the dramaturge and performers to gauge their responses to the material. Since the workshopped reading, I have reflected further on the play.

In the development of the play, my research methods changed according to the needs of the project. In the early stages, I produced a succession of drafts in order to crystallize the dramatic narrative and at the same time, kept a diary in which I recorded my observations and possibilities for further drafts. I also used the diary as a creative sandpit, in which I recorded character and plot development exercises. These early drafts and exercises were essentially dramatic in nature, with the aim of producing a logical cause and effect plot. Dramaturgical conversations and workshopping began with the fifth draft, and these helped shape the aesthetic qualities of the play, in particular the interplay of voices, times and places. In the later drafts, the dramatic and aesthetic uses of narrating grew more distinct. At the same time, and most excitingly, the differences between these two modes of performance produced the play’s themes, something that became even more apparent through the performance analysis I undertook of the play’s workshopped reading. In Chapter 7, in which I critically engage with *P.O.V. Dave*, I provide more detail on each of these methods and their application.

The critical commentary chapter takes account for the play’s creative development and its sometimes-fractious relationship with research and theory and in doing so, it will address two problems that I believe

sit at the heart of PaR methodology: timing and selection. Essentially, the movement from making, to referencing and to reflecting and arguing has produced a relationship between theory and practice that was always going to take time to develop. At first, the movement between creative practice, research and reflection was awkward and there was little apparent relationship between these modes of thinking. The early drafts of the play demanded a creative focus, with little room for critical reflection. It took four drafts for the play's narrative to start emerging. It was only then that I felt able to begin externally referencing other works and scholarship about narrating. As time went on, I began to realize that without this process of entanglement and unknotting, I would not have produced a cohesive creative project that I could then workshop, research and rewrite.

Secondly, the play has grown out of a complex combination of ideas, research and development and has become a dense weave of character, plot, themes and rhythms, and because of this it has been a challenge to know where to enter the process critically. On the one hand the commentary needed to acknowledge these complexities, yet on the other, if it was to be effective, it also needed to be highly selective and orientate itself back to the initial research question. To address all the play's influences and complexities would extend way beyond this particular chapter's limits.

The final chapter provides a critical analysis of my play, *P.O.V. Dave*, and its performance. It is, in a way, a prodigal tale. It engages with a draft that has emerged from three years of workshopping, redrafting, dramaturgy and performance. While initially tethered to a research question, it needed to wander if it was to ever find its own potential. As Brad Haseman argues, practitioner researchers do not 'merely think their way through or out of a problem, but practice towards a conclusion' (2007: 147). My argument, for a dynamic model of narrating that identifies two historical figures in tension with each other, grew out of a relationship between immersive creative practice, scholarly reading, reflective writing and argumentation. As the commentary interrogates the play, the play responds. This dynamic continues and part of this commentary acknowledges the dramaturgical conversations currently taking place between a director, a producer, a sound designer and myself as we move towards a full production of the play, later in 2015.

CHAPTER 4: *Bare Witness* - Narrating Motion and Rest

4.1 Introduction

As contemporary Australian theatre continues to challenge aesthetic categories, and to blur the boundaries between what is and what is not said and shown, narrators become more essential in enabling audiences to imaginatively engage with the confusions and paradoxes that such a project produces. Yet at the same time, they still perform a traditional function of supporting a cause and effect narrative. On the one hand, they disrupt, and on the other, they order. The orderly narrator preserves a cause and effect logic and helps the audience ‘make sense’ of what they see in story terms. Orderly narrators are actively engaged in a range of functions, both in terms of the narrative, and the ideology of the project. These narrators literally put things in order. As part of this ordering process, they move the action forward, either by noting what is taking place offstage, or moving us through time and place or directing the audience’s attention. They offer correspondences. Orderly narrators also invite judgment and verification. They compare what takes place on the stage with what occurs in the world. They critique theatre’s artificiality by alerting us to real events beyond its walls, or they verify the worldly truth of what is being represented on stage. By contrast the unruly narrator disrupts predetermined orders and structures. It does so through intense description and reflection, producing multiple and simultaneous perspectives and times, and also by simply presenting as an image.

In this case study of the theatre production *Bare Witness* (2010), we see both these narrators co-existing in very specific ways. We see them not only in the production’s performance, but also in its development and conceptualisation. *Bare Witness* was produced by La Mama theatre in Melbourne, and presented at Forty Five Downstairs in September 2010. It was written by Mari Lourey and directed by Nadja Kostich. It is both a presentation of a dramatic story using epic form and a highly abstracted, theatricalised experience. In this production, narrators intensify experiences for the audience but they also invite the audience to attend to a particular story logic and they validate the production by contextualising it historically.

Given its diverse forms of narrating, this production seems an appropriate place to begin this study. Monologues to the audience open and close the narrative, and also occur at regular intervals during the production in the form of messages, memory speeches and descriptions of simultaneous action. The production also presents additional advantages. Its dramaturgical history, which stretches back several years, tells of an on again/off again relationship with narrating as a performance mode. The writer, Lourey, initially conceived the production as a form of verbatim theatre, which she then rejected. Old

arguments of showing versus telling,²⁰ which typically frame the way in which orderly narrators are considered, influenced her decision to lose the narrating voice in the early stages of script's development. When the director and actors began workshopping the script, however, narrators staged a reappearance, but in a complex way, as both orderly and unruly (2011). The history of this production tells us much about the way performance conventions regarding narrating are shifting and evolving.

Like so much contemporary Australian theatre, *Bare Witness* blurs the boundaries between theatre, dramatic structure and performance. On the one hand it presents a traditional dramatic story, in which we follow the fate of the protagonist Danni, a war photographer, as she recalls the experiences that changed her life. On the other hand, it disrupts dramatic structure with other theatrical modes of presentation and at times, suspends the dramatic all together. This dichotomy, between the told and the presented, is reflected in the production's use of narrators. By telling stories based on, and sometimes about, real world events, narrators in *Bare Witness* educate the audience; they generated diverse points of view that allowed the narrative to move rapidly between places and times; and they assisted in the logical telling of the story. They also intensified experiences for the audience by producing intense description, multiple perspectives, complex use of time frames and poetic imagery.

In this chapter, I investigate the emergence of both the orderly and the unruly narrator in the development of *Bare Witness* and its production. I identify the orderly narrator's specific functions of compressing time and place, supporting story logic and correspondences between character and action, and verifying the narrative historically. I compare these functions with those of the unruly narrator, and explore how its unmotivated appearance makes relationships between character, voice and language ambiguous and how it participates in a free association of form. Finally, I explore how these two very different narrators co-exist.

Bare Witness' development history also demonstrates how the status and nature of a narrator or narrating in a performance text may clarify, strengthen or diminish in the development, workshopping or even rehearsal of the project. There is strong potential for narratological research to become more attuned to the shifts in narrative that such development creates.

Bare Witness tells the story of a young cadet photojournalist, Danni Hall, who grows bored with covering fashion assignments. She meets Jack, an Irish photographer, who gives her an opportunity to work as his 'stringer' or assistant, and she is quickly propelled into the confronting world of photojournalism in the Bosnian, East Timor and Iraqi wars. The play's three acts correspond to her experiences in each of these countries. The narrative pivots on one shocking event in which Danni is forced to photograph the

²⁰ The show/tell binary was popularised by Percy Lubbock (1954). He privileges showing over telling when he states that 'the art of fiction does not begin until the novelist thinks of his story as a matter to be shown, to be so exhibited that it will tell itself' (62).

assassination of a fellow journalist, Jacek. The play begins with Danni obliquely referencing this moment in a speech to the audience. She then steps back in time to recall the events leading up to it. Numbered photographs add form to the narrative. Starting with photograph 011 and counting backwards, they function as a frame of reference both for Danni and the audience as we move backwards in story time towards the incident. The full recounting of the assassination forms the play's climax.

4.2 Orderly Narrators

In much contemporary Australian theatre, orderly narrators help audiences to build a logical, cause and effect relationship with what is often a complex mix of genres and performance modes. In *Bare Witness* orderly narrators do this in three ways. Through direct address they compress events, places and times to allow the narrative to be told swiftly and clearly, they maintain a logical point of view and they historically validate the story.

4.2.1 Story Logic

It will help to understand how the orderly narrator operates in this production by further detailing the narrative and the story logic, which underpins it. *Bare Witness* is, in part, a war drama, and as with many narratives in this genre, it presents war as a combination of perpetual movement and heightened vigilance. Characters are in an endless state of negotiation with the world around them in order to keep moving. Stasis equates with failure and possible death. As war photographers, they are faced with a quandary. To photograph, one must be still and separate from one's subject. Yet to rationalise their profession, they must somehow fit it into a narrative of movement. Forks in the road, disputed intelligence from the frontline, calls from home, disappearances and reunions are all essential dramatic dilemmas in this type of narrative, and they play as such in this production.

The dramatic question each character faces in *Bare Witness* is not so much whether to continue, but how. As with many journey stories in general, once dramatic characters cross the threshold into the new world, there is no turning back.²¹ The protagonist's descent into danger is plotted across a series of landscapes. The more Danni reaches into the world, the starker and more dire her physical and emotional circumstances become, and the distance between her and the subjects of her photography diminishes until, in the final moment, she must photograph up close the death of the one she loved. *Bare Witness* depends heavily on this dramatic logic of forward motion. Typical Aristotelian techniques of structuring the action, reversals, recognitions and crisis shape the dramatic narrative (Aristotle 2000). Danni's career changes through a chance meeting. She reunites with fellow journalists. In various countries, she finds herself in difficult situations. Against extreme odds, Danni must continue on. Her conflicts are many. As

²¹ In a popular book on dramatic writing, *The Writer's Journey*, Christopher Vogler argues that once the threshold is crossed, the dramatic hero has no choice but to continue (2007).

a rookie, she has to prove her worth to her colleagues. As a daughter, she must refuse her mother's counsel. As a constant witness to death, she must subdue her feelings if she is to remain in motion. Like her colleagues, she soon learns that the nature of her job is migratory.

Activity equals survival (as it is so often the case in dramatic texts and performances). As Jack, one of Danni's fellow journalists confesses,

The minute you arrive somewhere you have to figure what's going on, how you're gonna get from point A to Point B, finding a good fixer, what you can eat, if the water's drinkable... (Lourey 2010: 7)

However, the characters can only find the capacity to extract some truth about the situation around them when they are still. Only then can they observe and reflect; yet to be still is to fail to change the affairs of the world. Telling becomes a passivity to be mourned. This is the paradox that this production presents and which it captures in narrating: to remain still in order to retell is both a failure to act, and a means of expression.

Nadja Kostich's direction produced highly physicalised performances that exploited the large performance space and reflected the characters' perpetual lines of psychological flight. The actors were present on stage at all times, prowling the shadows in an allusion to the restless pack-like mentality of journalists or producing frenetic, stylised movements that suggested the transient, dislocating and often dangerous environments in which they worked. Added to this was a lighting design by Emma Valente in which flashlights, fluorescents and light bulbs were manipulated by her and the actors throughout the performance, along with a dark, grating soundscape improvised by Jethro Woodward. The back wall of the space was covered with crumpled paper, onto which was occasionally projected the numbers of photographs together with Michael Carmody's animations of wolves. These became a constant metaphor of endless movement throughout the production. The play's scenography, like the dramatic narrative, is perpetual and unceasing in its activity.

4.2.2 Place and Time

As has been mentioned, the peripatetic lifestyle of war photographers is a central feature of the narrative. Orderly narrators help to represent this by naming the various locations in which the story occurs. Violette begins a monologue to the audience by announcing that she is in Georgia (8), and later Danni tells us that she finds Jacek in Baghdad (31).

The production also begins and ends with monologues addressed to the audience by the actor, Daniela Farinacci, who plays the character Danni Hall. The opening monologue combines complex point of view strategies along with a prolepsis (flash forward), that permit the narrative to rapidly move across locations and times. Danni's monologue also serves another dramatic purpose by jumping forward in time to provide a glimpse of the tragedy to come. This use of narrating to partially foreshadow an event is a time-honoured method for engaging curiosity and building suspense.²² Below, the opening monologue is reproduced, with each line numbered for easy reference. The text in italics is a description of the stage action as I observed it.

The lights dim to almost black. We see performers gather on stage. A single note sounds on a piano. Daniela Farinacci, who plays Danni Hall, speaks in character to the audience in the darkness.

1. My eyes are shut.
2. Photograph 011
3. You come to our country because you want to take good picture. Is that correct?

The numbers '011' are projected on the wall of paper at the back of the space. Danni continues:

4. Hello.

The lights flood the space. Downstage left, Danni stands facing the audience. About the space, leaning against the various pillars, are the other cast members. She says,

5. See it.

The lights fade quickly to black again. Danni adds,

6. Shall we leave them in the dark so no one will see it?
7. I just want to take great pictures.
8. Out of the wild, the wolves appear.
9. Hello?

²² William Archer, author of an early twentieth century 'how to' book for playwrights, grandly argues that foreshadowing is one of the 'great ends of craftsmanship' (1912: 319).

The lights then flash on and off, and the actors perform a series of choreographed movements, prowling animal-like through the space.

Another performer says, 'You manipulate the fucking image' (2).

Danni's opening speech is a fragmented reference to the final scene of the performance in which she is forced to witness and photograph the execution of a fellow journalist, Jacek, by militia in East Timor. It anticipates this event in a number of ways. The first line refers to the first of several photographs which will act as markers through the production, eventually finishing with Photograph 01, the one Danni is forced to take of her lover, and colleague, Jacek just before he is killed. In the second line, Danni recalls her desperate attempt to avoid witnessing the event. In the third line, Danni quotes one of her captors. In the fourth she gives a greeting she will use later on, when she arrives in a foreign town to take up a new assignment. The fifth line is Danni forcing herself to photograph Jacek just before he dies. The sixth line is Danni quoting a colleague, who in another scene defends his decision to adjust objects around a dead body to get a better photograph. The seventh is Danni defending her role as a photojournalist and the eighth is Danni introducing one of the key metaphors of the play. The ninth line is a repeat of the fourth.

As well as creating suspense, the way in which Daniela performs the monologue indicates to the audience that this production will move rapidly between times and places. The way she performs the line 'hello' is markedly different from the next line, 'see it'. 'Hello' is a tentative and slightly nervous greeting. 'See it' is an expression of despair and hopelessness. The contrast in the performances of each line signifies two very different sets of circumstances. That the performer can move so quickly from one to the other indicates to the audience that there will be an overall fluidity to the production as a whole and a rapidity with which it will alter time and location.

This is the orderly narrator at work. It serves the dramatic logic of a performance, which in this case is to withhold crucial story elements until such a time that their revelation can produce pathos.²³ While it presents a non-linear arrangement of events, it signals that this will nonetheless serve a cause and effect story. Danni's journey is fateful. Her desire to experience danger will result in the death of her lover. It signals events to come and intimates the final tragedy, in a logic of set up and pay off, in which information is intimated but only fully delivered at the end. It also provides conventions to instantly move the story across locations.

4.2.3 Point of View

The character of Danni in *Bare Witness* is what Gerard Genette would class as an 'intradiegetic' narrator (1988: 128). That is, she is a character who adopts a narrating or telling function within the narrative. She

²³ Ranci re argues that this relationship between knowledge, or logos, and pathos, is one of the signature turns of the representational regime. The aesthetic regime, by contrast, makes logos and pathos identical (Ranci re 2004: 22-23).

is also, according to Genette's schema, a 'homodiegetic' narrator, in that she is a character present in the story she tells. However, she does not have any omniscience over the narrative and does not relate what other characters are doing when not in her company. According to Genette, she would have 'external focalisation' (128). That is, she does not have access to others' thoughts. Using a category he termed 'order', Genette also argued that the narrator is always in a specific temporal position relative to the story she is telling. In narrating the opening monologue, Danni is adopting a 'prior' position in that she is describing something that will take place in the future.

Genette's dual questions, 'who speaks' and 'who sees' sit at the heart of his structural model of narrative (64). While he never intended these terms to be applied to an analysis of narrating in theatre, his taxonomy provides a useful approach to analysing orderly narrators and their use of point of view in theatre performance. As we see in this simple demonstration above, his categories are particularly useful for identifying a logical and unified structure that underlies the use of orderly narrating.²⁴

Dramatically, *Bare Witness* is Danni's story, and the narrating is strictly from her point of view. At no time does she step out of this frame of reference. What she describes is what she sees. These limitations have several performance advantages. They signify for the audience that it is observing a biographical story and that we will follow one person's experiences in particular. In so doing, these conventions give a clear shape to the narrative. They also have the advantage of creating suspense and curiosity. Danni chooses to only present fragments of her account. There are hints of menace and despair in the opening monologue, but the incident that creates these conditions is not revealed until the very end of the performance.

Genette's taxonomy also offers a method of identifying and evaluating consistency and logic in the way a dramatic narrative uses perspective and voice. By identifying these conventions we can determine a structure within a performance narrative, and evaluate how best it achieves what it sets out to do. In the case of *Bare Witness*, we can see how point of view is rigorously maintained in Danni's monologue. It provides suspense and it also helps logically navigate the audience through time and place. We will also see that Danni's account was reliable. What she intimates in the opening monologue, is confirmed in the final narrating. Such orderly narrating depends upon certainty. It allows us to identify, within certain parameters, who is narrating and what they are capable of knowing. It also confirms Danni's reliability as a narrator. This certainty is disrupted, however, when voice separates from character and tone, volume,

²⁴ That said, one has to ask what purpose is so far achieved by categorising voice and perspective in this way. What insight into the production, other than to identify a logic of structure, does such a process actually produce? Mieke Bal, in her critique of Genette's taxonomies, questions the point of simply identifying modes of telling. For Bal, narratology should analyse narrativity, or the cognitive aspects of narrative making, rather than impose supposedly normative categories on a narrative (2009: 226). However, orderly narrating, and Rancière's representative regime in which it can be placed, demands a structure that appears normative.

language and rhythm become the dominant forms of expression. Such disruptions are the domain of the unruly narrator, which will be examined further on.

4.2.4 Correspondences and Credentials

As well as compressing time and place and maintaining strict point of view to locate the narrative and produce a reliable narrator, orderly narrators also link the world of the play with the world beyond the theatre. In a speech half way into the first act, the actor playing Danni steps forward to tell us about how the Vietnam war photographer, Don McCullin, famously rearranged the bodies of dead Viet Cong soldiers in order to enhance the quality of a photograph.

McCullin never denied that he arranged the composition of the photo he then took. He was making a statement on behalf of the boy. He said ‘dead soldiers can’t speak anymore, but I can speak for them’ ... (15)

This speech follows a moment earlier when Danni questions the actions of her colleague Jack, when he rearranges objects on a dead woman’s body just before he takes a photograph. As the actor steps forward and tells us the story about McCullin, she draws comparisons between the fictionalised representation of this moment, and its actual historical source. In doing so, she presents the play’s historical credentials. This speech assures the audience that the play is qualified to speak about its subject.

For Lourey it was important that the play provided a truthful account of the way war photographers experienced conflict and trauma in the field. She drew her inspiration from two sources. Early on in the play’s development, she interviewed a number of war photographers about their experiences in the field. She was also inspired by a feature film, *Harrison’s Flowers* (Chourraqui 2000), which included war journalists speaking to the camera about their work. For Lourey, it was important to capture what she thought of as truthfulness about this sort of work. As she explained in an interview about the production, ‘I think it is more dangerous than ever to bring back the truth, and that is what I really wanted to raise’ (Lourey 2011).

Truth was also an issue for the director and performers. In another interview, Daniela Farinacci noted that when narrating to the audience, she aimed to present in a truthful manner.

I know that with the short direct address to the audience for each of the photos, the little countdowns before the photo provoked the next moment or incident in the story... I know that Nadja, the director, always said to us that we must be absolutely ‘real’ in those moments. Of

course, we are always seeking to be as truthful as we can but for those moments it was particularly important (Farinacci 2012).

It is worth considering what sort of truth is being talked about here, and how it relates to the way narrators function in the production. Farinacci connects the so called 'real' of a particular performance style with the sort of world truths that Lourey sought to capture in her writing. To speak plainly is to honour the production's intent. As Farinacci explains:

We were aiming to describe them [the photographs] so carefully and so truthfully that the audience could imagine them (2012).

The connection between narrators addressing the audience in a 'real' or 'plain' way, and concepts of 'truth', is often associated with the theatre of Bertolt Brecht. In 'The Street Scene', Brecht's famous polemic on epic theatre and the performances it requires, he sets out a prescription for the way in which the epic actor should 'demonstrate' a story to the audience (1964g: 121). For Brecht, the actor narrating the scene should be 'natural' as a 'demonstrator' and act with a certain 'detachment'.

The epic theatre wants to establish its basic model at the street corner, i.e. to return to the very simplest 'natural' theatre, a social enterprise whose origins, means and ends are practical and earthly (126).

Above all in the epic theatre, acts of demonstration such as direct address are a means of instruction, a social intervention, which will illuminate the structures that sit behind the event. Brecht's theatre is thick with diegesis designed to do just this. His actors continually break out of role to address the audience and explain the events taking place on stage, and point out their historical significance. It is part of a commitment to decoding disguised meanings, an approach described by Paul Ricoeur as a hermeneutics 'of suspicion' (1970: 30).

One can argue that this type of narrating is disruptive, in the way it challenges fourth wall conventions of traditional theatre by acknowledging the presence of the audience. It certainly disrupts Aristotelian dramaturgy, with its requirement that the epic be removed from the tragic so that action is only represented through character and speech (Aristotle 2000). It also disrupts audience expectations. Nonetheless, this Brechtian narrator often works *within* a system of ordered correspondence. For Brecht,

The 'story' is the theatre's great operation, the complete fitting together of all the gestic incidents, embracing the communications and impulses that must now go to make up the audience's entertainment (1964f: 200).

Far from flinging themselves into the story, the audience must be directed to see the knots that hold each of the story's episodes together, and their cause and effect succession should allow the audience to 'interpose judgment' and to understand 'the social point' (201). Brecht elaborates on this idea of the social in his essay, 'The Popular and the Realistic' (1964a). For Brecht 'realism' means:

...laying bare society's causal network/showing up the dominant viewpoint as the viewpoint of the dominators/ writing from the standpoint of the class which has prepared the broadest solutions for the most pressing problems afflicting human society/emphasising the dynamics of development/concrete and so as to encourage abstraction (109).

In other words, realism reveals hegemonic structures that are often concealed from view. This corresponds with Brecht's conception of the epic theatre, in which the social being determines thought and reason (1964a: 37).²⁵ Epic theatre, and its use of narrators, aims to show the audience the relationship between the individual and the forces that shape thinking and behaviour.

In pointing to that which is hidden from view, the orderly narrator in theatre assumes the spectator is in need of education. Farinacci follows this tradition when she addresses the audience about the photographer Don McCullin, in order to make us consider the ethics and morality of the war photographer. It is a natural, detached explanation of the war photographer's dilemma when faced with the opportunity to manipulate an image for the greater good of teaching others about the devastation war brings. It is orderly narrating of a very particular sort, a method of providing a framework that asks the audience to think about what they have just seen. It assumes an audience in need of education. Accordingly, it directs their attention to war's brutality, and teaches it that the media controls access to the realities of global conflict. As Lourey explained in the interview I did with her:

... I had political things I wanted to say. I wanted to question the context of how the news and images that we are seeing is covered, and illustrate how context can be so easily lost or manipulated (2011).

As Ranci re argues, there is an inherent assumption in this style of Brechtian theatre that the audience is ignorant and passive, in need of being activated (2009: 8). Lourey certainly expresses a desire to educate, and this comes through in the forms of narrating I have so far described. It should be noted, however, that the interpretations of Brecht's epic theatre model are broad. Meg Mumford argues that Brecht's 'verh fremdung' aimed to produce complex emotional reactions (2009: 64). Elin Diamond, in her description of Brecht's theatre theory, argues that while Brecht takes a pedagogical stance in urging the

²⁵ In his dramaturgical notes to the opera he co-wrote with Kurt Weill, *Mahagonny*, Brecht produced a table that compared the capacities and assumptions of the dramatic theatre with those of the epic. This reference is taken from that table (1964b: 37).

spectator to ‘lift the ideological veil’, his ‘gestus’ has the potential to go beyond this, to allow for meaning and interpretation to become fluid and ‘ephemeral’ (1988: 104).

4.4 Unruly Narrators

4.4.1 Language

Unlike orderly narrators who use language to direct attention to cause and effect logic, unruly narrators use language to intensify sensation for the audience. In the production of *Bare Witness*, they enable the audience to imagine the world in which the narrative unfolds by using specific rhetorical devices such as withholding of detail, poetic imagery and sudden shifts of tense to recall past events. They are also part of the production’s paradoxical relationship between stillness and motion.

Consider for instance the journalist Jack’s speech to the audience about the trauma of photographing a dying child:

Wait there I’d said, and I’ll bring back more sweeties. She waited, and a sniper’s bullet ripped her neck open. Her blood is gushing everywhere, choking her. They’re about to get her into the ambulance (8).

This speech functions in several ways. It is not a complete description of the event. There are gaps in Jack’s account that allow the audience to participate in its reconstruction. The speech jumps from the time of the gunshot to the arrival of the ambulance, mimicking perhaps how trauma disrupts the continuity of memory. There is also a poetry in these gaps that produces a rhythm of urgency. Jack’s observations gallop from the waiting girl, to the girl shot, and from her wound to the waiting ambulance. The sudden appearance of the speech is also dramatically unmotivated. While the story accords with the experience of the character that tells it, it does not follow a cause and effect logic in the way it is placed in the performance.

At one level, the use of focal distance is tightly controlled and well ordered. Jack does not actually see through the child’s eyes: he only reports what the child saw of herself reflected in the camera lens. This convention, of only describing what is seen, is well maintained.²⁶ However, there is an intensity to this moment that is independent of the ordered, narrative conventions shaping this speech. The poetic detail with which he recalls this event is startling. He sees himself and his camera reflected in the child’s eyes as she is about to take her last breath. He then he discovers, too late, that the reverse is also happening: the child sees herself in the lens of his camera, which reflects her final moments of life back to her. Here is

²⁶ Genette describes this narrative convention, in which a narrator can only describe characters’ visible behaviour, without ever knowing their thoughts or feelings, as ‘external focalization’ (1980: 190).

Barthe's punctum, the wounding moment wrought from the ordinary detail upon which the camera stumbles (1981). However, it is a punctum image in reverse: the camera has not taken the picture, but reflected it back. The narrator suspends a cause and effect logic to meditate instead on the dark poetry produced by the moment's multiple reflections and perspectives.

What is also noticeable in this speech is the specific use of grammar used by Jack to structure his speech. In the third sentence, he switches from the past to the present tense. Suddenly we are imagining along with Jack the events that are once more taking place in his memory. He then reverts back to the past tense at the end of the speech as he describes his realisation of what the child has seen. This use of what is known as the historic present together with the past tense in narrating creates a powerful sense of immediacy for an audience.²⁷ This combination of tenses, together with vivid detail, multiple perspectives and sudden jumps in time, is evidence of what narrating can achieve in intensifying experiences for the audience. A dramatic enactment of Jack's memory may not have been as powerful.

As well as being a vital part of the dramatic structure in the play and a method of engaging the audience's imagination, narrating provides poetic moments by making a sudden, unmotivated departure from the traumatic events being depicted. Towards the end of the play, one of the journalists, Violette, describes to us how, every year, she buys shoes in Paris and Rome. She dwells on her memory of the shoes she buys: their shape, their feel, and how some shoes make her feel more confident and beautiful.

And when I see such ugliness, such shit I look at my shoes and I see such contained pieces of beauty (20).

It is a tender, gentle moment from a character what, up till now, has been aggressive and uncompromising. While we listen to Violette's speech, the dramatic action of the play suspends. Instead it is the language itself that dominates the stage with its playful, poetic references to ordinary life. Other moments of reminiscing follow this: Jacek describes a postcard he carries with him while Jose recalls the first time he caught a fish. These moments of language, with their delicate memories of the everyday, sit in stark contrast not only to the horrors of war, but also the impending climax of the play's narrative. They are moments of pause, in which dramatic action is suspended in favour of reflection and description. As I have already argued, these moments are part of the production's paradox. Only through stillness can one find meaning in the world, yet the same world demands forward movement.

²⁷ This grammatical structure is found throughout the history of European theatre. William Gruber (2010) draws our attention to it through a careful analysis of the messenger speech in Euripides' *Medea* (1996). However, Gruber argues that its use in *Medea* dramatically highlights the princess' fate. Its occurrence in the play also follows a dramatic sequence of events (35). By contrast, its use in *Bare Witness* is part of a speech that is dramatically unmotivated.

4.4.2 Mise en Scène

The mise en scène of this production combines choreography, improvised lighting, animation, speech and live music. Kostich's direction distributes bodies through the space so that they are constantly on view, whether resting or executing abstracted movement. To add to this perpetual movement, the lighting designer occasionally moves through the space, swinging lights to create arcs of light. Meanwhile a musician improvises on a piano and electric guitar. Animated wolves race across the back walls of the theatre. When unruly narrators speak, they do so within this world of image and sound. Their speech is an inextricable part of the play's visual poetry. The boundaries between what they say and how they appear are blurred. While the orderly narrator moves the story forward, the unruly narrator presents within this world of image and sound. When Danni stands down stage in those final moments to describe Jacek's fate, and the image 01 is projected on the back wall, she brings the dramatic story to a shattering conclusion. However, her expressive language is also part of a composition of light, sound and movement that exists independently of the dramatic narrative.



Figure 1: Adam McConvell, Todd McDonald, Daniela Farinacci, Maria Theodorakis, Jethro Woodward and Isaac Drandic in *Bare Witness*, Forty Five Downstairs, Melbourne (Howell 2010).

Lourey confesses to having been dismayed when she first saw a workshop of the production. The explosive movements of the actors, the animation and the lighting all felt overwhelming and Lourey was left wondering where the story had gone.

When Nadja decided to direct it, she read the script with a very different eye ... As a director, she *feels* everything. She's Serbian; she came here when she was eight with no English. So language for her, and communication, is deeply physical and intuitive. So she has to feel deeply every line... Then it became really challenging but really exciting (2011).

For Lourey the workshopping and directing process allowed her to return to rewriting the script with a greater sense of the production's theatrical form.

4.4.3 Confusing Identity

Much contemporary theatre deliberately plays with the status of voice, character and actor, and it uses narrators to do this. The identity of unruly narrators is at times deliberately opaque, and one of their functions is often to confuse. In his analysis of contemporary American theatre and its use of narrators, Brian Richardson argues that it is increasingly characterised by a deliberate confusion between character agency and narrating voice (2001: 693).

We can see such confusion in the final segment of *Bare Witness*, as unruly narrators produce ambiguity by blurring relations between voice, character and actor. This final segment, about 10 minutes in length, begins with the five actors standing in a line facing the audience and narrating in succession small moments of significance in their lives. Danni then steps forward to recall once again how she was captured, blindfolded and reunited with her colleague, Jacek.

1. My eyes are shut.
2. We're in a room somewhere.
3. There's the stink of urine...

The actor playing Jacek then kneels in the centre of the stage while about him, other actors arrange his body in various positions to illustrate his capture, torture and eventual execution. This sequence of movements is repeated as about him, the others begin to clap. The clapping reaches a crescendo as, on the wall of paper at the back, videos of wolves are projected. The movements cease and Danni then steps forward to speak.

4. They say, you come to our country because you want good pictures, is that correct?
5. Shall we give the world a good picture of Jacek Kovacs - Heroic War Photographer's Last Moment?

Danni then holds her hands up as if framing a photo

6. See it.
7. Photograph 001
8. Take the photo, Danni.
9. Be my witness.

Danni then walks back to where Jacek kneels, stands him up, and then arranges the other actors about him in a pose. She then stands in front of them they smile, they lights dim to a single spot, and then go to black (33).

The story that was intimated at the beginning of the production is finally played out to its conclusion. In this climactic moment Danni gathers the courage to narrate the story of her colleague's final moments, the story she tentatively touches on in the course of the play, and which she finally enunciates in this speech. In doing so, she clarifies the references made at the beginning of the performance. The conventions of point of view, vocal instance and focalisation are maintained as they were in the opening monologue. In lines 4 and 5, Danni quotes her captors. In line 6, she exhorts herself to acknowledge the situation.

This final monologue returns us to the story that was first promised at the beginning of the performance. The horror of Danni's capture and the death of Jacek are finally revealed as the events that sit behind the speech fragments we first heard at the beginning of the performance. As with any dramatic tragedy, the monologue's power lies in finally sharing knowledge, which, for most of the play, has been withheld. In this way, it works within the play's cause and effect logic.

However, this final section produces uncertainties. When Danni delivers her final speech, she first appears to us downstage under a harsh spotlight, and her actions, even as she narrates, seem part of the event being acted out by the others. The actions of the performer are multiple, simultaneous and ambiguous. She is Danni framing the photograph she is forced to take, then a performer arranging Jacek's body and then as she joins the others to make up the final tableau, she transforms into one of Jacek's captors. A single note sounds on the piano. In blazing white light, she arranges the militiamen around Jacek. They pose. They smile. The lights go out.

In contrast to the opening monologue, Danni's status as a narrator is less clear in the final prologue. Her performance of the line 'see it' is markedly different from the way she first uttered this sentence in the opening monologue. In the beginning, it was performed as a painful memory. Here, its performance is more ambiguous. Where is Danni when she utters this line? After she speaks her final line, 'Be my

witness', Farinacci walks back to where the other actors are placed, brings Jacek to a standing position, and then arranges them all in a pose. Is she narrating this event? Or is she performing as a character in the event itself?

Genette's model of focalisation does not offer any means of exploring the sort of blurring of identity, time and place that has been described above. While it provides useful terms with which to segment ways of speaking and seeing according to information, it fails to explain the way in which unruly narrators deliberately muddy and confuse point of view. In the opening monologue, Danni's perspective is rigorously managed. However, in the closing monologue, perspectives become less clear. In the opening monologue, point of view provides the audience with intimations of an event to come. It also signals that this performance will move fluidly across space and time. The closing monologue uses point of view to question Danni's apparent perception and to deliberately create confusion and uncertainty.

In these last moments, it is almost impossible to differentiate between acts of telling, and acts of showing. Where does the point of view lie? In this world of trauma and despair, it has become unclear. That, I would argue, is the whole point.

4.4.5 History

Given the extensive use of narrating in the production, it is surprising to discover that it did not feature highly in the early drafts of the play. Lourey wrestled for some time with its use and it was only in the final months of development that it emerged as a possible mode of performance. As I mentioned earlier, she was initially inspired by the film *Harrison's Flowers*, and she imagined a form of verbatim theatre in which actors as characters spoke directly to the audience: 'The film had great witness accounts, from their perspective, and I wanted that idea' (2011).

Narrating matched her desire to produce something truthful about the world she was investigating. Lourey wanted to capture the reality faced by journalists in war zones but also to understand the context in which photographers took pictures, to understand the 'person behind the lens' (2011). Narrating seemed to Lourey a logical way of representing this reality. However, she was warned off this approach by one of her colleagues early on in the project's development. The emphasis, she was told, should be on action and conflict, or as Lourey interpreted it, 'show, don't tell' (2011).

Her dilemma reminds us of how the relationship between the demonstration of action and its binary opposite, 'telling', forms part of a discourse that has dominated European theatre for millennia. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle determines that tragedy is the imitation of 'men' of action (2000: 46). Plot and character are the mediums of imitation, diction its manner, and thought, spectacle and song are its objects.

Tragedy's end is a mode of action, with all its plots and incidents. Character comes in as a mere second to all of this, while speech is even further down the hierarchy. For Aristotle, a set of speeches, no matter how expressive of character and 'well finished', cannot replace a well-constructed plot (50-51). Character has to reveal moral purpose, and if speech does not assist in this project, it is unwarranted. Narrating has no relationship to action, and action is all. For Aristotle, it belongs to the epic, not the tragic.

This notion of theatre as a means of representing action formed the bedrock of European dramaturgy. Narrating was considered an inferior mode of performance that suspended action, and it is worth recalling Samuel Johnson's pronouncement referred to earlier in the literature review:

Narrating in dramatic poetry is naturally tedious, as it is unanimated and inactive, and obstructs the progress of the action: it should therefore always be rapid, and enlivened by frequent interruption. Shakespeare found it an encumbrance, and instead of lightening it by brevity, endeavoured to recommend it by dignity and splendor (2000: 229).

I argue that it is this discourse, of the 'showing' of action as a superior form of theatre to epic 'telling' that influenced Lourey to drop narrating in her early drafts of *Bare Witness*. It was not until the final rehearsal stage of the production that Lourey reconsidered using direct address. During rehearsals the director had the actors speak directly about memories of important photographs. Lourey recalls watching this exercise, and remembering how powerful it was. She remembers one of the actors improvising a speech in which he recalls finding a box of photographs from his childhood and how painful it was to look through them. She could see, in the improvised performances that afternoon, the possibility of using direct address as a way of portraying a character's 'truth'. This prompted her to incorporate these moments into the final script.

In contrast to Lourey, the production's director Nadja Kostich came late to this project and brought with her a different set of priorities. In the interview I did with her, Kostich expressed an interest in the relationship between the actor's body and the text, and combining both with a strong sense of design. She described herself as a 'dramaturge on the floor' and, in contrast to Lourey's concern with story, she emphasised the visual and the kinesthetic (2011). For Kostich, narrating was a useful way of making contact and building a relationship with the audience.

Because the pace is so fast we're in danger of losing the audience. I felt it very important to reveal something about these people to the audience in a simple and direct way (2011).

Hence the moments described earlier, in which each of the characters shares with the audience small

moments in their lives. Kostich conceived of direct address as part of the production's *mise en scène*, rather than simply as a dramatic device. As she explained, she and video artist Michael came up with the idea of combining Danni's speeches to the audience with numbered photographs projected on the wall (2011). In making Danni's narrating so strongly visual, they blurred the distinctions between showing and telling, thus disrupting a binary that is central to traditional dramaturgy.

4.4.6 Beyond the Mimetic/Diegetic Paradigm

These two very different conceptions of narrating are supported, to a certain degree, by narratologists Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer who argue that, in addition to its four primary functions of exposition, suggestion, compression and address, narrating in drama also facilitates 'interdiscursive experimentation' and 'encourages self reflexivity by the disruption of the dramatic action'. From their viewpoint, drama can be seen as a complex blend of the mimetic and the diegetic (2008: 345).

In many ways, Nünning and Sommer's model parallels the theories I am putting forward. Like them, I argue that narrating is a complex performance mode, not limited to storytelling. Similarly, I point to the way in which narrating is used to experiment and disrupt dramatic structure. However, the former situate their model in the overall category of drama, and continue to work with the mimesis/diegesis binary. The productions I examine in this thesis are first, and foremost, theatrical. While they use orderly narrators to support the dramatic, they also use elements that are not dramatic, including unruly narrators that create ambiguity, as Danni does towards the end of *Bare Witness*, or make unmotivated appearances and freely associate, as the other characters do at certain points in that production. This capacity to produce ambiguity is one of the functions of the unruly narrator, and is not necessarily a dramatic function. Narratologist Brian Richardson observes that in much contemporary theatre, narrating produces ambiguous relations between character and voice. While he, too, works with the mimetic/diegetic paradigm, it is telling that in his investigation, he struggles with drama as an appropriate term to describe some forms of 'stage' narrating, which he argues are 'distinctly theatrical' and only exist 'in performance' (2001: 692).

However, the confusions created by the mimetic/diegetic paradigm are resolved when the theatre narrator is split into two distinct figures: one that supports dramatic structure and one that disrupts it. The orderly narrator belongs to an Aristotelian tradition that privileges the representation of cause and effect dramatic narrative. Orderly narrators tell only when things cannot be shown. Unruly narrating, on the other hand, poeticizes the stage, as Kostich's direction demonstrates.

It can be argued that unruly narrating, in *Bare Witness* and more generally, is a result of theatre making having become a more collaborative process from the mid-twentieth century onwards. The 1960s is often seen as a watershed period in Australian theatre that ushered in new forms of theatricality, which allowed theatre makers to experiment together with voice, image and space, and to not be constrained by traditional dramaturgical requirements (McCallum 2009: 117). I support the view, however, that theatre's capacity to freely and collaboratively experiment with forms, bodies and spaces, of which the unruly narrator is a part, is the product of a broader and earlier shift in thinking about art that originates from the nineteenth century. As Patrice Pavis notes in his historical account of *mise en scène*, collaborative experiments with forms, bodies and spaces in European theatre that challenged the orthodoxies of Aristotelian poetics were underway from the 1880s onwards, in the work of theatre makers such as Adolphe Appia, Lugné-Poe, Paul Fort and Edward Gordon (2013: 9). Jacques Rancière provides a particularly detailed example of such an experiment, in his account of Lugné-Poe's and Maurice Maeterlinck's collaborative symbolist production of Ibsen's *The Master Builder*, with its experimental use of scenery, lighting, gesture and 'singing diction' (2013: 114). Rancière argues that this production suspended action in favour of sensation and perception. It exemplifies his concept of 'the aesthetic regime', an historical shift in thinking about art that grew out of the upheavals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. According to Rancière, this regime freed art from rules of taste, decorum and genre, and allowed form to be experienced for itself (2004: 18).

With this in mind, I argue that the unruly narrator as we find it in *Bare Witness* and the other productions examined in this thesis, is an historical figure that brings with it a conception of theatre as experimental, collaborative and poetic. It contrasts with the orderly narrator, whose job it is to support the dramatic telling of a story. These two narrators co-exist in *Bare Witness*. More so, their co-existence produces a complex story in which journalists dramatically act out a need to be highly alert and in perpetual movement, yet find themselves confronting, in a very non-dramatic way, the difficult poetry of their lives.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In the introduction to this thesis, I briefly referred to Ron Erickson's arguments regarding the widespread use of narrators in contemporary theatre. Erickson argues that much narrating ends up being monologic and conformist in its presentation, despite its claims to plurality (2003). Central to Erickson's concerns is a lack of conflict in much narrated theatre. It is useful to consider how the use of narrating in *Bare Witness* measured up to his claim.

A way of answering this question is to consider what this production would be like if narrators were absent. A major concern of *Bare Witness* was to appear truthful in its account of the trauma experienced by war photographers. Orderly narrators play a strong role in affirming the production's capacities to

remain truthful to this subject. They verified fact. As well, narrating supported the central conflict of the production, between Danni's initial desire to find adventure and the realities she quickly encountered. It moved us quickly across countries and time in order to provide the twists and turns that aggravated Danni's torment, and it shaped the final climactic moment that seals her fate and that of the one she loves. By contrast, unruly narrators suspended cause and effect logic, provided intense description, blurred the boundaries between showing and telling and confused the identities of character and performer. All these narrators are essential to the play's DNA, to its complex narrative structure and to its aural and visual poetry. Yet they each followed distinct trajectories in the way in they were developed and incorporated into the production. Erickson's claims of narrator monologism and conformity seem unjustified in this instance.

In the next chapter, I examine another production that also uses narrators to present real world events. However, its concerns are much less about the need to create verisimilitude, and more to do with the nature of the voice itself.

Chapter 5: *Beyond the Neck* – Narrating the Many and the One.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on a style of theatre performance that uses multiple narrators to produce harmonized or contested points of view, using a recent production at Red Stitch theatre in Melbourne as a case study: Tom Holloway's *Beyond the Neck* (2008), directed by Suzanne Chaundy (2012), based on the massacre at Port Arthur in 1996. This play combines a chorus with character monologues to experiment with narrating both dramatically and non-dramatically. Using this play, I continue to argue for the co-existence of two different narrator figures in contemporary theatre, and the tensions they produce, but the context in which I explore this argument will shift somewhat. In this production, orderly and unruly narrators combine to produce stories about the many and the one, to present traumatic experience as both singular and collective. Unruly narrators rely on descriptive and musical language, play and silent observation. Orderly narrators, as individual characters, present narratives of internal and interpersonal conflict.

The result is an uneasy relationship between the dramatic, monologic lines of action, and choric effects. The chorus supports the dramatic narratives, but it also disrupts them. As well, individual character narrators at times suspend the dramatic action through intense, poetic description. The play emphasises a musicality of language, but at times this is at odds with the requirements of cause and effect plotting. The play points to the many as the only way to understand events in a decentred world, yet it does not renounce singular dramatic arcs entirely.

As with the previous case study, I combine a reading of the play text and its production with interviews with the writer, director and one of the actors, as I continue to argue that in Australian contemporary theatre narrating is often split between two functions, the orderly narrator and the unruly narrator. The conflicting relationship between these two figures sits at the heart of each of the four productions I examine in this thesis, and manifests in different ways.

5.2 The Play Text

Beyond the Neck was Tom Holloway's first play, written in 2006 and initially produced in Tasmania in 2007, with funding from Tasmania Performs (2008).²⁸ Like *Bare Witness* (2012), the play uses narrating to explore historical events. Its narrators tell the story of four very different pilgrimages that converge at Port Arthur on a particular day, ten years after the massacre in which Martin Bryant murdered 39 people. Unlike *Bare Witness*, these narrators do not speak directly to the audience to educate it about the play's historical context.

²⁸ Tasmania Performs was an initiative by Arts Tasmania, developed in partnership with the Australian Council and managed by Performing Lines.

The text is written for four performers. Between them, they share the roles of chorus and characters. Most of the text is written as either fragmented direct address by characters to the audience, or choric commentary to the characters. Each actor is assigned a particular character: the old man; the woman; the young girl; and the young boy. The four characters have distinct identities, desires and dramatic goals: a tour guide sets off to his job, as he has done every day since the shootings; a young mother is on a mystery bus tour that ends up at Port Arthur; a young girl's mother and stepfather have decided it would help her to return to the place where her father was killed; and a young boy's family is taking him there on a day trip as a way of making up for their negligence.

The character arcs are structured with traditional dramatic elements. When we first meet each character, they are in a state of denial about the events they had witnessed years earlier, and through a series of inciting incidents, they are forced to face their memories. External and internal conflicts, sudden reversals of action, moments of recognition, crises and resolution all play a part in sustaining each of the character's dramatic journeys.

As an actor speaks in character, chorus members take turns at commenting on the character's thoughts and behaviour. The playwright provides a system of notation to clarify this complex arrangement. In the script, each actor is assigned a number, from 1 to 4. When a line is to be spoken in character, it is in normal type. In the play text, the lines spoken as choric commentary by the performers are bolded.

2: Mum turns to me, like she is going to say something.

3: Her mother wants to ask her if she is okay.

2: I look at her

(Holloway 2008: 41).²⁹

Along with this system of notation, the play maintains rigorous conventions of perspective to differentiate between the narrative capabilities of the chorus and those of each character. When speaking in a chorus, the narrators access the characters' behaviour, internal thoughts and feelings. Characters on the other hand are only present in the story they describe, and have no perspective beyond that which each experiences individually.

The play contains four main sections. These are titled 'Overture', 'First Movement', 'Second Movement' and 'Coda'. In the First Movement, there are subsections titled 'Setting Off' and 'The Trip Down'. The Second Movement contains 'The Arrival', 'The Tour' and 'The Point of No Return'. In the Overture, the actors introduce their characters through direct address to the audience, with oblique references to the

²⁹ Subsequent references to the play text, including its preface, will only use page numbers.

events in the past that continue to traumatize them: the old man who works as a tour guide at Port Arthur returns home after the shootings in blood-stained clothes; the young boy stands still as his mother tries to clean the blood and find the wound; the young mother does not cry but goes to work like nothing has happened; and the teenage girl hears the news of her father's death.

In 'Setting Off' and 'The Trip Down', the characters head towards Port Arthur and as the narrative unfolds, we learn in fragments of direct address and occasional dialogue more about the characters' history: about how the girl heard about her father's death; about what the tour guide heard and saw that day; and about why the boy's parents find his 'mysterious' (and unseen) friend Michael so disturbing.

'The Tour', at the Port Arthur settlement, works towards a climax in which the young boy and his friend Michael stage a mock shooting in the jail. The climax flings each of the characters back into their past, or brings their past into the present, to the moments that have traumatised them since: the tour guide remembers the unexpected comfort from an injured woman on the day of the shooting; the young girl remembers seeing her dead father in the burial casket; the young woman remembers the day her daughter and husband were hit by a car and both killed; and the young boy reveals how his strange friend Michael encouraged him to beat a dog to death.

It is only in the last section, 'The Point of No Return', that the play offers any significant dialogue. In the last few pages of the play, the tour guide attempts to speak with the young girl, and the woman tries to engage the boy. In this last section the chorus is silent. However the dialogue does not extend beyond a few shared observations and memories. The young boy notes the plaque listing the names of this who died in the shootings, while the woman lapses into memories of her now dead husband. The tour guide tells the young girl that he knows about her dead father but she too remains silent.

5.3 The Production

The play has received three productions. It was originally staged in Hobart and then toured Tasmania (2007). It was then staged in Belvoir St theatre in Sydney (2009), and finally restaged at Red Stitch Theatre in Melbourne (2012). This latter production is the focus of this chapter. The Red Stitch production used a simple, two-tiered stage designed by Dayna Morrissey that emphasised width over depth.³⁰ At the back of the stage were three panels referencing traditional Chinese landscape painting.³¹ As the director, Suzanne Chaundy, explained in my interview with her:

³⁰ Productions and play texts will be referenced in the present tense, while interviews will be referenced in the past tense.

³¹ The simplicity of the Red Stitch stage design contrasts with the Tasmanian production, which decorated the back of the stage with small, ordinary objects.

...we wanted to get that sense of stillness and ethereal beauty of Port Arthur where unspeakable horrors had happened (Chaundy 2012).

The stage design also emphasised the multi-vocal nature of the play and its production. The performers were arranged across the stage, and at various points either moved forward towards the audience, or receded to the back (2012).

The production commences with one of the actors stepping forward and asking, 'Shall we begin?' (2012).³² Forming a line across the back of the stage, the actors then proceed to introduce each other's characters to the audience.

In the preface to the play, Tom Holloway compares the text to a music quartet.

It is a piece where rhythm and timbre play vital roles, perhaps equally as important as characterisation and narrative structure. The actors in this play have two main functions. The first is to voice the story of their characters and the second is to work as a broken chorus in support of each other's journey's (13).

This suggests a fluid, harmonious relationship between these two different forms of narrating. The Red Stitch production emphasised these musical metaphors by having the actors work in an *a cappella* line facing the audience. Yet the dynamics between chorus and character monologues are less harmonious than Holloway's preface suggests, and the play often pursues an antagonistic relationship between the two.

Despite the play's insistence on a musicality of language, for Chaundy the emphasis needed to be on the storytelling, which described as:

... the most ancient form of theatre there is. We've gathered in a place to tell a story. It doesn't need a lot of bells and whistles (2012).

5.4 The Chorus

Diegesis as chorus has been prominent in European, American and Australian theatre for a good part of the twentieth century. It has been used as a dramatic device in works as diverse as Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1959) and Dorothy Hewett's *This Old Man Comes Rolling Home* (1992). It

³² Subsequent references to *Beyond the Neck*'s production will refer to the Red Stitch staging, unless otherwise specified.

also has a rich non-dramatic tradition, from the earlier experimental works of Gertrude Stein in the 1920s, to the abstracted voices of Samuel Becket, Robert Wilson, Anne Bogart and more recently, the work of the Nature Theatre of Oklahoma (2013).³³

The use of the chorus in contemporary theatre is often discussed under the title of 'polyvocality' and it is a horse to which a number of wagons have been hitched. Jean Pierre Ryngaert considers its use as an indication of the growing autonomy of the voice in theatre performance. Ryngaert argues that the 'weakening of the subject behind speech' is but one symptom of the increasing autonomy of language, and that consistency between speaker and speech is no longer necessary (2007: 26). This position is echoed in narratologist Brian Richardson's study of voice and narrating in contemporary theatre, in which he argues that more attention should be given to narrators that exceed the limits of individual consciousness (2001: 691).

Each of these moves promotes language over character. As Ryngaert writes in his survey of contemporary French theatre:

It is reasonable to ask whether the centre of interest has not shifted entirely to speech developing autonomously, in and for itself, speech that is no longer essential to attribute to anyone: whether speaking as such has not become a legitimate focus on interest (28).

Lehmann places chorus, along with monologue, centre stage in postdramatic theatre. As he explains,

In the age of media, it is precisely such forms of speaking that rupture the dialogic unit of the dramatic universe, namely the monologue and the chorus, that move into the centre of the theatre (Lehmann 2006: 129).

For Lehmann, the chorus in the postdramatic negates the concept of an individual entirely separated from the collective, and displaces the status of language through vocal effects (130). With its interweaving of choric and monologic voices, *Beyond the Neck* seems at first to epitomize the postdramatic's refusal of drama. Its unruly narrators fragment language and musicalise their voices at the expense of a single dramatic arc represented through traditional forms of dialogue. In the section of the play called 'The Trip Down', each of the actors comments in quick choric succession about what each of their characters are

³³ The Nature of Theatre of Oklahoma's *Life and Times* (2013), presented at the Melbourne International Festival in 2013, originates from theatre makers Pavel Liska and Kelly Cooper asking their friend Kristin Worrall to tell them her life story. So far the project has produced five parts, with a total of ten parts anticipated. Liska and Cooper recorded Worrall talking about her life from her earliest memories in first grade, through middle school and on. They then committed to performing the transcribed text 'as is' (Costa 2013). The performers sing the text as a chorus and democratically share the various parts.

doing:

3: The young teenager sits in the car as she

2: The young boy sits in the car as he

4: The young mother and wife sit on the bus as she starts her journey down.

1: The old man gets in his tinny and putts off into the ocean and joins a pod of whales travelling the Pacific until a Japanese fishing boat –

3: No! (35)

The repetitive description has a song-like quality and for just a moment, it veers off into a delightful absurdist fantasy that has no dramatic purpose. However, for all its autonomous, unruly use of language, the chorus also has an orderly function in the way it supports the dramatic development of each of the characters by providing back stories, introducing dramatic tension, highlight the inciting incidents, crises, turning points, moments of recognition and climax. It does all this by either augmenting what characters say or interrupting characters in order to keep them focused on the dramatic conflict.

In the 'Overture', the chorus describes to the audience the traumatic events each character experienced years before, but which continue to exert their influence. We hear how the woman reacts immediately after realising her husband and child are dead, how the old man returned home from the shootings, how the young boy dealt with the death of the dog and how the young girl reacted to her father's death.

The chorus begins with brief descriptions of each character.

2: The young mother and wife closes the door behind her.

4: The boy runs home.

3: The teenage girl as a child sits.

1: The old man sits down in his home (18)

It then augments these descriptions. Of the old man, it says:

1: The old man falls in to his wife's arms. He cries. He wails. He has blood on his clothes (18)

And then:

1: The old man sits down in his home. It is late. Very late. His wife cries at him. Screams at him. The old man holds her. He has blood on his clothes. He says nothing' (19).

Towards the end of the overture these descriptions taper off in length, until they are just short phrases.

- 2: Screams
- 1: Says nothing
- 3: Is alone
- 4: Like nothing has happened (21).

Following this, the chorus introduces each character in greater detail as they ready themselves for their return to Port Arthur. The parents organise Michael to take him on a drive; the mother cajoles the young girl in coming with them; the woman describes the coach trip she is on and the old man describes his ongoing battle with smoking as he gets ready for another day's work at the tourist site.

At other times, the chorus augments what other characters say. As the old man leaves the house, he calls out to his wife:

- 4: I'm headin' off, okay?
I love you.

The chorus adds, for dramatic effect:

- 2: He does love her.
- 3: He really does (39).

At other times, chorus members prompt characters to continue narrating at dramatically important moments, by repeating what has been previously said.

- 4: That was the family...
- 2: ...that was the family night in. (27).

As well, the chorus argues amongst itself about the accuracy of what it describes.

- 4: The young boy gives up and runs back in to his parents.
- 3: No, he doesn't.
- 2: The young buy runs home screaming. Tears mixed with -
- 3: No (24).

In the section, 'The Trip Down', the chorus' role intensifies. It details the increasing anxiety each character experiences as the memories they have so resolutely suppressed begin to surface. It relates how the young girl suddenly sees her father in the coffin and how the woman hears the screech of brakes associated with the death of her husband and child.

In 'The Arrival', the chorus not only continues to augment and prompt, but it also intervenes in the characters' observations and feelings when they stray from their dramatic purpose.

3: ...Then for a second I feel Mr Edward's wrinkly old hand on my thigh.

1: Stop (43).

Or it will prevent a character from meandering too far from the story to be told.

1: She runs off and takes a taxi deep into the Tasmanian wilderness...

2: No (29).

In this last example, the performer playing the woman launches into an imaginary escape, only to be drawn back into the dramatic narrative by a member of the chorus.

5.5 Observation As Action, Theme and Image

So far I have described how the chorus splits between an unruly function of creating language and vocal effects, and an orderly supporting of dramatic development. It also has another role, one not so apparent in the play text, but which clearly emerges in the production. As characters speak, the chorus observes in silence. This observing function is something the chorus undertakes throughout the course of the production. The actors are present on stage for the entire performance, and when not performing in character, they watched each other.



Figure 2: Marcus McKenzie, Phillipa Spicer, Roger Oakley and Emmaline Carroll in *Beyond the Neck*, Red Stitch Theatre (Hutchinson 2011).

In Figure 2 above, we see the four actors arranged up and downstage. Up stage, Roger Oakley performs as the Old Man, and to the right Emmaline Carroll performs as the Young Mother. Two the left, stand Marcus McKenzie and Phillipa Spicer as members of the chorus, observing these characters. As they watch, the Old Man watches us looking back at him. As he watches us, he is also looking back into the story he is telling us about his memory of the day of the massacre. The performance established this convention of the chorus observing the characters speaking. The characters, on the other hand, do not acknowledge the chorus.

These networks of observation raise several questions: when narrators observe without speaking, are they still narrating? Can we have a silent narrator? If so, does their silence support the dramatic structure, or thwart it in an unruly manner? Within a classical narratological framework, Gerard Genette argued that the narrator in a narrative could be present by a matter of degree, ranging from direct involvement (addressing the reader directly) through to detachment (an implied presence). For Genette, narrators are determined by their vocal identity (as a character within the story, or external to it) and also by the limits of what they can see (their knowledge of a character) (1988: 64). To a certain extent, Genette's taxonomy allows a parsing of the choric and character structures in *Beyond the Neck*, but as I have remarked earlier, in Genettian narratology, narratives and their narrators are only ever understood through literary texts.

Post classical narratology has begun to examine narrators within the context of script-based drama performance, and there is now a general assumption that narrators are present in drama texts and performances by virtue of voice and speech (Richardson 2001). Seymour Chatman broke new ground in narratology by arguing that in film or theatre, there is always a presenter who does not only tell, but also shows (1990: 122). This notion of showing as a form of presenting, or narrating, opens up greater possibilities for conceiving the narrator function in performance. If narrators show as well as tell, then they are no longer just reliant on verbal expression. Furthermore, one of the things a narrator can 'show' is that it is looking. The chorus in *Beyond the Neck*, when not speaking, shows us that it is observing. It does this by looking carefully and attentively to the characters when they speak. The effect of three people spread across the stage observing a fourth person speaking and waiting patiently for them to finish, is distinct, as the photograph demonstrates. The gaze, as a component of a narrator function, is something that Anne Ubersfeld recognised in her model of actantial analysis in theatre. In Ubersfeld's terms, an actant can be said to fulfill its function through non-verbal means, such as a distinct look (1999: 14).

The question about the purpose of the chorus' observation in *Beyond the Neck* remains: is it orderly or unruly? On the one hand, the observing narrators intensify the emotional conflict each character experiences. Their acute attention to every word spoken and every move made heightens the dramatic mood. We wait with them, as each character moves closer to their moment of self-recognition. For instance, in 'The Point of No Return', after the mock gun battle, the young girl finds herself by the cafe where her father was shot.

It looks like all the other ruins. I put my hand out in front of me and touch the stone wall. It's cold. Cool. I'm touching it. Touching the building where he. I breathe in. It's not what I. I look at my hand on the stone wall. I. I want to cry out but (78).

As she speaks these lines, the other actors silently and quietly observe her, intensifying the moment. For the young girl, this is a profound moment of recognition, in which she comes face to face with the event she has tried hard to suppress, and it is perhaps not far removed from Aristotle's definition of *agnosis* as a discovery in which there is a 'change from ignorance to knowledge, and thus to either love or hate...' (2000: 54).

What is also noticeable in this moment is that the young woman is observing herself, thus creating a tripling effect: the chorus observing the young girl, who in turn observes her own observations. This tripling of observation is also apparent when the tour guide tells us how he found himself watching the event, but was helpless to intervene:

I wanted to get over there. I mean I knew people in the. Workin' in the. But he was out the front shootin' and I was. I had hidden in the penitentiary watchin' this whole thing. Watchin' him (87).

His recollection of the event is comprised of short moments in which he orientates himself in the landscape in order to get a bearing on where he is in relation to the events taking place.

I look out and I could see. Just over the penitentiary. See all these people runnin' to the cafe and I'd see these flashes in the windows of it and then a moment and then hear the bangs (86).

The chorus watches on silently and as in the previous example, it focus our attention on the unfolding dramatic moment.

In this way, observation is not simply an action that is performed but also a dramatic theme of the play. Time and again, the characters recall how, in their anxious states, they observed the world with detachment. After her father's death, the young girl recalls how she listened through the floor as her stepfather moved in and how later, as they talk to her on the drive to Port Arthur, she sat in the car and watched the world go by. The woman observes those on the bus tour in a dreamy detached state. Observation also becomes a matter of life or death as the tour guide recalls how he watched the gunman work his way across the landscape.

In showing or presenting the characters, however, the chorus also shows itself to the audience in a way that is anything but dramatic. Its observing presence forms a significant part of the *mise en scène* of the production. It exists as a series of choreographed stances and movements back and forth across the stage and there are times when it takes on the image, as well as the sound, of an *a cappella* group. Lehmann notes the use of the chorus within the postdramatic as functioning 'scenically as a mirror and partner of the audience' and negating the conception of a dramatic individual entirely separated from the collective by emphasising the musicality of language (2006: 130). However, the chorus is not only language. It is bodies. As Patrice Pavis notes, in the *mise en scène* of contemporary theatre, the classical chorus has metamorphosed into a collection of figures that not only speak, but remain silent and intervene at arbitrary moments (2013: 109).

5.6 Character Narrators

As the chorus is split in its function, between the orderly and the unruly, so too are the character narrators. Through circumstances beyond their control, they are motivated to act in ways that produce a sequence of events generated by cause and effect, which brings them into dramatic conflict with each other. Each

character pursues definable arcs of action that take them from a beginning, through an inciting incident and on to an end. Events lead each character to Port Arthur. Once there, they find themselves encountering disturbing memories from the past. Suddenly, they each find themselves locked into a small space in which a prank is played. As they flee from this climactic moment, the memories they have suppressed return, more vividly than ever before. As they face these memories, three of the characters experience what could be called a catharsis, in which they find the capacity to accept what has befallen them in a way that is more frank and honest than previously experienced. They move from positions of avoidance, in which knowledge of key events is withheld, to moments of pathos in which they encounter their fears. For some of the characters at least, this leads to self-acceptance. This movement is fateful. From the outset, the play indicates that external events will bring each character together in order to resolve the tensions with which each first presents. Characters, speech and thought consistently support a line of action that creates this movement from the suppression to catharsis, from the unaware to the knowledgeable. This movement is structured around classic dramatic moments of inciting incidents (each character discovering they are returning to Port Arthur), complications (their attempts to avoid the journey are thwarted), recognitions (their memories return to haunt them), climax (the pretend shooting) and denouement (their various reflections).

On the other hand, their voices flow in and out of each other in an unruly way, producing patterns of speech, or to use the playwright's term, 'musicality', which has nothing to do with dramatic structure. Take for instance the moment in which each character begins to realize where they have come arrived:

2: Welcome, the sign says. This is where Dad. They've brought me to the place where Dad –

3: The old man hears a terrible bang.

4: **No!**

3: We stumble off the bus. There's a big sign.

2: **She sees a car flash by and** – (53).

It is a highly abstracted moment that jumbles together places, time and perceptions to produce a contrapuntal arrangement that has the quality of song. This is just one of many other occasions where the representation of action is suspended in favour of a playful and virtuosic use of unruly narrating.

In *Beyond the Neck* there is no single dramatic arc. The play proposes that the unspeakable is best spoken of not only by one, but also by many. Through a constant switching from one character's journey to another, and a constant shifting of time and place, the play subverts absolute linearity and dramatic presence. The characters narrate their stories in various pasts and presents. At one moment, the young boy is being tempted by his friend to hit the dog and then at another he is with his parents driving to the port.

The young woman is still with her husband as she travels towards the port even though in reality he is long dead. The old man continues to live in the time of the shootings as much as in the present.

Narrators thus tell a story of a decentred world, a story that invites the audience to experience its radical disarray through the sensual effects of language and image, rather than simply withholding knowledge in order to achieve pathos. The very fact that this play follows not one but four character arcs, and that they share the space and time of the performance equally, subverts one of the foundational principles of Aristotelian dramatic structure, that the plot should be constructed around a single, principle line of action that charts the perilous journey of an individual character (2000: 53).

5.7 Creative Experiences

The focus of each interview with the writer, director and performer was on how they used, developed, performed and conceptualised narrating. What comes through clearly is that while narrating as a form of expression is the principal mode of performance, the dramatic remains present as a performance problem. The play's overarching effects of language, speech and voice are contrasted with the requirements of character. On the one hand there are the integrated effects of the chorus, and on the other the individual arcs of the character. This is also thought about as a tension between the many, and the one. The dramatic emphasises the action of the one in conflict with the other, while the vocality and musicality of the text and its production depend upon the interplay of the many.

5.7.1 The writer

For Tom Holloway, narrating was an opportunity to explore themes of trauma and survival with language effects, but it also presented a dramaturgical problem. As he explains, blocks of narrated text can potentially rob the work of energy. For narration to work, it must be tied to action and theme. Holloway traces the rationale for such a heavy emphasis on narration and storytelling in this play back to its early development. Holloway based his play on interviews he did with survivors of the Port Arthur massacre. He notes that many of those he spoke to revealed difficulties in finding the right way to tell the story of what they had encountered. However, they also highlighted the moments when the story finally became significant for them. Holloway aimed to reflect their difficulties and breakthroughs in the play text. Direct address allowed him to represent the challenges of recovering memory, and shaping the narrative, of a violent event (Holloway 2012).

The playwright describes the work as existing in two different worlds. There is the world of direct address to the audience as each character describes their journey to Port Arthur and the experiences they undergo, and there is what he describes as 'the broken chorus' in which the performers comment on the character's

stories. In the forward to the play text, Holloway explains how the chorus has two roles: it supports the characters, or pulls against them (2008: 11).

In the writer's experience of each production, the actors were constantly been challenged by their need to move between chorus and character and have often asked him for some guidance in relation to the context. Holloway notes that this is reflected in the difficulties performers had in picking up queues and remembering lines (2012).

5.7.2 The Director

The play's complex use of orderly and unruly narrating posed a range of performance problems. For Suzanne Chaundy one of the biggest challenges in directing the play lay in the repetition of the language:

Things are not connected to action, which means one needs a different approach to how one maps a piece like that in the space....because it's not a play that you can hinge on emotional motivation or plot points (2012).

Chaundy explains how, at first, she used choreography as a principal means of development. Rehearsals were highly physical in the early stages. The chorus would move around the characters as they spoke, at times prodding them, and at times operating as puppeteers. However, this physical activity was eventually dropped, in favour of a more simplified choreography. The design and direction reflected this simplified approach:

We decided to opt for no furniture and instead to have different levels for them to sit on and also to find different proximities to the audience. To demonstrate the different layers they could be operating on in their storytelling. ...It was like a mini operatic platform, which helped to capture the epic nature of the story (2012).

The play reaches a climactic moment when the young boy, with his 'friend', decides to stage a mock shooting in the jail during the guided tour. For Chaundy this critical moment presented a particular performance problem. The actors found it difficult to perform, given how the writing requires each character to take turns in describing what they felt and did. Chaundy's solution was to overlap the responses in this section of the play, so that it produced a layered effect.

...when he got to the emotional crisis, it was really, really hard for the actors to play unless we did what I did which was to enable them to play through and on top of each other. To actually stop and wait for someone to go through something completely different and then start again,

which is kind of what is implied in the writing, is emotionally really hard if you're trying to work on the sort of level we were trying to do (2012).

Chaundy chose to present the climactic moments just after the mock shooting as musical, rather than dramatic. The emphasis is the tonal effect that the overlapping of the various speeches produces. This is in keeping with the playwright's vision for the production. As Holloway notes in the introduction to the play,

...this piece of theatre is perhaps closer to a musical quartet than to a 'straight' play. It is a piece where rhythm and timbre play vital roles, perhaps equally as important as characterisation and narrative structure (2008: 13).

So while it used unruly narrators to present a decentred universe with multiple perspectives and points of view, the play still depended upon protagonists with a dramatic arc.

Nonetheless, this climactic moment is also traditional in its structure. The mock shooting forces each of the characters to once again relive the horrors they had experienced ten years earlier. In doing so, they eventually find a way of speaking about their experiences, revealing their innermost thoughts and feelings. This path, from climax to pathos, is well worn dramatically. It is also worth noting that at the moment of the climax, all the characters are located in one small area: the solitary confinement cell. The landscapes across which each has travelled, the futures and pasts that each character has negotiated, cease to be. Instead, the action shrinks to one small room. Again, there are faint echoes of a more traditional dramaturgy in this arrangement. In naturalistic and dramatic realist theatre, the climax is inevitably walled in to one room of a house, as the secrets of the past are finally and often shockingly revealed.

However, Chaundy argues that while the play placed dramatic demands upon the actors, it also required a non-dramatic approach to the performances:

We looked at how much we pitched each character's emotional journey but also how it fitted into the whole. Sometimes you would catch a mood when someone else stopped a story and you came in. So a lot of our playing was about whether we stopped or continued on with that mood (2012).

5.7.3 The Performer

Chaundy's observations about how the play's complex mix of unruly and orderly narrating presented challenges are echoed by the performer, Roger Oakley, who played the tour guide. In reflecting on the musical nature of the text, he found that it was not something he was aware of when he was performing:

You hear it all together, and you sense this musical quality. But when you're doing it, you don't think in musical terms (2012).

On the one hand, the challenge lay in knowing the timing, or as Oakley puts it:

The way the voices hand over one to the other (2012).

However, he also emphasised the need to develop character:

Because the play was detailed choral stuff between four voices, and one telling another what to do and giving a nod to what happens. It took us a while to work out the realisation of the characters (2012).

Holloway, Chaundy and Oakley each clearly differentiate how the play's orderly and unruly narrating work in this production. Orderly narrating calls for an understanding of 'narrative structure', 'character arcs' or 'journeys' and emotional revelation, while the unruly is 'musical', 'voices', 'tonal' and involving a 'broken chorus'. Significantly, each notes the incompatibility of these forms, and the need for certain dexterity in moving from one mode of performance to another, from picking up musical cues, to pitching a character's journey.

5.8 Narrating: The Dramatic and the Non-Dramatic Together

Beyond the Neck, as text and performance, resists easy categories. It is a complex mix of orderly and unruly choric and character narrating, and stories of the many and the one. It proposes that an event can be understood as both a singular, character-based account of trauma and resolution, and as collective experience. I argue, however, that this resistance is part of its narrative.

Lehmann posits that the subject of dramatic theatre only exists in the space between the constituted self and its relationship to the antagonist, whereas the postdramatic theatre is polyvocal and decentred (2006: 154). He offers little opportunity, however, to think about how these two different frames of thinking might affect each other. His dramatic subject is incompatible with the postdramatic, because the latter crosses out the former's attempts at illusion (144).³⁴

³⁴ However, Lehmann does entertain the possibility that at some stage, the poetic may welcome elements of the dramatic (144).

Natalie Meisner's and Donia Mounsef's model of the 'poly-dramatic' offers some possibility in accommodating these disparate forms. They point out that in contemporary theatre, dramatic texts do not have to be inherently conservative but can speak in non-dramatic ways. As they argue:

Poly-dramatic criticism focuses on the text as a site of experimentation where many forms of significations collide, contradict one another, and interface with various aspects of liveness (2011: 95).

However, they do not specify exactly how these collisions, contradictions or interfaces might occur, other than to co-exist in multiple expressions of a universal concept of liveness. There seems little scope within this term to identify the sorts of conflicts between performance modes that we see in *Beyond the Neck*. When all that is in theatre is reduced to an ahistorical concept of 'liveness', what is left? Instead of attempting to accommodate these disparate modes of narrating within an ahistorical presentational mode of 'liveness', I argue that it is more productive to identify them as categories that co-exist in a state of disagreement, and that this disagreement of forms becomes part of the production's dynamic. After all, this is how the theatre makers themselves think about the performance, as something that requires a movement back and forth, between narrating as character action and narrating as music.

Rancière offers a way of thinking about how art at times finds itself having to work with conflicting frames of thought. As I have mentioned earlier, Rancière proposes competing regimes of thinking that influence the way art is made. The representational regime prioritises the plot as an arrangement of actions, which, in turn, is shaped by a hierarchy of subjects, actions and discourses appropriate to the moral codes of the day and a belief in the efficacy of speech as a means of illustrating the rhetorical power of the voice (Rancière 2004: 17). The aesthetic regime on the other hand, which Rancière argues was ushered in by the revolutions of the early nineteenth century, disrupted these rules of representation. The principle of fiction gives way to the primacy of language, an indifference to style and a capacity for art to take freely from the world around it (22).

Importantly, Rancière notes that while history produces these ways of thinking about art, they are not strictly diachronic. Instead, he sees them as autonomous axioms that can intersect and conflict with each other. In his analysis of early nineteenth century French literature he argues that writers such as Gustav Flaubert found themselves caught in a seeming contradiction between the old demands of classical representational poetics to privilege the mimetic fable, and a newfound capacity to play freely with language and experience. Rancière argues that this competition between two different ways of thinking about art is at times resolved by 'creating work out of this contradiction' (1998: 36). In other words, the aesthetic and representational regimes are not hermetically sealed off from each other, nor do they follow

a strict chronology, unlike Lehmann's 'postdramatic'. On the contrary, they co-exist, and this co-existence produces new artistic strategies for dealing with the contradictory ways of thinking they present, something Gabriel Rockhill describes as historical 'diagonals' (1998: 8).

When applied to *Beyond the Neck*, this theory of co-existing frames articulates the productive resistances that occur between the play's dramatic and non-dramatic elements. Seen in this light, the play turns the seeming incompatibility between two very different ways of artistic thinking, the representational and the aesthetic, into two distinct narratives. The impossible gap between dramatic action and descriptive language, becomes a movement from the active suppression of memory to an experience of contemplation through stillness and observation. As well, the play transforms the differences between single dramatic monologues and non-dramatic choric intervention into a poem about grief, how it fragments thought or moves between a collective and an individual experience. In this way, the chorus ceases to be only a non-dramatic device that fragments and musicalises speech, and instead becomes a metaphor for the way grief is as much collective as it is individual, and a story about the difficulties faced in joining others in mourning. Narrating is essential in each of these moves.

In its extensive use of intense description, fragmented speech and silent observation, *Beyond the Neck* often privileges the aesthetic effects of language and image over dramatic action. However, the play uses these contradictions in forms to tell a story about how the small, seemingly unimportant details of life take on a stark significance when encountered within a life-threatening context. It proposes that, through its many voices, horror can be understood through an encounter with the mundane, through the sensation of the ordinary such as the solitary image of a pademelon on the beach or in waiting for one's parents. This movement is noticeable in the story of the young girl, whom we first encounter actively, and dramatically, suppressing the disturbing memories of her father's death ten years ago. The play eventually leads her into a transformative experience, one that resolves her difficulties not through dramatic confrontation but through a minute poetic experience. She finds herself by the cafe near where her father was killed. She touches the bricks of the cafe wall with her fingers, and feels their coolness on her fingertips. In that moment, she discovers a way of telling herself a different story, one that is about accepting the death of her father.

In addition to this, the play turns its internal contradiction between a dramatic poetics and a non-dramatic use of language into a poem about grieving. Grief is presented as fragments of thought that collide across time. In the exchange below, the old man and the young girl grapple with the mock shooting that takes place in the jail, as well as recalling the day of the shootings in the past. On the one hand, this is a climactic moment in the play's dramatic structure. However, it is also a fragmented exchange of experience, which captures the incapacity of these characters to narrate their experiences fully:

- 1: What?
 3: Nothing.
 1: What?
3 sees a flashback.
 3: Why am I being dragged outside?
 1: What is it? (85)

The play also presents grief as a dialogue between the many and the one. While individual characters grapple to express their emotional states, it is the chorus that better articulates their circumstances. It is the chorus that guides the characters on the journey, particularly at the moments when they threaten to veer off into the imaginary, and it is the chorus that helps us piece together the worlds these characters inhabit and traverse. As so often happens in tragedy, collective responses and individual expression work hand in hand.

The only dramatic dialogue in the play occurs towards the end. After the mock shootings, the characters scatter across the landscape of Port Arthur. For brief moments they encounter each other. The tour guide finds the young girl and asks if she is okay.

Experiments with narrating at the expense of consistent dramatic dialogue have their critics. Jon Erickson argues that by turning its back on realism and embracing the monologue and the so-called ‘multivocal’, the avant-garde has weakened the possibility of meaningful engagement with audiences. Erickson warns that the anti-realist avant-garde is not going to reach a broad audience if it fixates on deconstructing theatrical form as the primary political act (2003: 177).

He suggests that one of the problems with vocal montage is that it risks becoming a kind of conformity:

One might then view the multiplicities of the fragmented self as conducive to the habitation of an immense totalising voice, which is everyone’s and no one’s (178).

Erickson contends that while the polyvocal suggests a certain freedom by validating difference, and creates complexity and poetry by representing emotion through pattern, (building up, subsiding down), it fails to resolve ‘in itself’ the nature of communication between the characters, that is, what is truly heard and responded to (and what is not) (180). Following Erickson, it could be argued that *Beyond the Neck*, with its montage of voice, is ‘everyone’s and non-one’s’. With its emphasis on narration at the expense of

dramatic dialogue, it could be seen to have weakened its prospects of reaching greater audiences by failing to follow through with more dramatic engagement between its characters.

Such a criticism, however, would fail to take into account the play's subject. The nature of communication between the characters in *Beyond the Neck* is, by its very nature, fragmented. They are traumatised to such an extent that monologue rather than dialogue is their only hope of expression, except, of course, until the end. Furthermore, Erickson's argument privileges a very narrow definition of dialogue as the main locus for meaningful conflict and communication. While this play lacks dramatic dialogue, it is highly dialogic. It finds dialogue in a conflict of forms, between non-dramatic, unruly chorus and dramatic, orderly monologue, and it turns this conflict into a narrative about the power of simple poetry to transform experience, and the path grief takes between the many and the one. The concept of dialogue in this production becomes even more complex when it is considered within the framework of the *mise en scène*. In this sense, there is also a dialogue of bodies, spaces and silences. As Patrice Pavis argues, once dialogue is considered within the interactivity of the stage 'it explodes, opening itself up to polyphony' (2013: 108).

I would argue that the play's strength lies in its capacity to turn a conflict of narrating forms into poetic dialogue, and it is something the Red Stitch production understands very well. It is this poetic disagreement, more than, 'polyness' or 'liveness' that best describes the play's relationship between the dramatic and the non-dramatic, and between the orderly and the unruly.

5.9 Conclusion

For a work that makes so much out of the tension between orderly and unruly narrating, it seems fitting that it ends on such an ambiguous note. The last words spoken are by the tour guide who haltingly describes his encounter with a stranger in the cafe on the day of the shootings:

I don't know who she was. Don't even know her name. But then. In all that. She came and hugged me. She...do you see what I'm sayin'? What I'm tryin' to say? (90)

This is a moment rich in dramatic tension, as the tour guide wrestles with the incongruities the woman's show of affection produces in such a horrific setting: the meaningless and confusion of it all; the utter humanity. There is no disputing that this is a dramatic moment. It is a representation of what fate has delivered, and of one's place in its delivery. It is Hegel's 'unhappy blessedness in misfortune' (2000: 326). This moment could easily be transposed to a naturalistic setting and be seen to offer closure to an already closed dramatic world. It is a tragedy of the individual and of place. As George Lukacs and Lee Baxandall argue, the drama of individualism is also the drama of milieu (1965: 155). That said, the play's

world is also wide open. The tour guide narrates his final question directly to us while about him, the chorus stand silently observing, reminding us that this is a story of the many as much as it is of the one. It is also a world that ends with a paradox. In detailing that moment and then framing it with a question, the orderly/unruly narrator ends the performance not just with words, but also with a terrible silence.

CHAPTER 6: *Intimacy* – Playful Narrating

6.1 Introduction

My main argument throughout this thesis is that in the productions I have analysed there are overall not one but two narrators in evidence, in varying degrees: the orderly and the unruly. Both are understood by their respective functions, rather than simply how they are embodied in performance. They represent two fundamentally different performance modes. The orderly narrator serves the needs of dramatic action while the unruly narrator is descriptive, playful and liminal in nature. Sometimes they are clearly discernible in the way they each function, as in *Bare Witness* or *Beyond the Neck*, while at other times the boundaries overlap, as they do in my own play, *P.O.V. Dave*.

The previous chapter considered how a theatre production turned the tension between these two narrators into a narrative about grief, as dramatic, poetic, collective and individual. In contrast to the other productions examined in this thesis, the narrators in this case study, *Intimacy*, are not only playful and provisional, but they also actively refuse the dramatic. This refusal is something evident both in the production, and also in the interviews I undertook with the theatre makers. The stories that are told at times tantalise the audience with the possibility of dramatic development, either through their content or in the way they are exchanged, but this possibility is always, actively denied. I argue that this denial of the dramatic is one of the production's goals. Anything signifying dramatic action, whether it is conflict between a character's internal desire and external circumstances, a withholding of knowledge in order to produce an emotional effect later on, turning points, character development, a dramatic monologue in which suppressed psychic content is confronted, dramatic gestures or certain forms of speech, is removed. *Intimacy* puts the drama out of action. Characters still act. They arrive, share, reveal, listen and leave. However, they do not pursue *dramatic* lines of action. The production's unruly narrators are at the forefront of this enterprise.

Intimacy is the third in a series of theatre experiments by Melbourne-based theatre company Ranters, aimed at 'making art' from what company member and writer Raimondo Cortese describes as 'the surprising occurrences that happen on a minute scale' (R. Cortese 2012). As the company explains on its website:

Intimacy begins with a man stepping out of his apartment into the chaos of a busy night. His aim is nothing more than to speak to strangers, to meet new people, to flirt with the simple differences that any urban street may offer up (A. Cortese 2011a).

It comprises casually told, incomplete stories delivered in a hyper-realistic conversational style, by actors on an almost bare stage (Intimacy 2012). There is no dramatic shape to it: no characters are forced to take action by events beyond their control, there is no cause and effect plot, other than a simple premise about a man wandering his neighbourhood engaging with others and listening to their stories, and there is very little conflict. Nonetheless, there are characters, there is narrating, there is action and there is dialogue.

There is a sparse theatricality to the staging, offset by an off-hand performance style. The fully-formed fable, with its emphasis on the closure of meaning and its hierarchies of action, character and speech is replaced by fragments of unfinished tales about endless wandering, and momentary encounters with a poetic emphasis on image and language. In place of a dramatic hierarchy, there is equality between represented subjects, speech and visibility.

I contend that in this production, the unruly narrator removes dramatic structures and dramatic performance from the stage in two ways. There is a deliberate, concerted effort to remove formal performance behaviours and dramatic conflict from the *mise en scène*, a process I term a ‘casualising’. Together with this, there is a studied incompleteness of encounters, stories and speech over the course of the production. In so many ways, *Intimacy* is theatre of the casual, temporary and unfinished. This process is also mirrored in the way company members articulate their philosophy of performance and the methods they go through to subtract the dramatic from their work.

If there is a distinctive development through this production, it occurs in its change of tone. While it starts with optimistic stories that ranged from the eccentric to the banal, it ends in a very different key. There is a distinct melancholy that fills the stage in this production’s final moments. It is as if there is nothing left to say and just as importantly, nothing left to do. This sadness, I theorise, arises from the production’s final moments, in which action is presented as impossible. All that can be done is to leave the stage. It is ironic that in constantly refusing dramatic action, this production finds itself at a loss as to what action it can finally take at all. The only answer it can provide is a mournful passivity. The narrator, Paul, begins with the offer of a communal experience. His journey into the St Kilda night was not a passive perambulation, but a search for connection through storytelling. This journey promised nothing more than to ‘speak with strangers’ and ‘to flirt with difference’ (although it was always more than this). The production’s final moments delivered something else: a series of disconnections, absences and partings.

Following this, I turn once again to playfulness, which in previous chapters I have argued is one of the core functions of the unruly narrator. Here, I construe playfulness in a very particular light, as an act of ‘playing at’, and I argue that in this production (and elsewhere) the unruly narrator ‘plays at’ three things: improvisation, closeness and being real. In doing so, I again use Jacques Rancière’s theories of artistic

regimes and in particular the aesthetic, as a lens with which to analyse this case study (Rancière 2004). However, I also argue that Rancière, in privileging the indeterminate and improvised in his account of the aesthetic, fails to acknowledge the importance of skill and practice.

In the interviews I did with the production's creators, they celebrated immediacy and intimacy, and referred pointedly to ordinary life and 'reality' as something they wished to produce on stage (Cortese 2011, Lum 2011, Cortese 2012). Despite these claims, this production is nonetheless presented within a highly theatrical frame. I argue that this contradiction, between its portrayal of mundane life and the artificial circumstances in which the portrayal is offered, is crucial to understanding this production.

In his conception of the aesthetic regime (the system of art he argues originated out of the Enlightenment), Rancière articulates this contradiction in a particular way. In this regime, art is unconstrained by classical rules of representation, and not subject to any privileged medium. It can take freely from the forms with which life shapes itself. At the same time, it requires a degree of autonomy in order to do this (Rancière 2004). In other words, art can be whatever it chooses to be, but in making this choice, it must separate itself out from life in order to signify what it does.

This tension between source and artifact is, as Clare Bishop has noted, part of the paradoxical nature of the aesthetic regime as Rancière conceives it (2012: 278).³⁵ We see this contradiction at work in *Intimacy*. Stories are taken from life, and made to appear as ordinary, immediate, close and real as possible, yet to do this the production relies on artificiality: in other words, a 'playing at'.

6.2 The Performance

Melbourne's Malthouse Theatre commissioned *Intimacy* for the 2010 Melbourne International Arts Festival (2010). It subsequently toured to Europe in 2012. My examination of the production references the Melbourne production, although I also refer to the video documentary of the European production. The Melbourne performance took place on a black box stage in the Malthouse's smaller Beckett Theatre. With just 250 seats, it is an intimate setting in itself. However, the sparse theatricality of the design was anything but warm. The wide stage was surrounded with plain dark blue curtains, which were ecclesiastical in appearance. These were parted upper stage left to reveal a white screen. The stage was empty except for a collection of large basalt rocks, similar to those found on some sections of St Kilda beach, the locality in which the performance is set. The whole stage was bathed in cool, blue light.

Intimacy comprises conversations between the central narrator, Paul Lum, and five characters he encounters during an evening's walk in St Kilda. Russell is obsessed with roller coast rides; Michael

³⁵ Rancière places this conception of the aesthetic in direct opposition to modernism, which according to him wished to purify art by purging it of life or non-art (Hallward 2005: 37).

impersonates birds; Tanya battles insomnia and Adrian, an airline pilot, is prone to panic attacks. The final character, Mary, reveals very little about herself at all and instead, listens to Paul talk about his lack of confidence.

6.3 Strategies for Distancing The Dramatic

6.3.1 Casualising

As the audience enters the theatre, a performer, actor Patrick Moffat, sits still and silent on one of the rocks upstage. He looks out into the audience, but does not appear to notice anyone in particular. His manner seems calm, almost meditative. His movements, like the set, are economical. The house lights then dim and another actor, Paul Lum, makes the first of several entrances in this production, ambling onto stage, fidgeting, smiling awkwardly and looking slightly anxious. His is no ‘actorly’ entrance. There is no well-timed stride or held silence. Instead, he is in a constant state of motion. He starts talking even before he stops walking. Even when he does stop, he continues to move from foot to foot, occasionally staring down at the stage floor as he introduces himself to the audience and explains the origins of the project. His casualised presence immediately contrasts with the sparse theatricality of the *mise en scène*. He begins awkwardly:

A few years ago, I was living in a flat above a restaurant on a busy street...I hadn’t been living there long, about a month or something. One night I was just lying around by myself...um...I decided to go down to the street, to introduce myself to strangers on the street, just random people walking past (2010).³⁶

While Paul’s prologue offers dramatic promise - a journey through a St Kilda night could deliver any manner of conflict - his casual, almost accidental, performance immediately undercuts any dramatic expectations the audience might have about the production. There seems to be little craft in his performance. There are no timed silences, planned gestures or calculated vocal inflections one might expect from an actor. His repetitions, pauses and fillers, delivered with a degree of awkwardness, give his speech a playful spontaneity. There is nothing dramatically inciting about this introduction, nor in his subsequent conversations.

Allan Kaprow characterises the use of a deliberately casualised, informal behaviour in contemporary theatre as ‘life-like art’, which he describes as ‘art in the service of life’ (1983). Within the context of the avant-garde, life-like art typically mixes genres. For Kaprow, the principal dialogue ‘life-like’ art

³⁶ All further quotes from the production will assume this same reference, unless otherwise indicated.

markers have is not with art but with everything else, with ‘one event suggesting another’ (38). Of avant-garde art, he writes:

The possible boundaries between life-like art and the rest of life were kept intentionally blurred. Where the art was located and where life was, when one or the other ‘began’ and ‘ended’, was of no importance. Such distinctions were merely provisional (39).

Similarly, through its casualised performance style, *Intimacy* could be said to blur the distinctions between life and art, especially given how Lum’s lumbering, conversational style seems to suggest that his performance is a factual representation of conversations that had actually taken place elsewhere.

It is worth comparing Lum’s opening narration in this production, and the way it was delivered, with the opening moments in Red Stitch’s *Beyond the Neck*, which also comprised an introduction by a narrator. In the latter production, the actor Roger Oakley walked out with the other four actors onto the small Red Stitch stage and then stepped forward and centre. He paused. He looked to the other actors on his left and right and then asked quietly: ‘Shall we begin?’ (2011). Oakley’s movements were deliberately minimal. By contrast, Lum’s movements are less controlled and often seem to have a life of their own: one hand continuously touches his face nervously, while the other hangs loosely on his hip as he moves his balance from one foot to the other. Oakley spoke one, small sentence softly and deliberately. Lum’s voice rises and falls in volume as he spills out incomplete sentences. While Oakley’s gaze moved studiously from left to right and then ahead, Lum looks into and about the auditorium at random.

There are other comparisons to make, not just with style, but also in terms of purpose. The pause that Oakley used when he first walked out onto the stage with the other actors should not be underestimated. While it was short, it had the effect of silencing the audience and focusing their attention. In addition to this, there was a distinctive use of pronouns. Oakley addressed his opening question (‘Shall we begin?’) both collectively, and in the future interrogative. This phrase suggested a formal gathering with a common purpose. By contrast Lum introduces himself, and the whole production, casually, in the first person past perfect, an address in form and manner that would have been at home in a backyard BBQ, a simple evocation of stories to come, even though it took place in a highly formal environment.

It could be argued that in Kaprow’s terms, Lum’s casual performance is life-like art in the sense that it does not appear to reference a known performance style. In Kaprow’s terms, it ‘secularises’ (39). In contrast to his category of life-like art, Kaprow coins the term ‘art-like art’ to describe art that is separate from life. For Kaprow such art is rarified, elite and governed by the needs of the institutions, theatres and museums that present it (38).

The problem with Kaprow's life-like/art-like art model is that it only offers an either/or position. On the one hand, he rails against art as autonomous from life. This is the art of established galleries and theatres and for Kaprow, it is something to be despised. It relies on a separation of genres and tends to thrive, according to Kaprow, in a self-referential economy maintained by 'high culture's institutions' (38). The only real alternative is the complete dissolution of art into life. Kaprow makes this clear when he states that life-like art is 'therapeutic' and 'continuous' with life (39). This notion, of art ridding itself of any status as art by moving into life, seems at odds with Kaprow's other claim, that the boundaries between art and life in 'life-like art' are provisional. This idea that the art/life relationship is plastic and negotiable seems to sit on the fringes of Kaprow's polemic and remains largely unexplored.

I argue that it is to the provisional relationship between art and life that we need to go, if we are to better understand the contemporary conditions of artistic expression and in particular productions that explore the ambiguous nature of art, such as Ranters' *Intimacy*. Jacques Rancière, in what he terms the 'emplotments of autonomy and heteronomy (2002)', offers a more nuanced account of the this relationship than does Kaprow. To appreciate Rancière's thinking in this regard, it is useful to first reprise his model of the 'aesthetic regime', which he argues is a mode of thinking about art that emerged in the early nineteenth century and which now frames contemporary artistic practice. According to Rancière:

In the aesthetic regime art is art to the extent that it is something else (sic) than art. It is always 'aestheticised', meaning that it is always posed as a 'form of life'. The key formula of the aesthetic regime of art is that art is an autonomous form of life (137).

For Rancière, the aesthetic is predicated on the capacity of art to be both beautiful (or autonomous) *and* about life (heteronomous). It 'grounds the autonomy of art to the extent that it connects it to the hope of "changing life"' (135). To put it simply, in the aesthetic regime, art takes from life but must become something other than simply life in order to do this. The tension that this contradiction produces is central to the aesthetic. However, as Rancière explains, this formula tends to be read in three ways. Artistic autonomy can be stressed over life (as in orthodox modernism), life over art (as in some forms of relational art), or art and life can exchange properties. These interpretations do not remove the fundamental paradoxical relationship art and life hold in the aesthetic regime: they are simply ways in which this relationship is configured (137).

In the scenario in which art becomes life, Rancière argues that art offers a promise to educate humanity through a framing of a new collective 'ethos', or way of acting. Such a framework is consensual, suggested by the term 'aesthetic education'. Rancière takes the second scenario, life becoming art, as the

foundation for a nineteenth century conception of the aesthetic in which art finds purification. Art defines itself through distancing itself from which it draws. In the third scenario, art and life exchange properties. By making the ordinary extraordinary, art also makes the extraordinary ordinary. Art turns to the ‘intimate realities’ of everyday life (145). What enables this exchange is foundational to the aesthetic regime, the ability to stage an encounter between ‘free play and free appearance’ (146).

Kaprow only allows art two choices: to remove itself from life, or head into it full on. There is no room in his analysis for paradox or ambiguity. Rancière’s model of the aesthetic regime offers a subtler parsing of *Intimacy*’s dynamics. Lum can amble on to stage and speak as he would at a social gathering because theatre, in the aesthetic regime, can draw from life in a way that representational, dramatic performance never could. Lum’s ambling and the casual discourse that follows, play with the fact that his behaviour originated in real situations and conversations, and can do so unhampered by the rules of dramatic engagement.

There is, nonetheless, a paradox inherent in Lum’s unruly casualisation of the stage, and Rancière’s model of the aesthetic helps articulates this. Lum announces at the beginning that the performances are drawn from his own experience (although this is not exactly true). These experiences are presented as collective and egalitarian. One can go into the night, encounter strangers and participate in a mutual sharing of personal stories. Inherent in this is a promise of safety and endless engagement.

However, there is nothing casual about the way in which *Intimacy* frames these possibilities and experiences. The placed boulders, the cinematic curtain, the soothing music all suggest a careful, if somewhat eclectic, design. In addition, the production’s carefully worked strategies of removing the dramatic from the stage through casualised behaviours and a studied avoidance of conflict and completion, produce a note of refinement that contrasts with the contingent, provisional and egalitarian.

In other words, there is a playful ambiguity in *Intimacy*, rather than simply the promise of a conversational utopia housed in the St Kilda night, just as there is in Red Stitch’s *Beyond the Neck*. It is not enough to say that the former represents life like art, and the latter art like art. Both, in their various ways, chart the tensions afforded in the aesthetic regime, to make the ordinary extraordinary, and the extraordinary ordinary.

Unruly narrating, in all its different manifestations, is central to the production of this tension. We see a very particular example of this tension a few minutes into *Intimacy*. After his introduction, Paul refers us to the back screen on which is projected a short video of Fitzroy St, St Kilda. He explained lightly:

This is what the street looks like sometimes.

He then waits as the monochromatic video shows a crowd of people jostling for space along the street, outside a nightclub. The video plays silently for a few seconds until Paul, smiling, then adds:

And this is what it sounds like (2011).

The video fades and we hear a recording of voices on the street, and for a few seconds Paul smiles at us as he waits for us to listen. The voices then fade. With this video Paul takes us into the world of a St Kilda evening, with its loud bars tumbling out onto the street. However, this is no straightforward documentary. Its component parts are split and we are invited to consider this representation of the St Kilda night in a way we would not normally do. This moment risks being seen as a facile attempt at estrangement. However, there is something playful with the way Paul presents it, which offsets the self-conscious gravitas that often accompanies the use of the audio visual in theatre performance. On the contrary, Paul giggles as he waits for the video to play out, a continuation of his initial awkwardness. The genial, the awkward, the ordinary, the arbitrary and the playful: these are the behaviours being underlined in these first few moments of the performance. At the same time, they are subjected to a series of rigorous artistic choices that are clearly on display. These tensions, between the quotidian and the refined, or the ordinary and the artificial, drive this production.

This artistically motivated casualisation of the stage continues on into the encounters Paul has with other characters. After his introduction Paul exits, leaving the other actor, Patrick, on the rocks alone. A title is projected onto the screen that reads 'Russell, 62 years'. Underneath the titles, a video of Patrick Moffat who played Russell appears that shows the actor sitting on the rocks. The video plays for 45 seconds, accompanied by gentle, soft music. Paul then ambles back onto the stage with a glass of red wine. He sits next to Patrick/Russell, offers it to him and asks, 'Where were you heading?'

What then follows is a conversation between the two. Starting with an obsession with roller coaster rides, Russell explains that the biggest is in Ohio, with vertical speeds of up to 90 kph. Russell then recites the statistics of a soon-to-be-opened ride in Germany. Paul validates this recitation and encourages him to speak further. 'Do you get scared now or are you so used to it...?' he asks.

The conversation, like Paul's introduction, has the pauses and cadence of ordinary speech and steadfastly avoids anything resembling the dramatic. However, the casualness of the conversation is offset by the increasingly extraordinary content of the stories. 'What's the most extreme thing you've done out of love for someone?' asks Paul after a few seconds' pause. Russell reveals that as an adolescent he made a Super

8 movie of his house to show to his girlfriend's parents, in order to convince them to let her stay come and stay. He introduces himself to the camera, and then filmed parts of the house, the spare room where she could sleep and even the fridge that was filled with the food she would eat. Russell ends the story with a matter of fact comment: 'It worked. She came down and stayed for a week.'

My argument, that the performance style in this production is casualised *artistically*, is based on an observation of how the minute behaviours on stage, the redundancies of speech and informalities of gesture, are framed theatrically. In observing the production in this way, my aim is to get into the grain of the performances and the *mise en scène* and locate the contradictions and tensions that shape it, rather than to try and pin down the production to a particular genre. Reviewers of this production, on the other hand, have done otherwise. Martin Ball described its performances as 'hyper-naturalism that underpins what might be called anti-theatre' (2010) while Alison Croggon labeled it 'documentary' (2010a). In describing and categorizing the production in this way, each reviewer misses the contradictions that sit at its heart.

As Lehmann argues, hyper-naturalism is the 'charging' of the banal and the trivial (2006).³⁷ The studied informality of the performances in *Intimacy* is certainly not charged. On the contrary, the performances are languid, more 'hypo' than 'hyper'. The encounters are gentle, the conversations mellifluous. Secondly, I argue against a description of this production as anti-theatrical. Such a position assumes a normative definition of theatre, something that is fraught with difficulty. As Postlewait and Davis argue, the domain of theatricality resists singular definitions, periods and practices (2003).³⁸ I suspect Ball is equating theatre with mimetic realism. As I argue, this production removes dramatic structure and dramatic performance from the stage, but retains a theatrical identity.

Croggon's attempt to formulate the production in terms of a genre also misses the mark. The fragmented speech, with its redundancies and fillers, is certainly of the style found in *verité* style filmmaking. However, as the theatre makers explained when I interviewed them, they did not report verbatim on conversations they had heard. Rather, they remembered stories from various encounters and then improvised these over time to produce a particular style of performance.

Michael Kirby, in his analysis of acting in contemporary American theatre, provides a framework for further investigating the casualised performance styles of *Intimacy*. In his model, Kirby applies a continuum that stretches from what he terms 'non-matrixed performing' to 'complex acting'. He argues

³⁷ In a slightly different but related vein, Jean Pierre Sarrazac describes hypernaturalism as naturalism of the second degree, in which the 'lower worlds' are offered to the public as an exotic attraction (1981: 178).

³⁸ Martin Puchner mounts an argument that modernist playwrights such as Bertolt Brecht were anti-theatrical. However, Puchner's arguments are very specific in this regard. He maintains Brecht and other modernists attacked theatre's reliance on actors and aimed to control the stage through literary means (2003: 6). *Intimacy's* actors developed the production, and the text arose collectively through improvisation.

that the former refers to a form of performance that does nothing to amplify the information arising from an actor's presence while the latter term describes acting that feigns or simulates behaviour. Next on the continuum is non-matrixed representation, in which an actor would perform certain actions without miming them. In received acting, actors do not act but by their simple presence on stage they are perceived as acting. In simple acting, actors will perform emotion without adopting characters while in complex acting they perform within a fictional framework (Kirby 1972: 5).

Lehmann argues that Kirby's framework provides a means of identifying how, in postdramatic theatre, the actor is often one who does not play a role, but instead offers his or her presence for contemplation (2006: 135).

Kirby makes the point that the context of the performance plays a key role in determining whether spectators will identify actors as 'acting'. Kirby argues that:

When the matrices are strong, persistent and reinforce each other, we see an actor, no matter how ordinary the behaviour. This condition, the next step closer to true acting on our continuum, we may refer to as 'received acting' (4).

A similar case could be made for the performers in *Intimacy*. We accept they are acting not because of any actorly representation of emotion within a fictive frame - they do not amplify their performances - but rather because they are in a theatrical set. However, Kirby's model does not allow for a situation in which actors act at *not* acting, which I argue is the case with *Intimacy* in the way it deliberately casualises its performances in order to remove the dramatic from the stage.

This process of casualising and removal is clearly articulated by the company members. As director Adriano Cortese explains, the performances are the result of a lengthy period of what he terms 'untraining', a process that involves stripping away anything that appears 'actorly':

If we're making something too dramatic, we try and find the opposite (A. Cortese 2011b)

Writer Raimondo Cortese argues that this process is indicative of the company's work as a whole:

The whole point of (the) work with Ranters is stripping out dramatic content and fictional frames....(R. Cortese 2012).

This process of stripping and ‘untraining’ removes a particular form of dramatic behaviour: but it does not remove theatre. The performers still make theatrical entrances and exits, and they deliberately move up and downstage to signify a change in scene and time. This careful calculation, of removing one type of behaviour but retaining another, contributes towards the production’s ambiguity and prevents attempts to categorise it.

6.3.2 Discontinuities

Intimacy foregrounds storytelling as contingent and provisional, and along with its tactic of casualising modes of address, it ensures the stories told are never allowed to pursue a dramatic logic.

The second encounter of the production is again announced by a video projection: ‘Michael Cody, 33. The Birdman.’ Patrick, the actor who played Russell, moves slowly to stage left and then performs a series of wing-like movements with his arms as he revealed his passion for impersonating birds. As with his portrayal of Russell, Patrick’s Michael lacks a studied economy of language and rhythm typical of more formal narrating and instead, casualises his performance with linguistic fillers, repetitions and awkward pauses.

At certain points, Michael’s eccentricity threatens to overtake the performance and radically change its key, but it remains tethered to moments of silence and reflection. ‘I am wild inside,’ explains Michael, in a thoughtful moment. Ironically, wildness is not something this production pursues. Its emphasis is elsewhere: on the disjointed, unfinished and elusive. As they both sit quietly at one point, Paul confesses to Michael that his expectations of people are ‘low’. Michael doesn’t respond. Instead, he walks over to a rock, removes his shoes, and quietly talks about a young man he once saw watching his bird performance. ‘I could see him thinking “that’s me” up there.’ This is where Paul’s encounter with Michael finishes, with this brief moment of imagining. Nothing comes of it, as nothing came of the previous conversation, other than a mutual telling and listening. There is no impetus born of conflict: only a tapering-off. There is a decision to neither tell more, nor deeper, nor provide information that can be recalled later. The stories Paul discovers are ones offered in passing. Telling is transitory. While the stories are coloured by intimate revelations, there are no dramatic repercussions.

Dramatic storytelling relies on a logic of progressive revelation. As Robert McKee in his popular polemic about storytelling in film-making, *Story*, explains:

To express our vision scene by scene we crack open the surface of our fictional reality and send the audience back to gain insight. These insights, therefore, must be shaped into setups and payoffs. To

set up means to layer in knowledge; to pay off means to close the gap by delivering that knowledge to the audience (1997: 238).

McKee is one of countless dramaturges in the European tradition that draw on the principles of Aristotelian poetics, which determine that insight is produced through reversals of action, moments of recognition and the manipulation of knowledge, which in turn deliver emotional satisfaction for the audience. At certain points in the Aristotelian narrative, a character reveals information, which in turn produces a moment of crisis, forcing a decision to be made. Pathos is governed by the logic of the action. Action is arranged to plant information strategically, but at the same time, it withholds the consequences of doing so, until a later point in the narrative when revelations can occur with emotional impact (Aristotle 2000: 58).

Intimacy disrupts this relationship between knowledge and emotion through discontinuous storytelling, and this strategy increases in intensity during the course of the production. Paul's third encounter is with Tanya, (Beth Buchanan), a chef who describes her battle with insomnia, and describes the routines she establishes to deal with this affliction.

As with the other characters, she reveals extraordinary details about her life. As she goes about her day, she hallucinates dream sequences that appear as superimpositions over the substantial realities of her life. She describes how, while shopping in a supermarket aisle, figures appear from her dream world. She then breaks from describing her insomnia, moves downstage and performs a series of dance moves she has recently learnt. Breathlessly she then seats herself on a rock and sings a very out-of-tune version of Burt Bacharach's 'I Say a Little Prayer.'

Tanya's revelations do not deliver a dramatic pay-off, nor produce conflict. Her unruly narrating simply describes moments in her life. She appears reconciled to her insomnia, despite its sometimes-florid consequences. In keeping with the conventions of the production, she fails to finish and instead sits quietly and simply catches her breath.

The incomplete and unfinished have been widely discussed as elements within postmodern or postdramatic theatre. John Freeman argues that the subject of postmodern performance writing tends to be:

...something provisional, contextual and unfinished, as a performative rather than a constative narratology (2007: 21).

Lehmann argues that the incomplete narrative is a hallmark of postdramatic theatre (Lehmann 2006: 90). Cathy Turner notes that performances of the unfinished constitute a dramaturgy of process (2009: 106). For Elin Diamond, incompleteness can be a positive outcome of Brechtian gestic performance, in that it provokes a view of history as processual and ongoing rather than closed (1997: 51).

In her exploration of contemporary theatre companies in the UK and the USA and what she terms ‘a poetics of failure’, Sara Jane Bailes notes how ‘incompleteness’ is a method of performance making (2011). Bailes examines her case studies within a specific context of failure, as the title of her book suggests:

More than a concern with representations that fail (of which clearly there are many) it is the failure of representation that focuses my inquiry (38).

In an examination of theatre company Forced Entertainment’s *Club of No Regrets*, she interprets incompleteness as a joint endeavor between performer and spectator. In not completing actions, and offering a ‘bricolage of uneasy events and exchanges’ the performers deflect audience expectation (108). She extends her observations to performances by US theatre company’s Goat Island, in which she detects a ‘tension between distraction and intention, between disintegration and composition’. This tension is balanced through ‘finely wrought human acts in Goat Island performances’ (131).

There is something of this tension in *Intimacy*’s performances. Russell’s suspended tales, Michael’s disjointed bird impersonations and Tanya’s unfinished songs are part composition, part decay, part ramble and part focus. They shape themselves *through* their occasional, fragmented and contingent appearances and behaviour. However, I would add that in *Intimacy*’s case, these discontinuities have an added purpose of removing dramatic story from the stage. They form part of a conversation the production has with the traditional requirements of dramatic structure, with its emphasis on cause and effect representations of action. On the one hand, the performances promise dramatic tension. There is the possibility that Russell might attack, Michael lash out or that Tanya might divulge a dramatic consequence of insomnia, but these never come to pass. Instead, we are given casualised encounters, silence and disjointed stories that refuse to fulfill their dramatic potential.

6.3.3 Playing At

In addition to casualising the stage and discontinuing their narratives, the unruly narrators of *Intimacy* ‘play at’ being what they are. Elsewhere, I have argued that play is a central feature of unruly narrating: in *Bare Witness* and *Beyond the Neck*, narrators play with image and language. In *Intimacy* they play *at* being themselves. This ‘playing at’ combines contingency with artificiality: the ‘now’ with the ‘made up’.

After Tanya leaves the stage, a fourth character enters, Adrian Tan, again played by Russell. An airline pilot, he describes what life is like in the cockpit. Instead of addressing this to Paul, he speaks to the audience, the only time any of the characters do so:

We operate in what is known as ‘sterile cockpit’ policy.

According to Adrian, this requires calm, observational language and he provides an example of how he could be required to describe an engine on fire. Ironically, Adrian reveals that he suffers from panic attacks, which for obvious reasons he hides from his colleagues. He demonstrates some of the calming techniques he learnt to control this problem. As with all other stories, this is delivered in the same plain, casualised style. Adrian follows this revelation with a description of the various tactics he uses to allay his anxiety.

Through Adrian, we have a story of someone who plays at calmness, delivered by an actor playing at being someone else, within a production that plays at improvisation, even though it is highly rehearsed. Reviewer Carl Nilsson-Pollas alludes to its practice of ‘playing at’ when he writes of the production:

... is Paul Lum actually smiling at us, or is it his onstage persona? And does he actually see us, or is he simply smiling at the black void below the bright lights? And, with a nod to Zen, how much does our presence matter? (2010).

The point is not so much to answer these questions, as to ask them. As Nilsson-Pollas notes:

In *Intimacy*, the distinction between the ordinary and the theatrical is twisted even more by its simple conceit—the vox populi. We are led to believe that Lum ventured out one balmy St Kilda night and asked strangers to chat. And they did. Or did they? (2010)

As Adriano Cortese explains, the idea for the performance grew from a night when he and a friend walked out onto the street and spoke with people at random:

So that was the idea and we thought, we'll use that as the template. We'll shift it around and make Paul as just one protagonist, just one person who goes out onto the street. And then we looked at what, who, these people could be (2011).

The process that they then followed to develop the production involved improvisation, selection and repetition:

A lot of Paul's stories towards the end are things that Paul had written. We wanted to make a very personal document. Really, that's what we did. We improvised and improvised and honed them, and then we got Raimondo involved. We put them on DVD. Raimondo looked at that. He wrote a bit of the first scene and a bit of the second scene. Then we worked it on the floor and honed it some more. It was a truly collaborative effort. That's exactly how we created it (A. Cortese 2011).

Out of this process a performance script emerged, although as Paul Lum explains, it was important for the performers to remain spontaneous:

We're not interested in sounding writerly. [We're] more interested in the personal rhythms of our speech (2011).

It is easy to assume that the random, accidental and serendipitous are easily conjured up, and that they are simply a matter of 'play'. However, the process described by the company suggests something quite different. While spontaneity is valued and sought, it requires a highly artificial process of development to achieve it and that the work required is not simply 'play' but 'playing at'.

The combination of play and practice as 'playing at', is something actor Paul Lum is keenly aware of:

Once we've got the scene, and looked at it seriously and getting it precise, then it's hard to keep a sense of play and improvisation going. Because all of us in the room know, in a way.... also we're starting to tweak it to the point so that we want certain things to come out. Sharply focused for the minutest detail. Under that gaze, I find it hard to keep a sense of play (2011).

Implicit in this paradoxical method of 'playing at' is a conception of the work, the performance, as a third thing, something the performers work to achieve and present, and equally something that audience members receive in their own way. Jacques Rancière theorises that performance, as a mediating object, which stands between the performer and the spectator, is something inherent in the aesthetic regime:

The spectacle is a third term, to which the other two can refer, but which prevents any kind of 'equal' or 'undistorted' transmission. It is a mediation between them, and that mediation of a third term is crucial in the process of intellectual emancipation.... The same thing that links them

must also separate them (2009: 278).

Most importantly for Rancière, the engagement with art as a third thing, which the aesthetic regime allows, emancipates the spectator to perceive at will:

[Spectators] are active as interpreters, who try to invent their own translation in order to appropriate the story for themselves and make their own story out of it. An emancipated community is in fact a community of storytellers and translators (Rancière 2009: 22).

This interpretation of art as a third thing that enables an ongoing process of translation stands in direct contrast to Lehmann's theory of theatre in the postdramatic as essentially autonomous. As Lehmann argues, the conditions for a theatrical perception of theatre lies in theatre itself (2006).³⁹

Following Lehmann, the narrative discontinuities in *Intimacy* are nothing more than a series of fragmentations and endings to be viewed passively. This conception of theatre as autonomous inevitably produces the sort of comment made above by Nillson-Pollas, in which he ironically questions the production's need for an audience.

By contrast, for the makers of *Intimacy* the audience members are co-creators of the production. As Raimondo Cortese notes, 'the narrative is already in the audience' (2012). This conception of an active, meaning-making audience is more akin to Rancière's notion of a community of storytellers than it is to Lehmann's belief in theatre for theatre's sake. It also suggests that, like the performers who are 'playing at' performing, the audience are 'playing at' being spectators.

Till now, I have drawn on Rancière's concept of the aesthetic regime to argue that *Intimacy's* dynamics result from a deliberate, studied muddying of the boundaries between theatre and life. However, Rancière's theory also presents problems in determining the role skill and practice play in producing performance. Rancière emphasizes the improvisational and the indeterminate in his account of the aesthetic regime. Casualising, discontinuing and 'playing at' certainly produce the *appearance* of improvised performance, but as the interviews with the theatre makers clearly suggest, in their use of terms such as 'precision', 'focus' and 'honing', much skill and practice sit behind these activities. As Peter Hallward notes, Rancière avoids issues of rigour in favour of a simplified position on knowledge (2005: 41). Either pedagogy stultifies by determining intelligence as either inferior or superior (Rancière 1991: 7), or emancipated understanding is never more than an equal practice of translating (9). There seems little room for a positive account of repetition, rigour and discipline between these two positions.

³⁹ Samuel Bottoms compares Lehmann's autonomous conception of theatre to Clement Greenberg's characterization of modernist art as a distillation of its own properties (2009: 69).

Yet, how can a performance find a form that will allow it to endure, without practice? As Adriano Cortese comments, there is nothing indeterminate about Ranters' development process. It is the result of 'honing and honing' over years (2011). 'Translating' does not seem to capture the experience, judgment and skill (and indeed, status) that such an approach implies.



Figure 3: Paul Lum, *Intimacy*, Ranters' Theatre, Malthouse (Busby 2010).

6.4 Loss and Mourning

Finally, I want to make mention of a curious drift in *Intimacy* towards what I would call a lyricism of loneliness. The production begins with Russell's tales of seeking out thrill rides and Michael joyously, if obsessively, performing his bird routines. It then changes key. Adrian manages panic attacks, Tanya can do nothing about her sleeplessness other than wander into the night and the final character, Mary, offers little, other than to listen to Paul describing the difficulties he has living with a persona that is at odds with his internal self-image. 'It makes me reluctant to be with people,' he confesses, as he then explains how he taught himself to cry.

The performance ends with Paul asking Mary if she has been to the desert. She has not. Neither, admits Paul, has he. They both sit in silence until Mary stands, and walks off. Paul remains alone for a moment. Music fades. A close up video of Paul appears and then he stands and exits as well. The video continues

to play, with its image of Paul looking out to us. Finally, in the last of a series of disappearances, it too fades slowly away.

The fact that *Intimacy* ends with a series of unresolved partings testifies to two things: in removing the dramatic from the stage, it also removes the possibility of a dramatic crisis, climax or resolution. There is no final dramatic monologue because no conflict needs resolving. There is simply a leave-taking to be done. In all of this, the unruly narrator's function is to banish the dramatic by casualising behaviour and ensuring that nothing is ever finished. The production's commitment to the temporary, provisional and contingent nature of engagement, and to a blurring of life and performance, means that there can be no unequivocal, categorical ending. In its last few minutes, the production resigns itself to this fact. It not so much mourns as simply accepts its own fate.

The ending also testifies to the incapacity of the production to fulfill its initial promise. As I noted earlier on, Lum makes a proposal in his opening lines. The St Kilda night will afford possibilities to engage democratically, through the sharing of narrative: it will produce a community of storytellers. Speech, image, sound and bodies all hold an equal place. There is no requirement that any one of these elements is pre-eminent, nor do they have to serve the requirements of dramatic action. However, the production, if it is to remain art, cannot fulfill this promise. In the end, it must do what any performance does: it must remove performers from the stage.

Rancière argues that the aesthetic regime of art contains the promise of a better world, but that it rests on a paradox. It is always an impossible promise, because if art is to be in any way political, it must remain as art.

As he points out:

Aesthetic art promises a political accomplishment that it cannot satisfy, and thrives on that ambiguity. That is why those who want to isolate it from politics are somewhere beside the point. It is also why those who want it to fulfill its political promise are condemned to a certain melancholy (2002: 51).

It could be argued that, in its steadfast resolve to banish the dramatic through a celebration of the casual, fragmented and discontinuous, this production risks being inconsequential. As Alison Croggon asked in her review of *Intimacy*,

Is it enough to frame the ordinary in order to make art? (2010a)

While Croggon uses this question to interrogate the play, I believe this very question sits at its heart. Through its use of unruly narrating, *Intimacy* asks this question of itself, and its audience.

Chapter 7: *P.O.V. Dave* - Thick Narrating

7.1 Introduction

Unlike previous chapters, which have investigated the work of other Australian theatre makers, this chapter takes the form of a critical commentary on my own work, *P.O.V. Dave*, a theatre performance that I have developed collaboratively over the past four years (2013). The previous chapters ask questions about how Australian theatre experiments with narrating, but through the process of making my own work and reflecting on the process, the research question also takes a personal focus: as a playwright, how can *I* experiment with narrating in theatre performance?

Using a practice-as-research (PaR) methodology, I answer both the overall research question, and my personal framing of it, in three ways. Firstly, I developed and presented my play over the course of three years through writing, workshopping and dramaturgical discussion. During that time, I also investigated the use of narrating in other contemporary theatre works. I referenced theatre studies and narratology in order to determine how I could situate my practice within a wider debate, which I have examined in previous chapters. In addition, this process also enabled me to reflect on my own practice, theorise a direction and shape the outcomes into a rhetorical and argumentative form.⁴⁰

Robin Nelson names these three phases ‘know how’ (tacit knowledge we call upon to intuitively make something), ‘know that’ (externally referenced frames of knowledge such as scholarly research) and ‘know what’ (the knowledge produced by reflective practices) (2013: 20). Nelson combines each of these ways of knowing into a praxis-based approach to practice-as-research. Prior to reading Nelson’s model, I was already working through each of these phases of knowledge-making though I had yet to name the process; however his terms have validated my research process and provided me with a structure in which to report them.

The making of the play and the field and literature research that have accompanied it between them produced the central theoretical argument of this thesis: there is not one narrator in contemporary theatre but two: an orderly one that supports the requirements of dramatic action and plot, and an unruly one that interferes with dramatic structures through intense description, presentation and

⁴⁰ That said, there were times when the creative project demanded I depart from the research question. In its early drafts, the play became an unwieldy tangle of ideas, language and characters, only some of which could still be considered under the rubric of narrating. Early on a choice presented itself: should I tether this play to my research aim, or simply let it run loose? I could have structured a series of playwriting experiments to test out various narrator functions, have these performed and record the results. Or I could have followed a more intuitive path in my writing. I chose the latter. Characters, stories, themes and ideas multiplied and there was a period where the play, and the research project, lost direction. As Brad Haseman and Daniel Mafe have argued, attempts to limit the focus of the research question in the early stages of creative projects can prove an impediment. In practice research the question needs to develop along with the creative project (2009: 214). I agree with their argument that the erratic growth of activity within practice research projects is both inevitable and welcome: inevitable, in that creative work by its very nature produces unexpected trajectories and welcome in that these trajectories produce useful insights that emerge alongside the research question and help sharpen it. Furthermore, Haseman and Mafe identify complexity and emergence as two essential features in practice research methodology (217).

silence, and blurs the boundaries between telling and showing, doing and not doing, fact and fiction, and character and voice. Furthermore, it is the conflicting relationships produced by these two narrators, which often shape the performances in which they occur. As the previous case studies show, narrating in contemporary Australian theatre can be provocative and powerful not only because it challenges the rules that have held sway over representation, but also because it makes theatre *out* of this challenge.

Similarly, *P.O.V. Dave* fashions a narrative out of orderly and unruly narrators, and the tensions they produce. However, it stands out from the other case studies in this thesis in that it uses narrating as both its dominant strategy *and* its main subject. It is a tale about telling. In the play's dramatic world stories are matters of life or death. They are commodities with the power to control or destroy. The dramatic structure of the play is premised on Dave's need to structure a cause and effect story of his week, in order to postpone his death. For him, story is something to be taken, commoditised and sold. However, through the course of the play's narrative, Dave encounters a different way of telling, one that engages playfully and poetically with the surfaces of the play's world and resists commoditisation.

This complex use of narrating, which I label 'thick narrating', is the direct result of the PaR methodology I followed in this thesis. Over a period of three years making, referencing and reflection combined to produce the play's sustained use of diegesis. This process thickened the themes and the structure of the play. In the remainder of this chapter, I will briefly explain how each of these components contributed to this outcome.⁴¹

To begin with, I provide a brief overview of the play's dramatic narrative, as it now stands in its workshopped draft (Maloney 2013b).⁴² I then identify its use of orderly and unruly narrators, of narrating as both a subject and a strategy and its persistent themes of storytelling as both commodity and play, and as life and death. Once again I draw on Jacques Rancière's aesthetic theory (Rancière 2004) to further develop my conception of orderly and unruly narrators, but I also show his theories to be both problematic and limiting. Rancière presents his concept of the aesthetic as potentially political in that it challenges sanctioned image and speech, but the issue is to what extent this is so. In *P.O.V.*

⁴¹ Graeme Sullivan argues that what is of interest to practice-led researchers is often a movement from the known to the unknown. Serendipity produces new and unexpected insights (2009: 48). However, for a practice-as-research project to be fully realized, it must also find a reverse movement, from the unknown back to the known, from the intuitive, to the referenced and the reflective. This movement poses a particular challenge in respect to timing. At what points do I, as the PaR practitioner, move from making, to referencing and finally reflecting and argumentation? At times, these movements were random: a reading led to a creative insight: a conversation illuminated a theory: a performance set my mind racing. At other times, these shifts were more structured and rigorous. I took detailed notes from the drafting, collaborating and workshopping. I wrote on the relationships I was finding between my creative work and research for the formal reporting rounds my candidacy required and finally, in this commentary I account for these movements in a structured, rhetorical way.

⁴² This is the draft that was performed as a workshopped reading at La Mama Theatre (2013). It includes amendments that arose from rehearsals for the performance. This draft is included as an appendix to this thesis.

Dave, unruly narrating opposes the dominant culture of the play world because it is ambiguous, indeterminate and free ranging in its use of form, yet how consequential is it?

Secondly, I argue that the play's final, intensely intimate moment between Dave and his son and in particular, the contract Dave requires of him, present a thematic problem. Up to this moment, two different forms of storytelling have conflicted with each other, one that moralizes and commercializes simplistic truths and another that is playful and contingent. The manner in which Dave passes the story to Jack, however, opens up new ground in the play. It calls for a way of imagining storytelling that is neither cynically masterful nor subversively playful. In handing on the story, Dave calls for a practice of care in the way it is told. It could be argued that such a practice limits creativity by requiring it to be rationalized according to the needs of a given community. This is certainly an argument Rancière pursues in his critique of relational art (2004: 16). On the other hand, Dave's 'curatorial turn' could be seen as dissenting with the dominant, commoditised culture of the play's world. I will argue against a resolution of this problem, and instead, contend that this final moment is best left ambiguous, in order to provide room for interpretation.

In the course of this analysis I will refer to the written play text, its dramaturgical development and its workshopped reading (2013). I will draw on Robin Nelson's model of praxis research to articulate the movement that took place between my own creative practice, research and reflection.⁴³ For brevity, I will use footnotes to provide additional detail of the play's development.

7.2 The Dramatic Play World

The making of my play has been as much about the traditional craft of plotting, as it has been about the disruptive potential of narrating. My experience as a television writer no doubt influenced the plotting style of the play, with its dense turning points and short dialogue scenes. It was perhaps for this reason that I first had to crystallize the dramatic story, with its emphasis on emplotment through action, before I was able to then experiment with non-dramatic modes of narrating.⁴⁴

In the following dramatic reading of the play, I treat plot as an intricate weaving of world, event and character. At the dramatic level, *P.O.V. Dave* presents a world in action, in which a particular ordering of events and times impinge upon characters to change the course of their lives. Of course, given that *P.O.V. Dave* is told from the perspective of a single character, it could be argued that its

⁴³ One of the most challenging aspects of documenting the development of the play was situating the creative work in relation to reflecting and referencing other works.

⁴⁴ Even in the early stages of the developmental work I did with dramaturge Gary Abrahams, the focus was still on the dramatic requirements of the narrative (2014). This process kept in mind the research goal, which was to experiment with narrating, but our initial meetings focused on the need to clarify the play's story and enhance its 'in-betweens' by further strengthening Dave's motivation, and heightening specific moments of conflict, such as his confrontation with Kevin and Kathryn.

story is first and foremost, a subjective one. Certainly, the play could be read as a series of encounters experienced by the main protagonist, Dave, that eventually lead him to a personal awakening. Such a reading would ignore, however, the world Dave inhabits and the intricate power relations it produces, and would threaten to reduce his change of circumstances to mere shifts of feeling.

At its dramatic level, *P.O.V. Dave* tells a series of interlocking stories about the perils of avoiding decisiveness in a world that demands action. A man (Dave) lies dying on a train, the victim of a random knife attack. A stranger, Colin, stays by his side and encourages Dave to describe the events leading up to this moment. Dave willingly does so, because through the act of telling, he can delay his death. He is a surveillance photographer who receives his assignments from Central, an organisation he communicates with only by phone. For some time, he has considered leaving this job, but has put off taking action. Susan, his wife, grows increasingly hostile towards his work and when a young actor kills herself after being photographed by Dave in less than flattering circumstances, Susan presents her husband with an ultimatum: he has to stop this work or he will lose his family. She also makes him promise that their son Jack will never know what his father does for a living (8).

Although he reminds Susan about the financial advantages his job brings, Dave assures her that he will finish. There is just one last job to do. A religious minister, Kevin, is standing for parliament. Dave's job is to photograph him leaving a sex-on-premises venue. Kevin discovers that Dave is photographing him, hunts him down and demands he destroy the photographs (39). The play's world allows such reversals of action to occur quickly across time and place. Arrivals and departures are instantaneous and retribution is swift.

When Dave refuses Kevin's request, Kevin threatens to shame him in the eyes of his son. Dave attempts to stall his nemesis, but quickly realises that he only has one course of action available. He agrees to Kevin's demands, but before he can destroy the photographs, they are stolen by Central from his computer and published (56). Dave then seeks out Kevin at the chapel, but instead meets Katherine, Kevin's wife. He begs her to put him in touch with Kevin or to at least intercede. He then tries to reassure Susan that he did everything he could to prevent the photographs from being published, but she refuses to listen. He offers to return the cheque, but to no avail (57).

In addition to this main of line of action, the play also contains a subplot in which Dave's father Angus insists on sharing a story about a strange, life-changing encounter he had years before. Angus fears his memory is going, and wants Dave to have the story before it is too late. Initially, Dave angrily resists Angus' attempts to tell the story but eventually succumbs. The story transforms Dave's relationship with his father, and also with his son, Jack.

News travels fast in Dave's world. Having learnt about Kevin's visit and the pressure he's placed on Dave, Susan realises the significance of the published photos and the threat they pose to Jack. She leaves with their son, vowing to make good her promise that Dave will never see him again (60). Distraught, Dave goes on a bender and meets Gwen, who invites him back to her place. After they have sex, she hands Dave a camera and asks him to photograph her. For the first time, he finds himself not in control of his subject. Although Gwen approves of the photograph, Dave finds the moment hollow and meaningless and, at first, reacts aggressively. Gwen responds by showing him all the other photographs she has had her lovers take of her. These images soothe, and then, transfix Dave with their multiplicity (69). On the train heading home, he attempts to intervene in a violent quarrel. A stranger on the train, Phil, aggressively ridicules his girlfriend, Katie, about a fictional story she has written. He demands Dave side him with in his attack. Dave tries to calm Phil, but he only makes matters worse. A fight erupts. Phil stabs Dave. He then runs from the train with Katie. As Dave lies waiting for the ambulance, a reluctant stranger, Colin, listens to Dave talk about his week and comforts him. The play then becomes Dave's memory of the last few days, intermittently returning to the train. In his final moments, he speaks with Jack and asks him to listen carefully to the story he needs to pass on to him (74).

The play employs a range of traditional dramatic techniques to tell this story. As the plot has developed over time, action, conflict and character development have grown in importance to produce dramatic urgency. This urgency operates on two levels. There is the sequential story of Dave's recent past, in which Susan's extracts a promise from Dave that his son, Jack, will never know the work his father does. The illocutionary force of Dave's assurance raises the stakes and drives the dramatic action forward. It adds potency to Kevin's threat to expose Dave's work to his son, and forces Dave to destroy the photographs. The stakes are raised even further when Central thwarts Dave's plan, precipitating his crisis and leading to the tragic events on the train.

Such is the dramatic arrangement of *P.O.V. Dave*, which begins with a promise, moves inexorably towards Dave's tragic failure to keep it and finishes with his subsequent attempt to make amends with Susan and Jack. However, the play's telos is not only the result of action. Drama is also, as Lehmann reminds us, 'the flow of time controlled and made surveyable (Lehmann 2006: 40).' In *P.O.V. Dave* there are many ticking clocks. Susan pressures Dave to drop his job. Central demands delivery of the photographs within the day. Most dramatically of all, time ebbs away from Dave's life, until he is left with a few mere minutes in which to gift his son with his story. This combination of event and time conspire to produce moments of dilemma, in which characters find themselves forced to choose

between limited possibilities. Dave must choose between family and work, between flight and fight and finally, in the confrontation on the train, between silence and speech.

Peter Szondi argues that dramatic time is absolutely linear and every moment must be ‘pregnant with futurity’ (Szondi 1987: 196). In its liberal use of analyses (flashbacks and flash-forwards), *P.O.V. Dave* could be seen to challenge this principle. However, even though Dave tells his story in two different time frames, and scenes are sometimes fragmented, the play’s progression is still dramatically linear. We await his fate in the train, and we are tantalized by the mini cliff-hangers in the tale of his week. Will Kevin hunt Dave down? Will Dave do a deal? Will he triumph over Central? These dramatic questions, despite their complex arrangement in time, attempt to preserve the absolute linear logic of a story moving inexorably towards a predetermined end.

P.O.V. Dave’s world is one in which a few words can alter time and place, and stories can offer a way of living, or forestall death. Like Scheherazade, Dave tells his story for his life. Its dramatic urgency proceeds out of this world of action, rather than being grounded only in individual character trajectories. In arguing this, I am alert to Elinor Fuchs’ observation that the prevailing ‘spirit of individualism’ risks reducing a reading of dramatic plot to a change of character intention or fluctuation or mood, and seeing recognition as nothing more than ‘passing realization or illumination’ (Fuchs 2007: 535). Following Fuchs, I favour seeing dramatic structure as a pattern of events from which character emerges. Such an approach allows for an integrated understanding of the way changes in plot manifest in the play’s world, rather than just in the internal psyche of a character.⁴⁵

7.3 Orderly Narrators and the Narratives they Support

Dave’s orderly narrating supports the dramatic structure of the play in several ways. It allows for economical storytelling by moving the plot efficiently through place and time (in a similar way to *Bare Witness*); and it reveals internal conflicts at crucial moments to maintain dramatic tension.

The play quickly establishes a convention of place and character naming, through which Dave announces a scene’s location and cast. This enables the dramatic narrative to pursue its cause and effect movement efficiently across places and times without getting bogged down in unnecessary exposition. It also heightens the chase, which is one of the central actions of the play. As Dave announces at the beginning of Scene 15:

⁴⁵ In some ways, this approach echoes Susan Langer’s earlier reading of Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Langer argues that tragedy abstracts patterns or rhythms of natural life and death, and that rhythm itself is the defining quality of drama (1953: 360). In other words, rhythm is action. However, as Shepherd and Wallis note, Langer’s interpretation was part of a larger trend in 1960s drama scholarship to move away from a priority of action over character, and towards drama as patterns of activity (2004: 169).

Dave: The flat. Cold. Empty. Except for me, Kevin and the bare walls (39).

Further on in Scene 15, Dave leads us into his bedroom as he desperately tries to work out how he might thwart Kevin:

Dave: I go into my room. I stand. I sweat.

He's mad. Stark raving.

With Jack not far away (41).

In addition to locating the action, this speech combines a range of orderly strategies to move the action along. Dave reveals his inner turmoil, notes Kevin's dangerous emotional state, reminds us about Jack's presence and finishes with an assessment of the stakes and the odds.

Dave's orderly narrating also moves the narrative back and forth in time, from the 'now' of the train carriage to the preceding week. In effect, there are two different Daves narrating in the play: the narrator Dave, who is telling a story in order to forestall his death, which I refer to as 'Train Dave': and the Dave who appears in the scenes, as both a commentator and a participant, who I call 'Story Dave'.⁴⁶ These are subtle, but important, differences that informed the play's conventions. 'Story Dave' moves through the dramatic arc of the play's week, while 'Train Dave', in the present time of the play, restructures these experiences for himself.

In constructing point of view in the play, I draw on Gerard Genette's taxonomy of fictional narrative and his specific application of voice, time and perspective to discern and articulate narrative structure (Genette 1980). 'Train Dave', the Dave who is the character in the train carriage recalling his week to Colin and the audience, 'frames' the play, while 'Story Dave' appears in the play's embedded narrative. Both narrators are what Gerard Genette would term homodiegetic, in that they play a part in the story they tell (245).

The play uses an analytical arrangement of time, moving from the present of the train carriage to the past week of Dave's life. 'Train Dave' is a subsequent narrator who recalls the events that have taken place in the past, while 'Story Dave' is present in the scenes being described, and narrates the events as they happen, a mode Genette names 'simultaneous narration' (271). This narrating of the present is also known as *teichoscopy*, literally meaning 'seeing through the wall' (Pavis 1998: 381), but in classical dramaturgy is taken to be a blow-by-blow account of events offstage (Gruber 2010: 91). While this technique has always existed in drama, twentieth century theatre makers such as Bertolt

Brecht and Erwin Piscator adopted it as a means of reporting what was taking place on the stage itself in order to create a critical distance for spectators (Puchner 2002:25, 81). This use of simultaneous narrating proved a useful technique to build dramatic tension, while at the same time preserving the intensity of ‘Story Dave’s’ narrating voice. The example below refers to the moment in which Kevin challenges Dave for having photographed him:

Dave: He has his hands inside the window, but I grab one of his fingers.

Kevin: Ouch! I scream.

Dave: Get off, I yell. And finally, he withdraws (15).⁴⁷

Another useful Genettian term, focalization, was helpful in determining the extent to which Dave could identify and read other characters. ‘Train Dave’ and ‘Story Dave’ are always externally focalized, a term Genette applies to characters that are unable to determine the internal lives of others and can only report on what they see and hear (1980: 10).

Genette’s taxonomies require a consistency and stability in their application. Either a character is, or is not, focalized in a certain way. It could be argued that such an analysis of the play’s structures is to the detriment of the actual story being told, and the themes being explored. As Mieke Bal cautions in her critique of Genettian narratology, there is no point in establishing narrative situations if they do not lead to cultural insight. For Bal, such a process reifies classification as a real thing in the world (2009: 227). Following this argument, it might be said that the complexities of Dave’s point of view sacrifice meaning for structure and culture for category. Certainly, a detailed categorisation of voice, time and perspective in *P.O.V. Dave* could generate a complex geometric grid of the play’s text that offered little insight into its narrative.

Point of view in the play, however, is not simply understood as mere instances of voice, time and perspective: it is implicated in character and theme. What Dave sees, and how he sees it, are key questions to understanding his motivation and development. He is characterised by the precision with which he is able to locate, frame and photographs his subjects. Focalization is literally his metier, as well as an indication of his biased worldview. For Dave, characters are only understandable through their outward appearance. It is only towards the end, in his encounter with Gwen, that he displays any capacity to imagine another in any depth.

⁴⁷ Roland Schimmelpfennig’s *The Golden Dragon*, a darkly comic account of identity, nationality and the politics of difference, inspired my use of simultaneous narrating (2011). In it he uses simultaneous narration to cut swiftly between story strands to build dramatic urgency, in a similar way to Holloway’s *Beyond the Neck*. However, Schimmelpfennig also uses narrating to create a playful poetry that offset the play’s dark themes, without ridding the play of drama entirely.

During the rehearsal for the workshop presentation of the play, these Genettian classifications of voice, time and perspective also proved useful tools for the performers to resolve performance problems. Their consistent application enabled the performers to logically follow the narrative as it moved from the present of the train, to the past of Dave's week, and to develop performance conventions that clarified times and frames.⁴⁸

Orderly narrating also helps crystallise those moments of dilemma in the play I referred to earlier. When Kevin corners Dave in his flat, Dave retreats to his bedroom to weigh up his choices:

Dave: I could get Jack's attention.
I could ring the police.
But he'll return. I know he will (41).

Later, when Dave realizes Central will publish the photographs, he confronts the impossibility of his situation:

Dave: Maybe he'll pay them like he paid me. Maybe there'll be bigger fish to fry. Maybe it'll just remain ammunition, with no shots fired. Maybe no one will care at all.
Maybe. The most important word in my life.
By the morning, there were no maybes left (55).

These orderly narrations are intervals between desire and demand, between Dave's wish to defer, and the external world forcing him to act. In these moments of dilemma Dave recognizes that there is no choice but to act. Orderly narrating enables these moments to be articulated, but such narrating is conditional. The narrator cannot dwell too long in this moment, because its purpose is to drive him or her to take action. As Paul Ricoeur notes in his reading of Aristotle's poetics, the dramatic necessities of action will not tolerate vacuous time (1988: 39). This is why the intense description performed by an unruly narrator is so disruptive to dramatic structure. It suspends action on two fronts: the action drama compels a character to take, and the overall arrangement of dramatic action a play requires.

⁴⁸ At the first reading, two key performance problems were identified: narrating conventions and character motivation. These were essentially dramatic in nature. Paul Ashcroft who played Dave felt that there was a problem in having 'Train Dave' split his focus between conversing with Colin, his companion on the train, and speaking to the audience (up to this point, Colin was a speaking part). Ashcroft felt this split in focus would confuse the audience. This problem was resolved by Zoe Allerton Ashley and Lyall Brook's suggestion that Colin as a speaking part was dropped, that 'train Dave' only speak to the audience and that he reported Colin's speeches. This solution had several positive outcomes. Firstly, it resolved the actor's split focus, and made it very clear when Dave was in the train narrating his work. Secondly, quoting Colin, rather than having Colin as a speaking character, worked with conventions of reported speech already operating in the play. It also enhanced this convention by ensuring that 'train Dave' only ever recalled events, right up until the final moments of the play when he speaks on the phone 'in train time' to Susan and Jack (2013a).

7.4 Narrating Worldview

In addition to supporting the dramatic logic of the play, orderly narrating is also a means by which characters express a particular worldview. Kevin's monologues are orderly in that they further the dramatic action and build dramatic irony, but they also present an 'ordering' polemic. Kevin has three monologues: two sermons in his role as a preacher, and a long confessional speech to Dave in which he reveals his secret life. The first sermon introduces us to a fierce and manipulative orator destined to become the main antagonist of the dramatic story (5). The second sermon takes place just after Dave's fateful decision to withhold Kevin's photographs from Central. Prior to this second sermon, Kevin has confessed his other, secret life to Dave. Kevin's revelations render his subsequent sermon, with its theme of personal truth, ironic (53).

Central to his pedagogy is an argument in which surfaces, and the images they produce, are suspect:

Kevin: A true smell. A true smile. Truth is all about us. We are drenched in it. Dressed in it. We walk it. Speak it. Think it. Touch it. Grasp it. Sometimes it is just out of reach but we are told that for just a few dollars we can find it. It is overseas and in your neighbour's backyard. It is a swimming pool. A plane. Bed sheets. It is in the next television program or film or novel or sexual encounter (5).

The only solution to the world's deceit is to accept that one is already sanctified by a preeminent God:

Kevin: When you feel yourself simply in the world, then you are in God himself. He is not going to talk to you. He is not even going to help you. Because he needs you to wake up and see for yourself what you truly are (52).

Kevin, however, also has a different, darker version of God that he divulges to Dave. He narrates the night he first attended a brothel, and the despair it brought him and his wife, as a prelude to discovering God's remoteness:

Kevin: He's there. Knowing. Being. But doing nothing. Why? Because he can. That morning, as I lay awkwardly with my wife, it dawned on me: he doesn't care. He just watches. Ruthlessly (45).

This orderly narration of the world, in which the surfaces of things are suspect, truths are concealed and position and relation are fixed, is echoed by Central's Bronwyn, when she advises Dave that 'you just don't get the bigger picture (55)', by Kathryn's division of people into the weak or the strong (58) and by

Phil's attack on his girlfriend's fiction, in which he argues that real story 'has a beginning, middle and end' and it only takes 'a minute to read' (72). Dave himself subscribes to this worldview when he describes his job as an ordered sequence of watching, framing, focusing and clicking (9).

7.5 Resistant Narrators and the Narratives They Produce

By contrast, unruly narrating in *P.O.V. Dave* presents both a different mode of performance, and in addition, an alternative worldview. Specifically, unruly narrators in this play resist the ordered, commoditised world. They do so by estranging the ordinary through intense, fragmented description and also by blurring boundaries between showing and telling, fact and fiction and biography and autobiography.

In addition, some unruly narrators also tell stories *of* the artworks they make, in part to challenge any preconception about them and in part to maintain enough space between the artwork and the spectator to ensure the possibility of free interpretation, without either pre-determining the critical gaze, or dismissing critique altogether. Through this act of curating, this particular form of unruly narrating deliberately blurs orders of telling and showing, in contrast to orderly narrating, in which the job often is to explain what is withheld from view.

The first speech in the play is a monologue, spoken by 'Train Dave' in the present:

Dave: A tin of Fosters. The Daily on seats. A Westpac bank cheque, ripped in two. Winston Smith Shoes. Black. Scuffed. Mine, I think. Blood. Type O. That's mine too. Light, intermittent rain easing to drizzle. A sign through the window: Ferndale Station. The 3.40 to Harris. A train carriage. Still. Empty. Except for me, Dave, and a bloke by my side in an expensive suit and a crowd looking in (2).

This monologue occurs towards the end of the play's fabula, or story, but it is presented analytically at the beginning of the plot. Dave presents random observations about the detritus of a train floor, punctuated by the sudden, disturbing mention of his blood. Given that Dave has just been stabbed and lies on the train's floor waiting for help, such random associations could be expected from someone in such a distressed state. The seemingly chaotic, fragmented monologue also offers another meaning. It represents Dave's developmental progression in the play's narrative, from someone who once viewed the world according to a series of instructions and pre-assigned sequences, to someone who, at the end, poetically resists order.

The seeds of Dave's poetic engagement with the world are there all along. During his vigil outside the Pound Club, Dave allows himself to meditate on the randomness of the streetscape (12). Later, after his confrontation with Kevin he returns to playful reflection and muses:

Dave: Isn't it amazing, how we can think of so many things all at the one time? (16).

But these first, small unruly engagements that occur early on in the play's story are mere digressions from his main task, which as he states, is to 'send the footage. Get the money... The sooner you send, the sooner you receive (20).' For a good part of the play, the unruly and poetic are to be avoided. The sinuous folds of Susan's moving dress, the strangeness of Angus' story and the dream he has one night of the ancient ruins in the sea are all mere footnotes to the dramatic story Dave feels compelled to tell Colin.

However, as the play progresses Dave's oscillation between narrating modes, from orderly to unruly, and back again, increases in intensity as he gradually relinquishes his rigid worldview of cause and effect representation. This oscillation is the core dynamic of the play's narrative. It also results from a combination of my practical experimentation and research. In identifying the orderly and the unruly narrator, both in others' work and my own, I have been able to combine these two figures in the one performance to produce a distinct theatrical narrative *about* narrating. In so doing, I have brought together several ways of knowing: the insights from the literature review and research into other productions; my own practice and the reflexive knowledge that I am producing through this critical analysis of the play.

Dave's journey is structured according to a series of encounters with other characters, situations and narrators that, through an unruly blurring of the boundaries between biography and autobiography and fact and fiction, resist predetermined forms and challenge his perceptions of the ordered world. His encounter with Gwen is of particular importance. Gwen's project, to have her lovers photograph her just after sex, is an expression of abandon and joy, an activity in direct opposition to Dave's initial *modus operandi*. When she first invites Dave into this activity, he reacts aggressively. The possibility that someone can find freedom in photography, when for him it has been part of a hierarchical arrangement that has rendered his own creativity meaningless, momentarily enrages him. However Gwen persists:

Gwen: ...Tell me a story.

Dave: About what?

Gwen: Not what. Who. About me.

Dave: But I don't know you.

She hands me back the camera.

Gwen: Do it with this. But this time, gently.

Dave: This time, I wait. I look. I see. I frame. I click. I show it to her.
 Gwen: It's beautiful (66).

Gwen's status as a narrator is unclear and in the play text, there is no strong indication that she has a telling function. Her character is mainly represented through dialogue. However, as a presenter or curator of her work, it could be argued that her narrating function is implied. As Seymour Chatman argues, once we allow the possibility of showing a narrative, we recognise the existence of a 'shower' (117). Gwen certainly 'shows' her photographic exhibition, but does she tell? I have argued previously that one of the characteristics of unruly narrators is their capacity to blur the boundaries between showing and telling, but for that to happen there must be a degree of telling taking place to begin with, whether it is to describe or recount: if not, then anyone or thing could be declared a narrator and the category would collapse.

What can be said about Gwen is that, while she may not be a narrator herself, she gets Dave to do the telling. In handing him the camera, she invites him to be the narrator of her life. In doing so, she blurs the boundary between biography and autobiography. Whose story is she asking him to tell? Hers? Or Dave's? When Gwen shows Dave her entire collection, he is momentarily overwhelmed. What follows is a dispute about their meaning:

Gwen: What do you think? Well?
 It's a celebration. Of pleasure.
 Dave: Yours.
 Gwen: Who else's?
 Dave: In some you look sad.
 Gwen: Sex is sad sometimes (67).

Gwen then provokes Dave to tell her whom he sees. As Dave narrates in response:

Dave: I see...
 Announcer: This is an express train to ... Travis.
 Dave: Little stories. Each face different. But together, they were her. Gwen.
 Just Gwen (68).

Dave's encounter with Gwen produces a significant outcome. Through this narrating moment, he demonstrates a fundamental shift away from perceiving the world as something to be framed, clicked and delivered. Instead, he discovers a way of thinking about identity that is ambiguous and playful, rather than predetermined.

Of course, this scene could be read as a display of narcissism on Gwen's part, and indeed there is room for such an interpretation in its performance.⁴⁹ Her desire to engage Dave in a production of her own imagery does suggest a preoccupation with herself at the expense of others. However, if the scene's performance were to only emphasise such an interpretation, then the wider dynamics of the play would be lost. For all her self-indulgence, Gwen is playfully, and positively, engaged in narrating her own life. More so, she also allows room for Dave to participate in this project. The distance between them is negotiated, rather than erased or enlarged. The photographs they eventually make together constitute a shared experience whose meaning is unsettled.

In this scene Dave encounters a creative practice fundamentally at odds with his own. It begins with an attempt by him to take control of the process, but ends with him being invited to translate and narrate Gwen's images into his own experience, without robbing Gwen of hers. There is something here of Rancière's notion of the 'emancipated community' of 'storytellers and translators', translating each other (2009: 22). For Rancière, an emancipated spectator is one who is free to interpret at will.

Yet, the history out of which Gwen's performance emerges will undoubtedly influence its reception. In demonstrating her capacity to freely create with her body, Gwen is also practising a resistance against the commoditized images of women that continue to dominate screens, pages and billboards. When Gwen stops Dave's aggressive attempts to control the photo shoot, she claims not only the right to a sensual present: she also performs a refusal of the policing that would severely proscribe her pleasure. While audience members may translate her performance as they choose, it would be difficult to completely disassociate Gwen's free, creative engagement with her own pleasure from that which opposes it. It may be a moment of free translation, but it is also a performance of a dialectic between an oppressive past and a possible future. Elin Diamond's feminist interpretation of Brecht's *gestus* is useful here, as something that can inform without restricting reception. As she argues, the *gestus* can reveal history and still remain indeterminate (1997: 52).

When Dave shares with us his image of a Gwen that is both multiple and singular, he is also telling us about the journey *he* is taking, from a past in which he framed subjects according to a predetermined future, to a collaborative present in which he allows meaning to unfold.

In contrast to Gwen's showing of her photos, Dave's son Jack is clearly the narrator in the presentation of 'Some Shoes', a short film that he shows to his grandfather, Angus:

⁴⁹ The recent phenomena known as the 'selfie' comes to mind, a practice of self-photography with mobiles. It, too, is sometimes seen as indicative of a narcissistic trend in culture (Ostrow 2015), but this does not need to be the only interpretation. Like Gwen's photography, it can also be seen as an indicative of a freedom to play and experiment.

Jack: This is my friend, Max. He's walking to the shops.
 I get him to hold the phone and point down at his shoes.
 And this is my friend, Carmen. She's walking into the kitchen.
 And this is her mother, Belle. She's walking in the garden (26).

In so doing, Jack provokes an argument with his grandfather about the purpose and requirements of narrating and storytelling:

Angus: How do we know?
 Jack: Know what?
 Angus: Whose shoes are those?
 Jack: I just told you.
 Angus: But if you didn't tell me...
 Jack: It doesn't matter, papa (26).

While this argument is brief, there is much at stake. Angus insists on the importance of knowing the owner of the shoes and demanding to know the theme. This dispute between Angus and his grandson mirrors one of the principle conflicts in the play, which is between narrating as dependent upon a correspondence between character, action and theme, and narrating as playful engagement. Jack insists on his film being a story simply because of its playful engagement with images of shoes and walking. Angus wants a 'who', doing a 'what' with an explanation as to 'why'.

The last scene of the play reprises this dispute, but in a darker key. Phil demands Dave offer an explanation about his girlfriend Katie's mysterious story. In his reply, Dave echoes Jack's defence of the film:

Dave: It's a story (71).

Phil's response in turn echoes that of Angus, though more aggressively:

Phil: A story? About what? Don't tell me what a fuckin' story is. This is a story. This!

Dave: He picks up one of the newspapers and shakes it at me. There's a picture of Kevin, flashing in and out of the paper's folds.

Phil: This sick cunt. He's a fuckin' story. You get caught. You pay the price. He's got a beginning, middle and end and it only takes me a minute to read. Value for fuckin' money. What the fuck is hers about? What? What? (71).

For Phil, like Angus, a narrative requires a cause-and-effect logic. It must tell us what it is about. It must conform to unities of action and time, identify itself as fact or fiction and in addition it should be tied to a moral lesson. In Phil we see a particularly brutal expression of the play world's dominant cultural order. The thought that Katie's story, with its haunting description of birds suddenly taking flight for no apparent reason, could be something freely expressed and open to interpretation, is an impossibility that has to be erased, or at least devoured, as Phil makes Katie eat her story. After all, stories in Phil's world are for consumption.

Jacques Rancière's models of artistic regimes have provided frames with which to interpret these experiments with narrating, and they form part of the 'knowing what' process I undertook in researching others' work, and developing my own. His theory of the representational regime offers a detailed and nuanced way of thinking about Aristotelian poetics, and a basis for conceiving the orderly narrator. Rancière identifies within this regime an assumption that representation has nothing to do with truth, and everything to do with a causal ordering of actions, designed to manipulate knowledge in order to eventually produce pathos, or feeling. Language and character serve needs of a sequentially structured story. The orderly narrator serves this system, by supporting cause and effect, action-orientated storytelling. Specifically, it helps identify place and time, and concentrates moments of dramatic crisis (Rancière 2007: 109)

By contrast, the aesthetic regime Rancière points to allows for a freer movement between art and life that is not constrained by rules of representation. Artistic activities show an indifference to style and draw freely from life. Language and feeling are entwined. For Rancière, it is this regime that separates voice from character and allows it to roam in a non-linear way through narratives (2007: 109). I use Rancière's aesthetic regime to think about how the unruly narrator produces multiple voices, language effects and perceptions that playfully engage with the world and are not tethered to the requirements of story action. These qualities characterize Gwen's photographs, Jack's film, Katie's story and Dave's newfound unruly narrating.

But how consequential is all this? Gwen's, Jack's and Katie's creativity hardly appears to change the dominant structures that give rise to the sort of reporting Dave has depended upon for his livelihood. The disruptions they produce are momentary. They may be symbolic of a capacity to defy the dominant order

through occasional, innovative acts of individual expression, but do they stand for anything other than this? Katie is forced to literally eat her words, before she rushes off into the night with Phil. Dave is no David to Central's Goliath. The dominant regime of storytelling, with its goal to manipulate and exploit people's lives, remains intact. The newspapers that fill the train carriage at the end, that proudly trumpet the exposé of Kevin, attest to this.

In a specific attack on Rancière's theory of the aesthetic, and a more general assessment of art's capacity, Hal Foster argues that artistic expression is no match for the image and information industries that control and concentrate 'the sensible' with such ease and efficiency. For Foster any redistribution of the perceptible through contemporary art is 'a mirage' and when opposed to capitalism's commoditisation, it is 'little more than the opiate of the art world left' (2013). Following Foster's critique, it could be argued that Dave's, Gwen's, Jack's and Kath's creative acts are a mere digression from what is otherwise an oppressive and unyielding culture. In this way, the play could be read as mournful and nihilistic. After all, Dave dies having had no discernible effect on the world around him.

I want to address two problems associated with assessing creative expression (to which I have linked unruly narrating), on the basis of its consequentiality and in applying such a rubric to *P.O.V. Dave*. Firstly, such an assessment draws a particular logic of causality between the aesthetic and life: if art *is* to be of any consequence, it *must* have a discernible, measurable effect on the world around it. It must activate in some observable way. Lehmann's idea of the postdramatic as potentially shocking follows this logic, in the way it configures the audience as needing some form of activation (2006: 187). Such a requirement buys into a binaries of activity and passivity, and seeing and doing. It assumes either that art should somehow activate spectators lest they remain passive, or that looking and contemplating is superior to activity. As Jacques Rancière argues, these binaries are 'allegories of inequality', whichever way they play out (2009: 12).

Measuring art according to its consequences also produces troubling questions: who does the discerning and the observing? Who gets to measure what should be changed and determine art's impact? These are the very questions the play raises about creative expression, and it uses characters' expressive moments to do so. Far from being simple digressions, their appearance and behaviours are potentially provocative *because* they are contingent and their outcomes indeterminable. To provide any guarantee that creative expression will produce significant change is to limit it to predetermined standards of taste and form.

On the other hand, by avoiding such guarantees art risks being ignored, or actively rejected, but this is the risk that Gwen, Jack, Kath, Angus and Dave must take when they express themselves creatively. If they are seen to risk little, their offerings may indeed count for nothing more than mere digressions. Dave's

encounter with Gwen is of particular importance in this respect. She risks being shamed. He risks encountering his own vulnerability.

Secondly, assessments of art's political potential sometimes assume that if it is to count for anything, it must somehow directly confront that which it opposes. Such a critique is inherent in Foster's argument that art is 'no match' for capitalism (2013). Foster limits the potential of art's effect to an arena in which it can only be measured in terms of winning or losing, but art does not need to engage in a contest in order to disrupt and interrupt. It can do so through subverting sanctioned form, and at times, such subversion can manifest through a simple refusal to act. A reading of the play's expressive moments as scenes of resistance and refusal retains their disruptive quality without having to demonstrate causal logic or produce action. In fact, the play's expressive moments at times resist through *inaction*. Dave's unruly monologues in which he dwells upon the detailed surfaces of the play's world break with the play's dramatic impetus. In embracing looking and watching, the play's characters resist a call to action.

Furthermore, effective resistance does not necessarily require a self-conscious political gesture to unveil the workings of capitalism or attempt to shock us with its horrific effects and proclaim that all is broken and beyond repair. Lacking in Foster's critique is any sense of the middle. The experiences of capitalist life can be revealed through intense, poetic detail that sit in the intervals of the everyday, in such a way as to allow shifts in perception, without removing the spectator's capacity to shape at will.

Yet, despite these arguments, a problem still remains: how to describe the dynamics of this midway space in a way that provides more than just a generalised account of perception and sensation? Rancière holds fast to a broad description of the aesthetic as momentary, improvised and liminal (Rancière 2004). However, as Peter Hallward has noted of Rancière's work, the liminal and the thematics of the interval may not be enough to shape art's situation (2005: 41). Furthermore, indeterminacy and ambiguity can be crippling experiences if all they produce is further fragmentation and difference.

Until now, I have argued that intense description, along with a blurring of boundaries between telling and showing, action and non-action, and character and voice characterise unruly narrating. However, something else is needed to flesh out its operations in these final moments of *P.O.V. Dave*, without forcing it into predetermined genres or self-conscious political narratives. The something else, I suggest, is recognition.

Nominally, recognition denotes memory, perception or realization of truths, and an acknowledgement of validity (Stevenson 2010), but as Paul Ricoeur has demonstrated in his extensive investigation, it is a complex process that can be considered as the knowledge of objects, self-recognition and as reciprocity (2005). These definitions especially align with the play's ending, which is thick with recognition of

things, self and others.

Unlike Ricoeur, my aim in introducing recognition at this late stage is not phenomenological. It is to thicken my account of telling as a performance mode in *P.O.V. Dave*, and, in particular, to provide Dave's unruly narrating with agency. It is, to quote Robin Nelson, a 'knowing what' activity (43), a reflective engagement with the influences that have guided the play's development. Recognising is an encounter split in two by orderly and unruly narrating. The orderly narrator recognises that which has been lying in wait, hidden in the folds of the play world until events conspire to push it out and make it unavoidable, as for example with Dave's recognition that Kevin will not relent, or Bronwyn's explanation to Dave of the system in which he has always been working. With its secrets revealed, the play world prepares itself for its final moments. By contrast, the unruly narrator recognizes by unrecognising, and it does so through metaphor to make strange the surface of things. If there is a discovery to be made by the unruly narrator, it is in its capacity to retell the world, as it has never been told before.

Dramatically, the play presents several moments of recognition, one brutally following the other. Dave recognises the futility of holding on to the cheque; he witnesses his failure to stop the publications of the photos; he recognizes the love he feels for Susan and, perhaps most tenderly of all, he discovers in his son the capacity to hear and hold his grandfather's story. For Aristotle, recognition was not so much a moment unto itself, but part of a sequence that comprises reversal, discovery and suffering (2000: 56). This sequence traces a movement from ignorance to knowledge, but as I have argued earlier, it is one grounded in the workings of the play world, rather than simply produced by character alone. Seen this way, events deliver Dave to these moments of discovery. The relationships he encounters at the end of the play with Angus, Susan, Colin and Jack have always been there, waiting for the moment when they can confront Dave.

Dave's unruly encounter with Gwen's image is a world away from the dramatic staging posts described above. It is a gestalt of the multiple and the singular, the many Gwens as one. It bridges the scene between her flat and the train, but it does not dramatically propel the action forward. It does not require Dave to make decision to move on. It suspends time and place. In this way it is liminal, but it is also a moment in its own right. Lehmann presents recognition in postdramatic theatre as a process that is continually outdone by a play of surprises (2006: 77). It is an unsettling experience that is never complete. For Lehmann, postdramatic theatre emphasises what is incomplete about recognition (99). But this concept of recognition as continually displacing itself refuses any capacity for clarity or discovery in the moment. Gwen's images do not produce endless horizons of unresolved meaning for Dave. Nor do they shock Dave into non-thought. In recognising her identity as both a composition of 'little stories' and a single figure, Dave finds in himself a capacity to hold contradictory points of view in the moment. This

was hinted at early on in the play, when he observed ‘how we can think of so many things all at the one time?’ (16). In his vision of Gwen he finds the answer.

In the following moments, Dave shuttles back and forth from recognizing what he must do, to recognising the world as it has never been until now. In seeing the sea of newspapers with his photos ‘carpeting the carriage floor...blanketing the seats’ (71), and Kevin ‘flashing in and out of the paper’s folds’ (74), Dave produces a metaphoric account of the world as it appears before him. In recognizing the world this way, Dave renders it unrecognizable. This is the point Dave arrives at. When once he sequenced his world according for framing and focusing, he now welcomes its impossible associations. Instead of the Aristotelian movement from the unknown to the known, the reverse takes place: the known is unknown.

These moments of recognition echo encounters I have identified in other productions. In the final moments of *Bare Witness* and *Beyond the Neck* events force characters to rediscover memories that they have so forcefully tried to suppress, and these discoveries are narrated dramatically. By contrast, unruly narrators in these productions use recognition to unknow the known. In *Bare Witness*, Jack’s mechanically precise description of the dying child seeing herself reflected in the camera lens, and the strange poetry it produced, is one such moment. Paul’s recognition in *Intimacy* that there is nothing left to do but leave the stage is another.

Of course, creative expression’s consequentiality can be dismissed altogether as a problem. Why should it have to do anything? Why can’t it be seen as purely autonomous? This is Lehmann’s wish, when he imagines postdramatic theatre as devoid of representation and consigned it to an ever disappearing present (143). What then of the spectator, or indeed the artist? Art depends on networks of production, intention, social context and reception. Gwen draws her photographs from her own lived experience, and while she presents them as creations in the moment of their making, they are complex artefacts, informed by history, and shaped by a playful creative practice between herself and her photographer, in order to be made and viewed.

In the final moments of the play, the themes of telling and recognition grow more acute. Dave passes the story of the light on to Jack, and in doing so, changes the key of the play’s narrative. Dave’s relationship with his son comes into sharp focus, and with it, a new conception of story as it shifts from being either a means to control or disrupt, to a way of honouring. This last encounter does not quite fit into what has gone before. It is emotionally charged with Dave’s need to pass on the story of the light to his son and to have his son listen carefully to the instructions for the story’s careful handling in the future. Dave requires that the story be tethered to a contractual obligation, and conform to a storytelling based on an ethics of

intention.

This last exchange is a puzzle. Until now, I have argued that the play's themes be understood in terms of the conflicted relationship between orderly and unruly narrating, between action and non-action, the various forms of recognition each allows. When we first meet Dave, he is indebted to a representational mode of storytelling, and then by degrees he refuses the dominant culture and moves towards a more poetic engagement with the world and those around him. However, the play's last exchange is hardly free play. The handing on of the story to Jack is serious stuff. Where Jack could freely create and share his shoe film, the latter story must be handled with care. Its performance is restricted. It leaves little room for improvisation. With the story comes a requirement to enunciate its provenance. This will always be Angus' story. While it is Jack's to keep and repeat, it will never be his to rewrite. Significantly, Dave seeks consensus on this matter.

Rancière has been a strident critic of what he terms relational art, which seeks to justify art according to the needs of a given community. He describes 'ethical art' as the collapse of artistic and political dissent into consensual order (2004: 21). Following Rancière, Clare Bishop argues that relational approaches to art risk subduing the idiosyncratic and controversial in favour of a 'consensual behaviour upon whose irreproachable sensitivity we can all rationally agree' (2012: 26). It could be said that in seeking consensus and placing obligation on a mode of telling, Dave is limiting creative expression. The narrating of Angus' story must first attend to a predetermined relationship, rather than open up to new possibilities. The story's authorship and the need to preface its telling with a form of social engagement become crucial to, and possibly anticipate, its meaning.

Conversely, it can be argued that in insisting on stewarding story, Dave is, in fact, further resisting the culture he once obeyed. When working for Central, Dave thought nothing of stealing others' stories and selling them on, while at the same living a life riddled with doubt and confusion. In telling Susan he loves her and in asking Jack to care for the story and be mindful of its origins, Dave distances himself markedly from the masters he once served. Furthermore, he recognises that the story's origins, the need to recite them and to remember them, are indisputable. In gifting this story to Jack, he recognises his son's capacity to treat the story with the respect it deserves. Such an interpretation provides a distinct trajectory for Dave: this is the first time he has freely given anything to anyone in the play. But it also suggests that the momentary, improvised and liminal are at times not enough and that they will be augmented by an ethics of relation, and recognition.



Figure 4: Harrison Smith as 'Jack' in *P.O.V. Dave*. The Courthouse, La Mama Theatre (De Saint Croix 2013).

In the end, an interpretation of these final moments does not sit in the play text alone. It will be addressed by the play's production. The play's workshopped reading at La Mama (2013) demonstrated how creatively wayward the written word can be, when it comes to being performed. The reading's simple *mise en scène*, of performers waiting and observing as stories are told, created images that the writing could not have anticipated, and reminded us that narrating in theatre is never only a textual instance: it is a performance of observing and listening as much as telling. A particular example of the unanticipated results of embodied performance stays with me. It is the final moment, just after Dave has uttered his instructions to Jack, to honour his grandfather's story. Abrahams directed the actor playing Jack to remain on stage alone, under a fading light (See Figure 4). It was, in many senses of the word, a 'telling' moment, as Jack was left with the story. It underlined the dramatic narrative's conclusion and Dave's decisive performance without sacrificing the performance's aesthetic. It told us the play had ended, but the nature of what had just been told, remained questionable. Was it an attempt to limit the creative effects of Angus' story by imposing relational requirements on it? Or was Dave's handover simply an attempt to perpetuate a myth that he, like the story he gave Jack, might endure in some form? Ironically, the last thing to be performed is not Dave's narrating, but Jack's listening and waiting (2013).

Throughout this thesis, I have focused on the entanglement of the orderly and the unruly narrator, the representational with the endlessly relational qualities of the signified or what Rancière refers to as a 'forest of things, acts and signs' (2009: 16). While Rancière assumes the aesthetic regime to have superseded the classical one, I maintain things are a little more complicated. Dramatic structure has not exactly disappeared. It remains, but it does so in the company of various aesthetic strategies that hold it to account. In the productions I have examined, the dramatic and the aesthetic sit in tension with each other, and this tension produces a narrative. This is particularly apparent in *P.O.V. Dave*. Dave's story is never allowed to be only a dramatic one. Poetic narrating continually challenges the tragic logic of the play's

plot. Dave traces a difficult, and at times dangerous, journey between the emplotted and the momentary, from a realization of one's limits in a world of action, to discovering a capacity to poetically retell the world.

Through the making of *P.O.V. Dave*, I have been careful to preserve an identity for dramatic structure as a hierarchical system that privileges action. I have avoided the temptation to dissolve it into relativisms such as the 'poly-dramatic', or consign it to history. Dramatic structure remains a powerful means of shaping and performing a story, but it can no longer occupy the stage simply on its own terms. The gig is well and truly up. The contemporary stage demands its investigation. I have demonstrated how the unruly narrator works as one of the dramatic's chief antagonists. It threatens its stabilities, but it does not destroy them altogether. On the contrary, as *P.O.V. Dave* demonstrates, the tensions this investigation produces are productive.

8. CONCLUSION

This thesis began by asking how contemporary Australian theatre makers use narrating to produce performances. In the productions I analysed, I discovered that there was not one but two types of narrator, each of which represents two very different modes of performance. Orderly narrators support dramatic structure through a range of metatheatrical techniques to heighten conflict and hasten story. They are involved in a dual action of suppressing appearance and manipulating information. In *Bare Witness*, narrators report the events of war off stage, but in a way that sets up the climax to come and engages suspense. The play withholds the truth of Jacek's fate until the very end, when it is told in a way that maximises pathos. In *Beyond the Neck* the old man's recollection of the shootings is always partial and never enacted, up until the very end when the memory finally blossoms into a single, emotionally charged moment. Orderly narrators also move the story across time and place. With Dave we travel swiftly through his week, and his orderly linking of events heightens the urgency with which he tells his story.

By contrast, unruly narrators produce dissent, ambiguity and uncertainty. They disrupt the neat pairings on which the dramatic relies: telling and showing, acting and stillness and character and speech. *Bare Witness* produces a *mise en scène* in which telling is an image and identities between character and performer blur. In *Beyond the Neck*, the chorus watches without speaking, language is music and inanimate objects speak. In *Intimacy*, performers refuse the possibility of the dramatic by casualising the delivery of their stories, or suddenly stopping them without cause. In *P.O.V. Dave*, there are moments in which showing and telling are inseparable.

This thesis makes another discovery. These productions make narratives *out* of this dissent. Dramatic action drives characters to speak in certain ways to produce conflict, and withhold knowledge to produce emotional effects. Yet, voices flout these rules and speak out in an unruly way. Language and image disrupt action. *Bare Witness* uses these two modes of narrating to present a paradox: while characters narrate a world of perpetual movement, it is only through a suspension of this movement that this world can be fully told. Photography is an activity across time, but is also a timeless moment. In *Beyond the Neck*, non-dramatic, choric narrating conflicts with dramatic monologue to suggest that tragedy is experienced both collectively and individually, with the differences between the two being irreconcilable. In *Intimacy*, narrating keeps the dramatic at bay, but suggests that, in the absence of a cohesive, cause and effect narrative, life can only be mourned as a series of departures and absences. *P.O.V. Dave* is thick with telling as a subject and a strategy. It contrasts hegemonic, cause and effect narrating with poetic observation. Narrators manipulate, forestall death, free the imagination and for just a brief moment, suggest an ethical practice of storytelling. To account for all this, the play suggests that our worlds are story.

Importantly, the dissents and disruptions each production produces are not reconciled. Perpetual action and stillness remain tragically opposed in *Bare Witness*. *Beyond the Neck* refuses to reconcile collective and individual perception. The only way *Intimacy* can settle the game between theatre and reality is through melancholy. Story as a way of living remains ambiguous in *P.O.V. Dave*, and indeterminable. What I am arguing here is that, in recognising narrating in these productions as heterogeneous rather than as homogenised, we can identify how they then exploit these differences of form for their own narrative ends. These productions do not synthesise differences in form. On the contrary, they keep them unsettled. The implications of these observations and arguments are therefore several. Firstly, *Bare Witness*, *Beyond the Neck* and *P.O.V. Dave* demonstrate that theatre does not have to abandon dramatic structures completely. The productions retain these, without relying entirely on the dramatic to frame their narratives. Characters are propelled by events to achieve ends beyond their means, conflict with antagonising forces and discover new capacities. Knowledge is withheld to produce pathos. However, these productions ensure that dramatic structure is never hegemonic. On the contrary, they rely on the dramatic being contingent and temporary.

As a consequence, Lehmann's model of the postdramatic as a theoretical frame is limited by its insistence that drama and the postmodern stage cannot co-exist (2006). On the contrary, three of the productions profiled in this thesis demonstrate quite the opposite: dramatic structure does sit with the non-dramatic. More so, this incompatible relationship becomes a feature of the stage. Granted, in *Intimacy* the situation is slightly different. Dramatic elements are not performed. However, performers are reliant on the dramatic as something to banish. As the interviews with the company demonstrated, the dramatic remains important as an idea, because it produces the resistances that make up the performance. These productions also refuse Lehmann's postdramatic in other ways. For Lehmann, theatre should produce 'shock and disorientation'. This, in turn, should draw spectators' awareness to their own presence (187). Certainly the *mise en scène* of *Bare Witness*, with its use of jarring light and sound effects, seems to want at times to do just this. However, when its narrators step forward to tell their stories, they provide a very different experience, in which audience members are allowed an opportunity to listen, and interpret, at will, and in their own way.

Lehmann argues that the body is pre-eminent in the postdramatic and its appearance precedes narrating (173). These productions demonstrate something to the contrary. Their stories circulated prior to their performance. Many of the stories performed in *Bare Witness*, *Beyond the Neck* and *Intimacy* were already in existence as artifacts, before their production. They were found, used and passed on. If story in performance is only ever embodied, it cannot be held up as a third thing between performer and spectator. It cannot be an object of play. As these productions show, play is an essential feature of the orderly

narrator, as it bounces story around the stage.

Throughout this thesis, I have been alert to Ron Erickson's argument that narrating in contemporary theatre has produced a homogenous wash of speech across the stage. He insists that in its claims to polyvocality, contemporary theatre avoids staging conflict. Erickson essentialises dialogue as a preferred mode of conflict (2003). These productions demonstrate that, on the contrary, conflict is not reliant on dramatic dialogue. Multiple narrators can talk across time and place to produce disagreement, as they do in *Beyond the Neck*. Poetic voices can dialogue with drama itself, as they do in *P.O.V. Dave*. Telling can also produce powerful moments. In *Bare Witness* Jacek's simple story of the girl dying in his arms from a sniper's bullet punctuates the narrative in a way dialogue could not.

In a slightly different vein, Patrice Pavis expresses a concern that in abandoning Brechtian style theatre and the clarity it offered, the contemporary stage, with its emphasis on multiple voices, favours the ambiguous and the opaque (290). There is some merit in Pavis' assessment. *P.O.V. Dave* has the potential to veer towards the mystical and the mysterious, if its ambiguities are overplayed at the expense of its dramatic structure.

Nonetheless, there is no rule to say that telling must be synonymous with story. The fragments of speech that litter *Beyond the Neck* are often nothing more than short observations, but they are a powerful reminder of how trauma can dislocate perception and thought. Furthermore, in the way they are often spoken by chorus members, they remind us that telling is not reliant on character. In fact, when the choric narrators silently observe, they show us that telling does not have to rely on speech at all.

Jacques Rancière's theories of the distribution of the perceptible and artistic regimes have deeply influenced this thesis and its arguments. His thought has helped me frame dramatic structure as a series of rules that determine what can, and cannot, be seen and said, and this, in turn, has provided me with a framework for theorising why narrating is so limited in drama. Rancière's concept of the aesthetic regime, as a historical period that has freed speech and image from the requirements of dramatic action, has in turn influenced my concept of the unruly narrator and helped me identify its capacity to disrupt the dramatic (Rancière 2004).

This thesis suggests several directions for further research into narrating as a performance mode. Mediated performance such as television fiction is increasingly turning to the narrator to shape narrative. *Modern Family* is one of several contemporary productions that use narrators to link segments and episodes. In the case of this particular series, narrators create comic irony by betraying their faults and secrets as they talk to camera. Is this simply a more sophisticated use of the comic aside? Or might such a

study reveal how porous television production has become, in the way it is drawing on different performance modes, when once it actively quarantined narrative conventions and genres?

Ethnographic performance studies may also reveal the extent to which the narrator in contemporary performance is shaped by specific cultural traditions. For instance, Dario Fo and Franca Rama have drawn heavily on Italian oral storytelling traditions such as the *fabulateri* (tradespeople or vendors who told tales while they worked), stand up, and variety traditions (Scuderi 2000). Research could further reveal how popular oral traditions have historically informed Australian theatre, and it could also suggest new ways in which these traditions could be re-interpreted.

Through its framing of the narrator as both a narrative and a theatrical device, this thesis invites further possibilities for narratology and theatre studies to collaborate more closely (or disagree productively). For instance, the assumptions that narratology has traditionally made between ‘sjuzet’ and ‘fabula’, where the former is a logical ordering of the latter, beg more theatrical attention, as Pavis has suggested (1997: 220). Further studies might usefully explore how theatre makers receive and apply notions of exposition.

In addition to these specific possibilities, this thesis opens up broader questions about how contemporary theatre performance can be interpreted as a site of formal disagreement. Rather than shoehorn performances into predetermined categories such as the postdramatic, this thesis has demonstrated how theatre performances can be interpreted by identifying how they produce narratives out of conflicting forms and modes of thought.

If there is one, simple conclusion to be drawn from the way these productions use narrators to dramatise and poeticise, it is this: there is no resolution to the disagreements they produce. This is the very point these productions make. Dramatic structure has not entirely left the stage, but its presence is conditional. For it to occur, it must have its rules of action, character and speech playfully exposed. Who better to do this than the unruly narrator, who separates voice from character and character from action, and who muddies the differences between showing and telling, acting and not acting, and theatre and life?

APPENDIX: THE DEVELOPMENT OF *P.O.V. DAVE*

This appendix outlines the developmental stages of the script for *P.O.V. Dave* and its workshopped reading, and the emergence of its structures and themes. My account of the methods I used to develop the play, and the way in which it explores the research question, tells a very simple story. It shows how, in responding to the research question, and by experimenting with narrating, investigating its use in contemporary work and reflecting on my own practice, I discovered ways of using narrating to challenge the limitations of a representative poetics, but without dispensing with drama. On the contrary, I discovered a way of making theatre *from* this challenge. At the same time, narrating functions in the play thickened to become both strategy and subject.

This complex, thick use of narrating in *P.O.V. Dave* was achieved over three years of development and involved five phases:

- early drafting that involved some rudimentary experimentation with narrating as monologue;
- theoretical readings;
- finding inspiration for the unruly use of narrating in other performances and theoretical readings;
- collaborating with a dramaturge and actors to find ways of disrupting the linear logic of the narrative without dispensing with its dramatic structure; and
- finally, the performance workshop, which produced new directions for further development.

1. Early Drafting

The play's development began with a simple dramatic proposition. A man lies dying, the victim of a random knife attacks. As he waits for the ambulance, he recalls the events that brought him to this point. The initial aim was to create a protagonist who only exists by virtue of the reactions of others to him. The characters in his life were to narrate a series of monologues to a video camera. The camera would be the protagonist's eye and the screen his memory. The play initially developed as a series of monologues to the camera as the protagonist, Dave, recalled his last few days. Those performing to camera were his internal creations, understood from his point of view. Dave was a creation of those speaking to him. This approach offered an opportunity to experiment with performing internal memory (Maloney 2014).

The first monologue to be developed belonged to a character called ‘Barry’, someone Dave met in a bar. In this monologue, Barry tells Dave a story about his encounter with a white light while driving through a forest with his wife late at night. Now that his wife is dead, he needs someone else to share the story with. He imposes one condition, however. Dave can only hear the story if he agrees not to tell anyone else until he judges the time is right. This notion of ‘story stewardship’ has remained and provides a contrast to the dominant world of the play in which story is instantly gratifying and dispensable. It sits in direct opposition to the scene, towards the end of the play, in which Phil demands his girlfriend eat the story she has written.

In the initial workshop of the play, Barry’s monologue was performed to camera. Curiously, it was noted by a number of workshop participants that if only a portion of the performer’s body was videoed, there was a stronger suggestion that the camera was somehow representing Dave’s point-of-view and internal memory. We experimented with various camera angles, but the most convincing were those that only partially framed the actor’s body (Maloney 2014).

However, despite these interesting results, the use of the video camera was eventually abandoned. It seemed too easy a way of representing Dave. The presence of the camera would have also begged an additional analysis of the way the narrative was being mediated. This would have complicated the project. In any case, the removal of the camera presented a much more interesting challenge. If the characters were to continue speaking to an invisible Dave, where would they look: at various members of the audience, or at a particular spot in the performance space? How would the performers experience being looked at by an invisible Dave? These seemed to be performance problems worth exploring.

In subsequent drafts the initial premise, of Dave being mortally wounded on a train, remains. What also remain are those voices Dave hears, as he lies wounded at the beginning, listening to those commentators eager to know what is taking place inside the carriage. There is a breathless, anxious quality to their commentary, and at the same time a keenness to form the experience into a narrative:

Bystander 2: Well I just got on the train and I went to take a seat and there he was not moving it's terrible really with all the blood I just feel I don't know how I feel it's really shocking lost for words really (Maloney 2011b: 3).

As the next three drafts developed, so did the number of characters and encounters recalled by Dave. However, while the beginnings of a plot emerge, it failed to develop strongly in these initial drafts. Dave’s brother, Tom, a newspaper photographer, takes pictures of a right-wing politician leaving a sex venue but then has a change of heart and withholds the photographs from his editor. The editor pressures

Dave to intervene. Dave is caught. On the one hand, the politician is corrupt. On the other, the photos are unethical. To complicate matters, Tom is dying and doesn't care either way. He eventually hands the digital photos over to him, and tells him to take responsibility for them himself. Dave refuses to hand the photographs to the editor and instead visits the politician to warn him. While brief, the encounter between the politician and Dave eventually became the central conflict of the play. But apart from this, there is so much going on in these earlier drafts that it is difficult to discern a single strong line of action. A wide range of characters clamours for Dave's attention. His son confesses to being hurt by Dave's father. Dave's mother wants him to broker peace between her and Tom. And Dave has befriended his next-door neighbour and encourages her to read out her fiction. The play drowns in story. It depends heavily on dialogue to drive the narrative. The initial aim, to create a play that uses narrating as both subject and strategy, seems to get lost and I felt gripped by problems of plot (Maloney 2014).

As I read back through these early drafts, I see a series of free-ranging experiments with narrating. They are awkward and rough ventures that grow out in all directions, with too much of everything. Nonetheless, there is vitality to the language and richness to the ideas, and amongst it all the elements that will comprise the final workshopped reading are already beginning to emerge. There are several strong dramatic encounters that will grow and develop further, such as the stabbing on the train at the end, or the confrontation with the politician. There are other dramatic scenes that are destined for a slightly different shape, such as the confrontation between Dave and his boss Max, which will translate into Dave's battle with Central.

There is also an emerging theme of the story as an object of desire and storytelling as a performative act that can alter one's perception. Throughout Dave's occasional voice-overs in the third draft, we hear how he struggles to recall the story of his week as he lies dying in the train. As he struggles to narrate, the world transforms around him as people perform themselves through the stories they tell. Susan brings to life the memories of a strange dream and a neighbour, Katie, (who was later dropped from the play), recalls her defiant show and tell session when she was seven. In contrast to these dramatic monologues, the play is also beginning to experiment in these early drafts with non-dramatic modes of narrating. The meta-narrative, of Dave recalling his week, allows him as the narrator to move backwards and forward in time. As he grows more stressed, his memory becomes more fragmented and increasingly disrupts the dramatic narrative. In addition, the monologues tentatively experiment with poetic forms of language (Maloney 2014).

In the fourth draft, three developments are notable. Firstly, sequences of cause and effect become clearer and Dave's dramatic motivation strengthens. Dave becomes the photographer stalking the politician. Secondly, parallel storytelling begins to emerge, allowing the play to move back and forth between other

narrative moments with more rapidity. Of particular importance is the emergence of a non-dramatic use of voice. Speech fragments and cuts further into the linear narrative. Towards the end of the draft, as Dave returns the photographs to the politician, the scene is taken over by the voices of all the characters, demanding to be heard (Maloney 2011b: 30).

At this stage, my theoretical reading took me to Jean Pierre Ryngaert's observations about the proliferation of narrating voices in contemporary theatre performance. Ryngaert's careful detailing of the way some theatre mixes dramatic and non-dramatic voices, validated my use of narrating and provided me with further possibilities to experiment, in particular, his argument that theatre makers were discovering a new freedom with the way they played with speech registers (Ryngaert 2007: 21). The idea that theatre could be made *out of* the movement between different forms of speech was both provocative and inspiring, and influenced the changes I made in subsequent drafts.

2. Visible Voices

In the fifth draft the narrative significantly changes shape. Dave no longer remains invisible to the audience and instead he becomes an identifiable character. At the same time, his narrating voice and the time of the narration become more complex. Dave develops a vocal dexterity that allows him to move from relating his story to Colin (his carer on the train), to recalling a particular memory, to having an internal conversation both with himself and an internally imaginary friend called Ben. Consider the scene in which Dave recalls waiting outside the venue to photograph the politician:

Ben: ...Why are we here?

Dave: You know why. It's the money. It's a job.

Ben: So's dynamiting fish populations. Spying. Information acquisition. Wanker.

Dave: Which is typical of the relationship Ben and I have. So where was I? Colin? That's right. Ah shit that hurts. Hang on... door's opening. Hand on camera. Out he comes and.... nah, not him. No resemblance at all. Still, I do wonder who he is. Plumber by the looks. You get to read 'em.

Then ...silence. A bat flaps overhead. (Maloney 2011a: 12)

In developing conventions for the now visible Dave, I found Gerard Genette's model of narrating functions useful. Genette may seem an odd reference in this context, given his insistence that narrating

hardly counts as a mode within drama. However, he develops useful terminology for delineating narrator functions, and even though he intended this for fiction, they prove a useful way of identifying narrator conventions in theatre performance. In the fifth draft, Dave moves from being what Gerard Genette terms a heterodiegetic narrator, one absent as a character from the story he narrated, to being a homodiegetic narrator (Genette 1988). He is now a character in the story he narrates to Colin, his carer who sits with him on the train. In addition, he finds a capacity to narrate both subsequent to, and simultaneously with, the stories he tells. Dave comments, either to himself or to Colin his carer, about the relationship he has with his internal friend, Ben. He then attempts to work out where he is: is he in the story being recalled, or in the meta-narrative in which he is based? For a moment the pain of the knife wound brings him back to the train. However he quickly returns to observing the exterior of the sex club but does so at the same time as the events that are occurring. Consider this exchange as the evangelist, Kevin, attacks Dave after he discovers he is being photographed:

Dave: And then, BAM, he whacks the bonnet. And BAM, again (13).

These two developments, one that makes Dave a ‘character’ narrator in the story and the other that has him able to move backwards and forwards in time, allow him greater ability to perform the act of narrating. In the workshop in which these initial scenes of the fifth draft were performed, this became very clear. The actor playing Dave was faced with the task of having to move quickly between dialogue and narration, as well as between time frames. His rapid moves contributed to a performance that was very much about narrating to the audience as much as to other characters (Maloney 2014).

In addition to these new conventions that allow Dave quick transit between time frames, narration and dialogue, other characters now intruded abruptly into his memory even though they do not have any connection with the scene he is in. For example, as Dave describes to Colin on the train how he waited in his car outside the sex club, his son Jack suddenly makes an appearance:

Dave: Eunice the ute. The name of my car. Eunice. Before that, it was Manuel the manual. And before that it was Fergus the four wheel.

Jack: Fergus rocked. I loved Fergus. Dad, why did we have to sell Fergus? (12)

However Dave quickly exits Jack from his narrative:

Dave: Jack? You're not meant to be here. Jack?

Jack: Sorry, dad. See you later.

Colin: Ssssh. Just relax. (12)

These emerging strategies of simultaneous and homodiegetic voice draw attention to narrating as a non-dramatic mode of performance, in the way it disrupts linear time. Dave increasingly becomes a product of his own narration. There is a crucial difference emerging in this draft between the narrator as a commentator on the story, and narrating as story-making itself. On the one hand we could say that Dave narrates in a Brechtian manner when he calls our attention to the events taking place outside the Pound Club. For Brecht, epic actors serve as narrators and demonstrators to highlight the story and point to its knots in order to educate the audience (1964f: 200). Dave is certainly estranging the fiction being represented. However, I was not interested in using narrating for pedagogical purposes. In this and subsequent drafts, my focus was increasingly on the dynamic between narrating as a dramatic, orderly device and its use as an unruly, non-dramatic strategy. As Dave narrates, his world changes both internally and externally. In narrating to others, Dave remakes himself.

Theoretical readings influenced my thinking about narrating at this stage. Brian Richardson's account of narrating in contemporary theatre, and the extent to which the narrating voice is no longer dependent upon a character or narrating figure, inspired me to imagine in more depth how to play with voice. My decision to play with 'vocal intrusion', as in the example of Jack's sudden appearance in Dave's memory mentioned above, was inspired by Richardson's study (Richardson 2001). At this point, two distinct Daves began to emerge: the narrator Dave, who is telling a story in order to forestall his death, who I will refer to as 'Train Dave': and the Dave who appears in the scenes, as both a commentator and a participant, whom I will call 'Story Dave'.

My reading of Jacques Rancière's models of artistic regimes parallels these practical experiments with new ways of using narrating in theatre performance. His theory of the representational regime provided me with a more detailed and nuanced way of thinking about Aristotelian poetics and traditional dramaturgy, in particular, its demand that character serves the needs of dramatic action. By contrast his concept of the aesthetic regime allows for a freer movement between art and life that is not constrained by rules of representation. For Rancière, it is this latter regime that allows for voice to be freed from character and to roam in a non-linear way through narratives (Rancière 2007: 109). Rancière's thought provided more concrete frames and terms to theorise two different ways of using narrating in theatre performance: one that supported cause and effect, action-orientated stories, and another that produced multiple voices, times, places and perceptions.

3. Unruly Inspirations

In Roland Schimmelfennig's *The Golden Dragon*, produced at the Arcola Theatre in London (2011), and subsequently in Tom Holloway's *Beyond the Neck* (2012), I found a language that enabled me to further open out the narrative of *P.O.V. Dave*, stretch its use of narrating and disrupt traditional dramatic structure without ridding the work of drama entirely.

Set in a Chinese/Thai take away restaurant, *The Golden Dragon* tells the story of a young migrant worker from China, who works in the kitchen, is beset with intense pain from an infected tooth. As the pain intensifies, he screams in agony. His fellow workers debate the best strategy for dealing with this interruption to the work and to the harmony of the restaurant. Medical treatment is out of the question. Finally they decide to remove the tooth. The Chinese worker dies. In a comically grim moment, his co-workers wrap his body in a rug and hurl him into the river. This moment transforms into a poetic description of the young man's passage up the river, into the sea and finally backs to his family's village.

Direct address and meta-commentary figure heavily in the mise-en-scene of both works. Performers swap roles and speak to the audience both as themselves and in character. Sentences are broken up and distributed amongst the performers. Dialogue between characters is brief. Teichoscopy or the synchronous description of events as they occur is widely used. Traditionally teichoscopy refers only to off-stage events, but in this play and in Holloway's, it is used to describe events that occur simultaneously on-stage.⁵⁰ As well, these descriptive acts are shared among the cast in both plays.

In this technique of commentary on dramatic action, Brecht's inheritance looms large. However, Brecht included this device in his model of epic theatre with the express purpose of teaching the audience to be more critical (Brecht 1964b). Both Schimmelfennig and Holloway employ it for more aesthetic reasons. I have referred in a previous chapter to Holloway's interest in using narrating in his play as a form of music (Holloway 2012). For Schimmelfennig narrating is an opportunity to be deliberately playful, in order to explore the loss of identity and the politics of difference. At a post production discussion of the play, Schimmelfennig responded to an audience member's question about what the lesson of the play by saying that there was no 'take home message' and explaining that 'there's no value you can take home. The play makes you think in an aesthetic way. Playfulness is an essential education. There is no message. The play is a "strange mirror" (Schimmelfennig 2011)'.

⁵⁰ Teichoscopy comes from the word *teichoscopia*, meaning 'see from the other side of a wall'. In Greek tragedy, it refers to the reporting by messengers of events happening off-stage (Puchner 2002: 25). Michael Isaacharoff places such events that are not visible and only described in 'diegetic space', as opposed to the events that are visible onstage as being in 'mimetic space' (Isaacharoff 1989 :55).

Both plays had a profound effect on my writing in several ways. They offered a dramaturgy of narration that enable me to open up the play text of *P.O.V. Dave* in ways that I had not previously considered. Specifically, they showed me to what extent narration could be used to blur the boundaries between dramatic action and playful language, showing and telling, character and voice and between singular and multiple times, places and genres.

Earlier on in *The Golden Dragon*, there is a scene in which the Chinese man's co-workers extract his tooth:

The Young Woman: (Who plays the young Chinese man with the infected tooth):
Don't, don't -

The Woman Over Sixty: Number 82: Pad Thai Gai, stir-fried rice noodles.

The Man Over Sixty: I tighten the spanner.

The Man: The boy screams. He can see the spanner -

The Woman Over Sixty: We call him the boy.

The Young Man: He snaps the tooth out of my mouth,
Long Pause
He snaps it out of me,
Short pause
He pulls it out of me -

The Young Man: And the tooth flies through the air (2009: 46).

It is a dramatic moment, fuelled by the young man's pleading and the grim determination of his co-workers to find a quick solution to his torment. However, the playful moment-by-moment description of the event ensures the drama is never allowed to dominate the stage. In its use of teichoscopy, the scene also blurs the boundaries between what is being shown and what is being told. The scene mixed a highly choreographed series of manoeuvres to capture the violence of the extraction, with the playful observations of the performers.

Schimmelpfennig's work also showed me to what extent narrating could play with times, places, genre and tone. In a scene towards the end of *The Golden Dragon* the restaurant workers, having failed to save the Chinese boy's life after extracting his tooth, wrap him in a rug and take him to the river and throw him in:

The Man: No, don't leave him lying in the street, what's going to happen to him if we leave him lying in the street.

The Woman Over Sixty: Poor boy -

The Young Woman: I hope they're not going to throw me off the bridge.

The Man: Let's just throw him off the bridge - (83)

And they do. As the boy plummets to the river, the young woman playing him narrates how his spirit swims up stream, out to sea and back to his home village, where his family welcomes him. The scene moves rapidly from calculated savagery to comedy, until it ends on a note of ironic lyricism.

The impact of *The Golden Dragon* is evident in the opening scene of the fifth draft of *P.O.V. Dave*. In this scene, Dave the photographer is staking out the Pound Club and waiting for Kevin, the evangelist, to exit. While he waits, Dave sets the time and place of the scene with narration:

Dave: In the dark. In a street. If you can call it that. In a car. When I do this work, I'm car encased. Eunice the ute. The name of my car. Eunice. Before that, it was Manuel the manual. And before that it was Fergus the four wheel (Maloney 2011a: 6).

Suddenly Dave spots his quarry coming out of the club. The intention in having Dave describe Kevin from his point of view, rather than us seeing the man, is to provide the audience with a more vivid picture of the situation:

Dave: And there he is, framed by a single overhead globe, bald head shining, cardigan half buttoned, hands in pockets, gentle stride. Just like they described (12).

Events quickly take a bad turn for Dave as he describes how Kevin suddenly sees him, heads to the car, clocks the camera and challenges him:

Dave: He has his hands inside the window, but I grab one of his fingers.

Kevin: Ouch! I scream.

Dave: Get off, I yell. And finally, he withdraws (13).

When this scene was workshopped, this use of narration, in describing events as they occur on, and off stage, proved effective (Maloney 2014). It painted a vivid picture. Similarly to its use in *The Golden Dragon*, it blurred the boundaries between the dramatic action of the encounter between Dave

and Kevin, by using poetic language to focus on its micro-moments. The showing, or enacting, of the violent encounter was offset by moments of intense visual description.⁵¹

Throughout the development of *P.O.V. Dave*, I had always used narrating to experiment with movement between times and places and character and voices. *Beyond The Neck* inspired me to extend this experimentation. Holloway's play uses several time frames: there is the linear, dramatic movement of each character towards a reunion at Port Arthur; and there is the non-linear movement of time and place, as they remember back to the day of the shootings ten years before.

P.O.V. Dave blurs the boundaries between dramatic time and non-linear time in a similar way. It follows a cause and effect line of action through Dave's recollection of the week that led to his stabbing in the train. His announcements of the time and place of each scene reflect his attempts to create a coherent memory of the story he wants to recall. However, every so often, he gets it wrong, as in the scene I just described above where, unannounced, his son suddenly makes an appearance:

Jack: Fergus rocked. I loved Fergus. Dad, why did we have to sell Fergus?

Dave: Jack? You're not meant to be here. Jack?

Jack: Sorry, dad. See you later (Maloney 2013b: 7).

Or else, he lapses into reverie and suspends time altogether, as he does at the end of this scene:

And then I'm thinking about Jack who's coming to stay with me the next day. My boy, Jack. Who will stay with me for the weekend. And my dad who's in the nursing home. And my ex wife who thinks everything is wonderful. And my camera. The Sony SLTA77VQ. And Eunice. And why the windows aren't tinted. Isn't it amazing, how we can think of so many things all at the one time? (15)

The first few drafts of *P.O.V. Dave* are weighed down by dramatic intent and lengthy character monologues. As I have noted elsewhere, drama demands a fictional world that is governed by action and closed to the audience. Schimmelpfennig's and Holloway's work showed me how narrating could playfully and musically work against dramatic restrictions and blur the boundaries between dramatic enactment and visual description, times, places, characters and voices.

⁵¹ It was tempting to copy Schimmelpfennig's convention of writing for actors rather than characters. However, I avoided this. In the case of *P.O.V. Dave*, it seemed best to keep the story told from the point of view of one character. After all, the thematic point of the narrative is to show the consequences of failing to imagine another's viewpoint.

4. Collaborations

I began working with dramaturge Gary Abrahams, on the sixth draft of *P.O.V. Dave*, in February 2012 (Maloney 2014). This work involved close readings of the play text, structured discussion and redrafting. This process kept in mind the research goal, which was to experiment with narrating. However, it was not until we clarified the dramatic structure of the play, that the dramaturgy became more experimental.

Our initial meetings focused on the need to clarify the play's story and enhance its 'in-betweens' by further strengthening Dave's motivation, and heightening specific moments of conflict, such as his confrontation with Kevin and his wife, Kathryn. Dave's imaginary friend, Ben, was removed in order to dramatically heighten Dave's solitude. Other dramatic developments involved building curiosity, creating stronger dilemmas and heightening conflict, all of which contributed to a strengthening of the cause and effect logic of the play. Narrating captured moments of dramatic choice, including Dave's dilemma about whether to take Kevin's cheque. I also built more initial antagonism between Dave and his father, Angus, so that Dave's eventual reunion would be more intense, and I fleshed out the conflicts in Dave's and Susan's relationship. Dave's description of his 'dark night of the soul' moment, in which he gets drunk and meets Gwen, also originates in this period of development. Dave's asides to the audience helped stylize the violent encounters with Kevin and Phil, in a way that avoided them being weighed down by naturalistic performance (2014).

In the seventh draft, Abrahams encouraged me to play more freely with montage and time, and to fragment some of the larger sections of the play in the first segment. His suggestion, that I intercut Kevin's opening sermon with Dave's monologue in which he justified his job, Bronwyn's phone call to Dave about his last assignment and Dave observing Kevin's book signing, produced exciting results and created a template for further redrafting. This method of intercutting times, places and speeches, increased the play's dramatic urgency. It also helped further distinguish between the two Daves, by returning more frequently to observations being made by Train Dave (2014).

This fragmenting of speech also produced a non-dramatic effect, in that Dave's journey through the play becomes not only a singular, dramatically stable trajectory, but also a series of discontinuous moments. Eleanor Fuchs identifies such a non-dramatic fragmentation of perception across place and time with late nineteenth century European theatre's experiments with landscape, such as August Strindberg's dream plays and also with later expressionism (1996: 32). Fuchs hitches her observations of fragmentation to her more general argument that the death of character is aligned with the questioning of the stability of subject in the postmodern. By contrast, Rancière notes that while fragmentation of montage may suggest a dissolution of the self, it also suggests the opposite: a

capacity to suspend the demands of cause and effect logic by freely combining perceptions and their meanings. Mapping Rancière's positive model of fragmentation onto Dave's journey, we can imagine his growing capacity to move across places and times as a freeing of his imagination. It is a sign of potential. As Rancière argues:

The fragment has often been thought of as the mark of an unfinished and detotalized status proper to modern works....A fragment is not a ruin; it is much more a seed (1998: 76).

During this period, Abrahams also prompted me to experiment with the registers in Dave's narration, in particular between flat and experiential description (2014). This consolidated the two Daves: one removed from that which he observes and one that figures in scenes as either a commentator or participant. Nonetheless, the focus remained on the dramatic development of Dave's character. Abrahams and I initially shared a belief that Dave's dramatic problem resulted from a lack of self-awareness. Dave's goal was to discern a self that was not yet apparent to him. In these early discussions, phrases such as 'you have to find your narrative and live in it'; and 'you have to find your own story and be true to it' figured large (Abrahams and Maloney 2013). These early conversations were driven by an assumption that story formed character and that dramatic narrative should culminate in a moment of self-recognition and the identification of an internal logos, and that this should result from the character's interaction with the world and his or her interpretation of this activity. Put simply, Dave's destiny was to gain insight into past behaviours, triumph over them and set his internal world to rights.

At this stage in the play's development, several character trajectories were considered that mirrored this model of self-transformation. We discussed the possibility of Dave going public about Central, the agency that provided him with assignments. This would make him more of a hero in his son's eyes. It was also argued that Dave should choose to expose Kevin, the evangelist. Again, this would reward Dave with self-illumination. These are all adventure stories, predicated on the belief that a character must encounter an internal psychological obstacle and triumph over it. While these sorts of character stories, dependent upon an external epic force that results in the development of an inner life, remain the bread and butter of television drama, they are Romantic in origin.

This enthusiasm for a Romantic character that grows in self-knowledge through meaning-making activity arising from the interaction with others in the world, continued to influence subsequent drafts.

Conversations focused on Dave's need to discover his own internal resources in order to act heroically. The possibility of Dave triumphing over Central occupied a great deal of thought. How could he bring them down? The events on the train were seen as fateful. They put Dave 'back on the path' so that he

could ‘do the right thing’. In discussions on the seventh draft, Gary Abrahams observed that: ‘Through story, we live life (Abrahams and Maloney 2013).’ We would often return to what we felt was a dilemma about how to end the play.

In the play’s ninth draft, there was a shift away from the notion of storytelling as an act of heroic resistance that leads to self-discovery. Instead, the emphasis was now on storytelling as a performative action in the world that has consequences both for the teller and the subject. When we first meet Dave, he has no allegiance to the subjects he photographs. They are, like him, autonomous beings that are totally self-responsible. Susan challenges him about a young actress he photographed in less than flattering circumstances who subsequently killed herself. Dave replies that ‘she made a choice’ (Maloney 2012a: 12). However, by the end of the play, Dave commits himself to telling his son the story that his father has told him. This metaphor of storytelling as a practice of honour, fidelity and truth, sits in stark contrast to Dave’s initial conception of storytelling (in his case as a photographer) as simply a job that is defined only by the contractual nature of the assignment. Dave ends the play not simply by being true to his own story but being faithful in his account of the stories he tells of others (2012a). This, in the course of the last three drafts of the play, my concept of Dave’s ‘development’ had shifted from the privileging of self-knowledge and meaning-making to a notion of subject-making through the practice of story fidelity. When Dave hands the story of the encounter with the light to his son, he is fully engaged in the moment. This echoes his father’s description of the event as being a moment in which time stopped, a moment of singular truth outside of which there was nothing else. Angus imparted this story to his son with a codicil. It must be kept safe and silent, until Dave judges the time is right to pass it on. It comes with a provenance and duty of care.

In one sense, Angus’ story is meaningless. It is a puzzle and an oddity: even a psychotic fantasy. For Dave, however, it is not so much the story of the light that is of importance, but the way it is treated. In acknowledging its provenance and respecting his father’s wishes, he gifts his son not with any insight into the world, but with a new ethos that values care and fidelity. In this sense, the telling of the story is an interrelated practice. As it is told, it changes the relationships of those who engages in its telling. When Angus tells Dave the entire story, their relationship softens. In telling the story to his son, Dave finds a capacity for enunciation he has not encountered before.

Nonetheless, even when working on the ninth draft, the temptation to create a heroic figure remained. I considered having Dave, in the penultimate scene, call the mother of the young actress who suicided, to apologise for the part he played in her death (Maloney 2014). It would have been a solid dramatic moment that led in nicely to the final scene on the train. It would have also returned the play to an earlier notion, discussed previously, which delivers the character to a moment of self-

recognition and personal salvation. But this is not a play about redemption. Dave is not saved. His end is deliberately ambiguous. What he does offer us, in the final moment, is a gesture towards a very different way of being ‘as telling’, one that may not be fully realised in the performance, but one that nonetheless stands in dramatic contrast to the other vision of storytelling offered in the play, in which images are ordered, sold, cut up and dispersed.

5. Workshopping

Through redrafting, theoretical reading and dramaturging, the play’s development charts a distinctive course. It initially demanded a dramatic structure, and only when problems of action, conflict and character were resolved, could experiments with non-dramatic narrating take place. These experiments in turn produced tensions between orderly and unruly narrators that shaped the play’s world. The workshop process followed a similar course.

The workshop comprised six actors along with Gary Abrahams as director, and involved a week’s rehearsal that culminated in a performed reading of the play at La Mama Courthouse theatre (2013). From the outset, Abrahams and the performers contributed generously and creatively to the process.

At the first reading, two key performance problems were identified: narrating conventions and character motivation. These were essentially dramatic in nature. Paul Ashcroft who played Dave felt that there was a problem in having ‘Train Dave’ split his focus between conversing with Colin, his companion on the train, and speaking to the audience (up to this point, Colin was a speaking part). Ashcroft felt this split in focus would confuse the audience. This problem was resolved by Zoe Allerton Ashley’s and Lyall Brook’s suggestion that Colin as a speaking part be dropped, that ‘Train Dave’ only speak to the audience and that he reported Colin’s speeches. This solution had several positive outcomes. Firstly, it resolved the actor’s split focus, and made it very clear when Dave was in the train narrating his work. Secondly, quoting Colin, rather than having Colin as a speaking character, worked with conventions of reported speech already operating in the play. It also enhanced this convention by ensuring that ‘Train Dave’ only ever recalled events, right up until the final moments of the play, when he speaks on the phone ‘in train time’ to Susan and Jack (Maloney 2014).

Brooks also felt that Kevin’s problem, of being photographed visiting a brothel, was not problem enough for someone in his position. I resolved this issue by implying that the brothel he visited employed under-age girls. This increased the dramatic stakes for Kevin, but it also added irony to his confessional speech to Dave. He framed these visits to the brothel as purely personal, and was unable to see any political, moral or ethical dimension to it (2014).

Subsequent rehearsals focused on choreographing the reading. Abrahams worked with a simple *mise en scène*, comprising five chairs set throughout the space. When performers were not in scenes, they sat. ‘Train Dave’ always spoke from downstage to the audience, but when performing in scenes, moved centre stage. Four audio visual elements were used: a projection of Jack’s video, ‘Some Shoes’, Dave’s photographs of Kevin leaving the brothel, Gwen’s photographs of herself and finally, an image of a lit forest that referenced Angus’s speech about the encounter with the white light.

The performance revealed problems that had not previously seemed as acute. Despite a powerful performance, Kevin’s sermonising was a problem for Brooks, both in pitch and intention. Despite the philosophical thought that underpinned them, the dramatic intentions and dynamics of the sermons proved limiting. However, the dramaturgy and workshopping provided a solid framework for dealing with this problem. If the play’s intention was to create a narrative out of different forms of narrating, perhaps there was something to explore in the way Kevin narrates to the audience. Could he speak more directly to the audience, what sort of engagement might this produce and how might it affect both the play’s dramatic course, and explore the boundaries between audience and performance?

The performance produced what the script development and dramaturgy promised: a narrative that moved purposefully between dramatic and non-dramatic narrating. It enabled several stories to be told simultaneously. It clarified Dave’s suspenseful dramatic arc, with its confrontations, reversals and recognitions. It also produced a Dave who transformed himself through a poetic engagement with the world. Particularly impressive in the reading were the rhythms the performers produced. There were no pauses between scenes. Abrahams directed movement and speech to overlap throughout the entire performance. This created a degree of urgency in the performance, which matched Dave’s motivation to keep telling his story in order to live. At the same time, the perpetual movement of the piece suggested a certain dream-like ambiguity, which reminded the audience that, for all its characters and stories, the narrative was from Dave’s point of view (2013).

Above all, the simple *mise en scène* was an effective reminder that there is no accounting for the way a small vocal inflection, a fleeting look, or subtle intake of breath can transform language into something that is inseparable from the bodies that produce it, the space in which its enunciation occurs, or the times that shape its performance (2013).

6. Future Development

Since the workshopped reading of *P.O.V. Dave* at La Mama in April 2013, a creative team has emerged to give the play a full production in 2015. Over the past few months, I have had a series of conversations with the director, Beng Oh, who is keen to bring to the production a sophisticated use

of multimedia in order to capture through sound and image the play's ambiguities, as much as to tell its dramatic story (Beng Oh and Maloney 2015). We find ourselves in disagreement about Dave's character, however. For Beng, he is a failed hero. I argue that any suggestion of a heroic structure should be disrupted by the textures, moods and rhythms of the *mise en scène*. The play is not only a drama. It relies on tensions between the dramatic and the non-dramatic. At this point our conversation remains unresolved, which seems entirely appropriate for a project that blurs relations between the shown and the told, and character and voice, without entirely sacrificing a suspenseful plot with tragic consequences.

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