

**‘People know what they want to see’: Space and Reception in Rob Drummond’s
Quiz Show (2013)**

Jeanne Schaaf

Introduction

In contemporary theatre, the place and status given to the spectator varies considerably from one play to another, and this peculiar link becomes a privileged space for the re-negotiation of the stakes of political theatre. Indeed, ‘the political’ in theatre is also grasped – and often in a decisive manner – through the relationship that the stage intends to build with its spectators. Such is the position of Olivier Neveux in his last book *Politiques du spectateur. Les enjeux du theatre politique aujourd’hui* (2013) in which the central hypothesis is that what is ultimately political in theatre, is ‘the explicit or implicit conception – be it spontaneous or theorised – that the play holds of its own spectator; the ‘spectator’ that the play imagines for itself (or doesn’t) and the relationship it intends to build with this spectator.’ (17, my translation).

Indeed, a quick overview of different contemporary productions in the theatre highlights the variety of mechanisms at stake with respect to the position granted to the spectator. A play like David Greig’s *The Events* (2013), engages with the frontier between fiction and fact, as it confronts the audience with representations of major societal issues, or current affairs. This form of confrontation is taken one step further with the technique of verbatim theatre, in play like Gregory Burke’s *Black Watch* (2006). The verbatim technique is described as follows in *Verbatim, Verbatim, Techniques in Contemporary Documentary Theatre*,

Instead of adapting or repacking experiences or observations within a fictional dramatic situation, a verbatim play acknowledges, and often draws attention to, its roots in real life...The words of real people are recorded or transcribed by a dramatist during an interview or research process ...They are then edited, arranged and recontextualised to form a dramatic presentation, in which actors take on the characters of the real individuals whose words are being used. In this sense verbatim is not a form, it's a technique; it's a means rather than an end. (Hammond and Stewart 2007: 9)

In verbatim theatre, the spectator thus gets to hear the 'real words' of other individuals. This defictionalisation of the dramatic discourse contributes to a reinforcement of verisimilitude as the audience gets to hear the voice of the nation. However, the overtly constructed technique of verbatim also leads to experiments that can alter the discourse of authenticity built with the audience.

Indeed, flourishing under various forms, contemporary dramaturgy shows another tendency that renegotiate the stage/audience paradigm: it rests on the exposition of the communicational mechanisms of media, on stage, through the production of plays based on orchestrated manipulations, such as Dennis Kelly's *Taking Care of Baby* (2007) for instance. In this production, the spectators are deceived through the distortion of the codes of verbatim theatre and the pirating of the discourse of authenticity. This play of 'fake verbatim' shows how authenticity is artificially elaborated in order to guarantee a certain mode of reception. A similar uneasy overlapping of the realms of fiction and non-fiction is to be found in Tim Crouch's *The Author* (2009); in which the spectators are on-stage participants with other unidentified members of the cast and members of the audience. Among them the superimposition of the author and the actor playing the author leads the spectators to a re-consideration of the narrative of the representation.

This radical practice concerning spectatorship falls under the thriving category of immersive theatre, which blurs the dichotomy between stage and audience, since the audience become actively engaged in the representation as they are invited to act (wander around, read papers, chose a room or an actor, or even wear a mask in the productions of the company Punchdrunk for instance). As such, they are often referred to as theatrical experiments, on the verge of performance. The spectators no longer are a 'consciousness' in the dark watching the show, they become a physical presence invited to be active in the set.

The observations of Josephine Machon (2013) on the use of the word 'immersive' in her book *Immersive theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance* are particularly enlightening:

There are several aspects to the word and its related forms: to 'immerse' is 'to dip or submerge in a liquid', whereas to 'immerse oneself' or 'be immersed', means to involve oneself deeply in a particular activity or interest. 'Immersion' thus defines the action of immersing or the state of being immersed; whereas 'immersive', developed from computing terminology, describes that which 'provides information or stimulation for a number of sense, not only sight and sound'. These definitions help to highlight how immersive experiences in theatre combine the act of immersion – being submerged in an alternative medium where all the senses are engaged and manipulated – with a deep involvement in the activity within that medium. (21-22)

This quick overview illustrates that the variety of 'techniques' and 'means' developed in the contemporary dramatic landscape emphasise this constant negotiation with the status of the spectator, and with the spectator's 'awareness'. According to Neveux, this evolution reflects a trend of political theatre marked by a 'fetishism of awareness'

(Neveux 2011: 179) – be it political or moral awareness. The strategies used in space management, and particularly stage/audience relationships in the theatre, sometimes become the mechanisms for raising awareness.

Such is the case with Rob Drummond's last play, *Quiz Show* (2013), which relies simultaneously on several of the aforementioned mechanisms, overlapping in the play. Indeed, the play revisits reality through the lens of a recent news item, it tricks its audience in an ambiguous game, and it displays features of interaction with the spectator.

Quiz Show premiered at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh in April 2013; the very title of this play leads to ambiguity as to genre: is it a game, or a TV show, or a performance, or a play? It borrows characteristics from a series of different genres of entertainment, mimicking and mocking their codes within the theatrical space. In this quiz show called 'False' the participants play in order to discover the truth, as the Quizmaster reminds its audience and contestants: 'welcome to False! the quiz show where there are no questions, only statements; where every one of those statements is a lie and where the prize is nothing less than the truth' (Drummond 2013: 4). The stage plays at being a TV studio set, and rules applying to each modes of representation are intertwined. If the rules seem to be defined both for the participants and for the audience, the latter are however referred to as being 'complicit' (Drummond 2013: 4) in the text. The ambiguous use of the theatrical space turns the game/play into a nightmare, in which the very question of consent – of the participants, and of the audience – becomes central. What kind of truth emerges from this game? How do the spatial dynamics contribute to a renegotiation of the power dynamics between stage and audience? What does the play reveal – about theatre and about reception? In a multiple *mise en abyme* where porosity between false and true rules, the 'play' and its power (alternately ludic, enigmatic or critic) question the

place and role of the spectator, echoing Neveux's position about 'political theatre' (2013).

Just as the rules of the game change over the course of the play, so does the use of theatre space, which is constantly reassessed – resulting in an ambiguous displacement of meaning from game to manipulation, from fun to horror, from entertainment to lecture, from comedy to tragedy. Ultimately, the quiz called False, becomes an ethical quest for truth, relocating the moral stakes in the audience's collective consciousness¹.

I will thus question the modalities of space interaction in the play, focusing on the ways in which the ambiguity between real and virtual space leads to a redefinition of power relations. I will also investigate the emergence of trauma on a mental stage through the mechanisms of memory and language. I will show throughout how both these aspects of the show challenge audience's expectations and reception.

Quiz Show

A synthetic overview of the storyline and of the final revelation is necessary in order to proceed with further analysis. When the audience enter the theatre it is immediately faced with a theatrical setting turned into a TV studio set from the eighties, where the quiz show False is about to take place and to be 'broadcast live'. All the classic landmarks are recognisable, the gaudy coloured sets, the sharp-looking quizmaster Daniel, the three happy contestants (Sandra, Ben and incumbent champion Molly), Gerry the floor manager of the show, and the enthusiastic audience. The quiz starts, but gradually, this typical form of escapist entertainment lurches into new territories. Through the game, and its series of twists and turns, the audience

gets to know the contestants better, and at some point, eventually to understand that what they have been *witnessing* since the beginning, is the quest for one tragic truth behind all the lies: the revelation of contestant Sarah's rape when she took part in the very same show at age fourteen – and was abused by quizmaster Daniel. The show thus shifts to new mechanisms, initiating new dynamics of reception. It 'immerses' the spectators in the game and invites them to be active and look beyond the obvious – look for the truth even though, as the script states, 'truth can be cruel!' Contextually and indirectly *Quiz Show* is also anchored in British current affairs as it echoes the real-life 'Jimmy Savile Scandal', which occurred only a year before the play premiered – thus putting in perspective the apparatus and power of the media world.²

Interacting spaces.

Rob Drummond's play is divided into three main parts followed by an epilogue. This fragmented narrative structure appears both in the printed version of the text and in the staged representation, where each sequence corresponds to a specific use of theatrical space. The respective titles of the different moments of the play announce the importance of theatrical space as *locus* of interpretation, for indeed, they play with the notions of reality and fiction in an explicit and treacherous manner: the first part is entitled 'Reality', the second 'The Gun and Package', the last one is referred to as 'Unreality' while the epilogue is presented under the title of 'The Future'. In turn, all three parts will be considered in their relation towards space and the resulting conception of the spectator. I will start by analysing the complex interpenetration of fictional spaces in the first part, which is purposely, and paradoxically labelled 'Reality'.

As mentioned before, on arrival of the spectators, the set of the play multiplies the superposition of various types of spaces. The theatrical space or 'presentational space' (Mc Cauley 1999: 25) is invested with a television set in the 'fictional space' (Mc Cauley 1999: 25). These two spaces of representation interact in a spatial dialogue, blurring frontiers and codes both on the levels of production and of reception. As Richard Knowles states 'space and place impinge directly on both production and reception silently inscribing or disrupting specific (and ideologically coded) ways of working, for practitioners, and of seeing and understanding, for audiences' (2004: 62-3). A second level of space inter-action occurs between stage and audience. In order to reproduce the codes of a TV show program, at that stage of the play, the spectator's presence is not obliterated by the theatrical convention of the fourth wall but much on the contrary it is constantly emphasised, so as to turn the theatre audience into a television show audience, immersed in the production.

Through the superposition of spaces which codes of interpretation differ, the stage becomes an ambiguous space, at once utterly familiar and recognisable, and yet disquietingly strange. Freud's concept of 'the uncanny' can help qualifying the experience felt during the development of the show, for this notion refers to an impression that occurs when that which was long known or familiar, suddenly appears as distorted or estranged. Indeed, in the opening round of the quiz, the scenery is instantly recognisable and appealing to the audience as it rests on a very naturalistic aesthetical choice. The choice of the cast further intensifies the construction of a recognisable environment since Jonathan Watson, the actor embodying Daniel Caplin, is known as a star of old fashioned light entertainment comedy in Scotland, thus deceiving the members of the audience into recognising him as a real public figure, playing on the generic type with which he is associated. The figure of the actor on stage is superimposed on the public figure of the media, thus contributing to the

confusion between both spaces – theatrical and televisual.



Quiz Show at Traverse, Edinburgh Photo: Traverse Edinburgh

However, the exaggerated stylisation of colours and device on stage distorts the naturalistic representation of the television show into a grotesque parody. The theatre stage parodies light entertainment while using a number of its characteristics to manipulate its audience. This duality is essential to the concept of parody since a parodic work imitates and yet subverts the original, as Linda Hutcheon underlines when she states:

The collective weight of parodic practice suggests a redefinition of parody as repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity. In historiographic metafiction, in film, in painting, in music, and in architecture, this parody paradoxically enacts both change and cultural continuity: the Greek prefix para can mean both 'counter' or 'against' AND 'near' or 'beside.' (Hutcheon 1988: 26)

Parody indeed allows the audience both to recognise the environment (continuity) and to perceive the distance established with it (change). Furthermore, the parodic treatment of television is not circumscribed to the stage: the audience is turned into a television show audience and given their own part to play in the show; their attitude is thus being itself parodied in the process. Through the use of flashing applause signs, the 'real' audience is included in the fictional representation, becoming the virtual audience of False. As such they are assigned a role that far surpasses the status of observer, as Gerry's speech (the floor manager) makes very clear:

I'm sure, like me, you're all fans of the show and don't need the rules explaining but what I do need to explain is your role in all of this. Because you are all complicit in our little adventure and vital to its success.

So.

These.

Gerry *indicates light boxes either side of the stage*

These are known as applause boxes. When we wish you to applaud we will light them up, like so...

The boxes light up

And you will respond like so...

The audience respond.

I can see we have a very intelligent audience in tonight ... (Drummond 2013: 4)

Audience of the theatrical representation of Rob Drummond's last play, audience of a television show, and ultimately 'complicit in [the] little adventure' – each level of fiction blurs the status of the spectator.

The reproduction of the well-known codes of the media language, also participate in the creation of an overly familiar and entertaining 'reality' on stage in which, at first, the audience feel at ease. Daniel's language, with its predictable jokes, echoes that of a ringmaster – it works as another signpost of the parodic treatment of TV show reality – and yet it generates laughter within the audience, physical involvement as they clap their hands; and as such it builds a stage/audience relationship built on inter-action, co-operation and trust:

*The **Quizmaster** enters, the applause boxes light up and **Gerry** encourages the audience to clap and cheer.*

Quizmaster

Wow! Thank you, thank you so much. You know I've been doing this show for twelve years now and it's safe to say that of all of the audience's I've had in that time you are definitely the most recent.

I'm joking, I'm joking, you're wonderful and, from where I'm standing, incredibly gorgeous audience – especially the front row down here – hello young lady, does your father know you're out? (Drummond 2013: 7)

The quizmaster's discourse, addressing the silent mass of the audience and compulsively filling the space of communication, rests on linguistic conventions, which are meant to guarantee the authenticity of his posture of sincerity ('you know', 'it's safe'), and to seduce the audience ('wow', 'wonderful' and 'gorgeous') into trusting his words and rules. The multiplicity of puns and light jokes builds up a captivating environment, in order to further emphasise the shock when the illusion collapses, as playwright David Crimp (2008), argues:

I think that it's really important to have humour in the theatre whatever the subject because it's a way of enabling the audience to enter into the world of the play, it's a way of making people feel at ease, comfortable with what's happening and then they begin to feel uncomfortable.

(Hammond and Stewart 2007: 9)

The parodic staging of the televisual quiz show thus rests on the illusion that in this game, (or in this play), each part to play is well defined and circumscribed and that, according to the rules, each character will stick to their own part. Paradoxically, this first part, which is entitled 'reality' and builds itself on a familiar environment and 'real' interaction, is precisely the very part of the play in which the levels of illusion, fiction, and lie are climactic. To counter this, it is when all references to an external reality disappear – in the part intitled 'Unreality' – that the factual revelation occurs. It thus turns the stage into a space similar to a court where the final trial takes place, revealing the tripartite identity on which the play is built: 'Victims. Bystanders. Perpetrators.' (Kane 2001: 231)

At that stage, the revelation has relocated to the audience's consciousness, as the spectators become aware that through their participation or passivity, they have embodied in turn all three statuses. The turning point between the two main distinct parts of the play – the televisual hyper-realism of the first half, and the theatrical revelation of the psychological trauma of the second half – occurs during 'The Gun and the Package' episode, when the televisual realism starts to fade away and the presentational space takes on a new shape.

Inverted gaze

As the show progresses, the accumulation of incoherencies open up a place for treachery and duplicity, leading to an uncanny re-consideration of the trustworthiness of the game, and of the representation on the whole. Indeed, the last few cues of part one, between Gerry and Ben, encapsulate the looming revelation through the polysemic use of the word 'screw', hinting at the fact that truth as well is a polymorphic notion. Ben addresses Gerry and Daniel saying 'You screwed her' (Drummond 2013: 35) and then repeats 'You screwed her out of the game' (Drummond 2013: 36), revealing the treacherous nature of the game while at the same time disclosing the concealed sexual allusion. The comfort zone of the audience is shattered.

Indeed, part two 'The Gun and the Package', disrupts the illusory and appealing world of the game, simultaneously introducing violence in the initial light entertainment atmosphere. The setting remains the same, but on stage, power relations are reconsidered. Contestant Ben, a doctor in psychotherapy, has noticed the organised cheating meant to disqualify Sandra; he takes out a gun, kills Molly and holds the rest of the crew hostage. The game goes on under his leadership until

Daniel collapses after a heart attack. Throughout this sequence Ben becomes the new Quizmaster, leading the game:

Ben Would now be a nice time to get to know the contestants better? (...)
After the first elimination you get to know the contestants better. It helps the audience identify with us. It makes them care who wins. (Drummond 2013: 45)

The words 'know better', 'identify' and 'care' also literally hint at the position of the spectator as a judge, and they refer to the processes of identification, empathy and ultimately judgement. While the doubt persists as to what exactly *is* the truth, the parts are re-assigned in a chaotic and estranged distribution. Ben is henceforth, the one asking the questions, still reasserting the presence and temporality of the codified world of media when he states 'We don't have long (...) before the ad is over.' (Drummond 2013: 40-41) yet also putting emphasis on the 'unpredictability' and 'quirkiness' of the experience with a series of questions:

Ben: Not your type of contestant?
Not attractive enough?
Too quirky? Too unpredictable? ...
Maybe you were just giving the audience what they wanted to see. People know what they want to see ...
We don't have long... before the ad is over.

This disruptive episode, which tears the fabric of illusion and opens up a space where all the established codes and corresponding expectations are obliterated, challenges the initial link built with the audience. Ben is the new quizmaster and inherits the same linguistic fabric, and the same power as Daniel, since he makes the jokes and

gives his authorisation for the cast to laugh : '**Ben**: I have a wife. And two children. Three and seven. *Pause*. Stupid names for kids, I know. That's a joke Daniel. You can laugh if you like' (Drummond 2013: 47). As the power relation renegotiated, Sandra literally states that she no longer wishes to take part in the game. '**Sandra**: I don't want to go back into the Quiz.' (Drummond 2013: 42) Her use of the words 'go back into,' suggests that the TV show set, as well as the stage have now turned into enclosed, claustrophobic space, exempt from freedom. This threat mirrors the position of the (TV show) audience, held hostage of a 'show' where no more rules subsist.

At that stage of the play, the first part of the show called 'Reality' clearly appears as an orchestrated manipulation in which: 'Maybe you were just giving the audience what they wanted to see. People know what they want to see ... (Drummond 2013: 40)' as Ben states. In this regard the emphasis on the voyeuristic aspects of the entire show is conveyed through the use of the verb 'to see'. The audience members are made necessary witnesses of the show. As television show audience (for the fictitious 'live broadcast' and for the theatrical revelation of the tragic truth to be successful), they are also *watched* since a set of (fake) cameras and screens captures their reaction during the first part. Through this process, the spectator's gaze is imitated through suggestion: it is observed in the act of observing. This disquieting process of confronting the audience with its own action of onlooker inverts the status of the viewer, and thus blurs the frontier between who is looking at, and who is being looked at. Through the vanishing of division between onlooker and person looked at, the play successfully makes the quest double: that of the subject on stage (Sandra), together with that of the audience. In this respect the reference to the universe of media and screen through the object of the television is central. This post-modern object characterised by the fact that it is precisely looked at – generally in a process of passive contemplation – becomes active in the process of overlooking. The mechanism of inversion aims at shaking the audience out of the comfort of the dark

room of the theatre. Virtually, it confronts the spectators with the spectacle of their own reactions, as the truth emerges.

The ambiguous comic effect of the play rests on the contrast between the two levels of representation. Indeed, the satire of the media is displayed in an obvious parody of its discourse, so that the spectator of the play is confronted with an aesthetic experience that puts him in the position of the spectator of a TV show, ultimately turning *him* into the target of his own laughter.

Mental Stages

The generic hybridity built through the complex investment of theatrical space and the naturalistic treatment of dramatic action is linear and concealing in the first part. As such, it highly contrasts with the ‘unreality’ of the second part in which the fictional space is an inner space of memory and consciousness, fragmented and revealing.

The end of part two generates a shift in the audience/stage relationship, and during part three ‘Unreality’, a more traditional approach to theatrical space is re-established with the fourth wall excluding the audience from the fictional narrative, and reassigning them to an external position of onlooker – thus also reallocating them the status of audience of a theatrical representation. Indeed, in the sequence ‘Unreality’ the presence of the audience is verbally obliterated. **Sandra:** where have the audience gone? **Ben:** There’s no audience Sandra. *The applause boxes light up with the word QUIET!* (Drummond 2013: 65). Moreover, as the stage direction show, space is distancing itself from the initial naturalistic setting, and evolves towards ‘unreality’ – a de-realised space: *‘The applause boxes light up with difficulty. The sound effect of a raucous audience fills the room to oppressive levels ... The lights go*

out ... The space is shadowy, half lit, terrifying (Drummond 2013: 66). 'Unreality' is the part in which any subsidiary referential reality collapses – becomes opaque and oblique for the audience – while truth and certainty (both on stage and at a metadramatic level) emerge. This new space bears little resemblance with the former television show set, although some devices remain – it has turned into a mental stage. Indeed the 'unreal' is the representation on stage of the inner space of Sandra's repressed memory: 'You're in my head. None of this is real' (Drummond 2013: 71). This part reveals in a fragmented narrative, a series of facts about Sandra's life: when she was forty, Ben came to visit her to tell her that Daniel Caplin was dead, that Molly had shot herself, that when they both took part in the show as kids, he had been a witness of her rape, and that he had a recorded tape of the show for her to watch – hence, the space of the stage and the fictional space evoked, no longer coincide as various time and space scales are telescoped in the reconstitution of the truth. Language becomes the means through which the fictional space is evoked and constructed on stage.

On this stage Sandra enacts the re-remembering process, now 'guided through' (Drummond 2013: 10) by Ben. The action of reassembling the dismantled parts of the story becomes the new game, like a puzzle – which the audience also try to solve on their own mental stage. The ultimate 'memory' game to get to the truth of the show takes place in each spectators mind, as every joke, allusion, pun or incoherence of parts one and two, become evidence and turn each inappropriate burst of laughter into a flush of guilt. Language and memory work in parallel (on stage) and in the audience's mental stages to circumscribe the traumatic event. 'Truth can be cruel' for it is a 'traumatic' experience for the spectators to grasp the reality of the manipulation orchestrated at their expense. Word plays, puns, lapsus linguae, anagrams, and slippery echoes pervade the play since its beginning and work as looming signs of the repressed truth, about to resurface. Indeed all the clues have been sign-posted in a

series of keywords, which, when re-assembled, seem obvious. These linguistic clues also navigate through the different levels of reality of the show. No clear frontiers delineate the various parts of the play. When the common experience and language seemed to refer to the world of entertainment and media, in fact it works as a *trompe l'oeil* and calls for mechanisms of decryption and recognition of the intricate levels of fiction. Most notably, the lexical field belonging to the game of seduction, pervades the show in cues uttered by Daniel Caplin like: 'My goodness, Sandra, flattery will get you everywhere...Don't worry, Sandra, you'll get the hang of it. I'll guide you through. Any kids?' (Drummond 2013: 10), in which the phrases 'get you anywhere' and 'guide you through', resound as sexual invitations. These *double entendre* exemplify how language in itself is playing a game of disguise, of illusion, and of manipulation. The audience thus has to remember the echoes, decode the encrypted message in a constant movement in which they create new meaning. This can be linked to Roland Barthes's 'Paradoxe du lecteur' (applied in our case to the spectator) which states that the reader, as he decrypts, interprets and decodes a text, simultaneously becomes the producer of meaning, as he 'is crossed' by language:

[the reader] would perceive the simultaneous multiplicity of meanings, of points of view, of structures, a space extended outside the law which proscribe contradiction (« Text » is the very postulation of such a space). This imagination of a total ... reader may be useful in that it permits us to glimpse the Paradox of the reader: it is commonly admitted that to read is to decode: letters, words, meanings, structures, and this is incontestable; but by accumulating decoding ... by removing the safety catch of meaning, by putting reading into freewheeling, the reader is caught up in a dialectical reversal: finally he does not decode, he *overcodes* ; he does not decipher, he produces, he accumulates languages, he lets himself be infinitely and tirelessly traversed by them : he is that traversal. (Barthes

1989 : 42)

Several other signs recur relentlessly throughout the play, such as the reference to number 14 (Sandra's age when she was raped): '**Sandra** I'm forty /**Quizmaster** My gosh, fourteen (Drummond 2013: 10)'; '**Quizmaster** Mary, Queen of the Scots was fourteen when she married for the first time (Drummond 2013, 12)'; '**Quizmaster** The square root of one hundred and ninety six is/ **Sandra** False. It's fourteen. (Drummond 2013: 15).' '**Sandra** False! Leda and the Swan by Corregio features fourteen swans.(Drummond 2013: 32).'

Obvious references to the process of re-membering, of putting the repressed images and experiences back together to discover the truth, work as metadramatic references. For instance, the correct title of one poem is 'Looking for truth with a pin'; the response to one of the false statements mimics the narrative construction of the play: 'In psychology, **encoding, storage, and recall** are the three stages of memory'. (Drummond 2013: 17)

Furthermore, round three of the game is a definition round, playing with a series words, their definition and their orthography, in a manner that mimics the construction of the show. At the microcosmic level of the play, language mirrors the macrocosmic dramatic structure: the construction rests on the creation of a humorous and appealing illusion in total contrast with a more powerful or disquieting truth, that only reveals itself with hindsight. In this example, the term hippocampus when defined as 'a holiday resort for large African beasts' is both comic and unreal, and alludes to a space dedicated to mass holiday and passive entertainment. While in fact the term refers to real scientific reality, an inner part of brain, centre of emotion and memory:

Daniel The false definition is...a holiday resort for large African beasts.

Silence

A very difficult one this. I can hand it over to Sandra.

Ben It's hippocampus isn't it? Hippo-campus.

A holiday resort for large African beasts.

The hippocampus is actually the part of the brain associated with memory.

It receives information about every single experience we have and it never sleeps. (Drummond 2013: 51)

This playful and light language thus creates a web of echoes linking sexuality, memory, and trauma in the manner of a humoristic puzzle, as it releases false and correct definitions for the words melancholic, catatonic, denial, hippocampus, nubile, and repress. The ultimate example is the occurrence of the anagram on the word denial, which brings together denial and Daniel, as a conclusive accusation: '**Ben** Time's up. The word is denial, Daniel. A river in Egypt. De-Nile. Correct definition – an assertion of falsehood.' (Drummond 2013: 51).

At the crucial turning point of the show, when all the clues match and the fragmented puzzle of time and space is reassembled in a big picture, the spectator grasps the ambivalence of the process: the mechanisms of memory have unveiled the truth that turns Sandra into a victim of abuse, while the very same truth turns the audience into bystander. The reconstitution of the story implies a shared responsibility, making the audience feel guilty of their own laughter. This idea of responsibility is literally stated through the evocation of the 'choice': 'Perception is reality. Truth is simply what you choose to see. What you choose to remember.'

(Drummond 2013: 60). Paradoxically, the ambivalence of the revelation also turns the audience into victims of the manipulative construction of the show.

The utterly theatrical part 'Unreality', is the locus of revelation and ethical consciousness, hence it reasserts the power of theatre as a collective and political experience.

As has been argued, through the game of inversion the play questions the relevance of notions of reality and truth, and displays strategies to have the audience experience the importance of reception. In the process, the show flows from a comedy to a tragedy. What was presented as light entertainment has evolved and transformed into a didactic lecture on child abuse, celebrity culture, blindness and responsibility of the audience. Ludic, enigmatic, and critic are the three pillars on which the show is constructed. The very last section of the show entitled 'The Future' is Sandra's soliloquy: a short monologue in which she recalls – in a linear narration – the time when she was raped. As the discourse shifts from confession to public address, it becomes a confrontational moralising lecture:

Sandra I can't imagine anyone will be surprised. Everyone knew. Everyone. They just chose not to see. Motivated ignoring. We're all guilty of it. Choosing not to see something that's right in front of us...

The perfect conspiracy happens inside the collective subconscious of a nation...

And we need to look at ourselves as well. We need to decide what we are going to see...

In the future...child rape ... will not be seen as an inevitable part of life but

a fucking impossibility. (Drummond 2013: 87)

The keywords of this epilogue lay bare the underlying dynamics at stake in the play: the pronoun 'we' asserts the idea of shared experience and of exchange between stage and audience. The words 'guilty', 'choosing not to see', 'collective subconscious', 'look at ourselves' resound as denunciation of the ethical misbehaving of the audience, if not of contemporary society on the whole.

Conclusion

The ultimate quizmaster in the play is the playwright, together with the floor manager - stage director - Hamish Pirie whose production of the play challenges the audience's perception of reality and calls for a renewal of collective consciousness within the social space. While the controversial response to the play underlines the limit of the critical statement on contemporary society and child abuse, what appears as political is the use of theatre space in its relationship to the audience. Indeed, Joyce Macmillan in *The Scotsman* argues that the play's interest relies in the fact that it 'works so relentlessly and brilliantly on the consciousness of the audience'. Mark Fisher, reviewing the play for *The Guardian* is more reserved, as he admits 'the play is imperfect: by withholding information, Drummond can string us along and when, finally he explains himself, he risks stating the obvious (child abuse is bad).' Yet he is nowhere near the critical condemnation published by Mark Brown in *The Telegraph*, in which the play is described as a 'comi-tragedy, which asks wrong questions'.

However, this overview underlines that the ambivalence of the play questions the shift from a political consciousness to a moral consciousness, or rather a

moralising one. While the mechanisms displayed in the show prove to be efficient, the underlying question is whether the relationship with the spectator should be triggered by a didactic aim, based on manipulation. Even the central project of rising awareness – through the confrontation with reality, the revelation of facts, the questioning of the audience’s role – as a determining condition for the show to succeed, appears as contestable. According to Neveux such type of political theatre relies on the ‘conscientisation’ of the audience and aims to provoke mobilisation; as such, the spectator is characterised by a lack or a default that theatre has to address. (2013: 284). His initial interrogation (what conception does the play hold of its audience?) leads him to consider a form of political theatre in which the key concept would be, instead, that of the ‘equal capacity’ (‘l’égale capacité’). He postulates the possibility of a theatre in which the spectator is neither conceived as a conformist individual, who needs to be shaken out of his passivity, nor as an individual lacking consciousness who needs to be confronted with the reality to become aware. He labels this type of theatre a ‘theatre of capacity’. (Neveux 2013: 297). In many respect, Rob Drummond’s *Quiz Show* illustrates the ambivalence of the stage/audience relationship with respect to its political power. Paradoxically it heightens both its possibilities and its limits.

Works Cited.

- BARTHES, R. 1989. *The Rustle of Language*. University of California Press.
- BROWN, M. 2013. *Quiz Show*, Traverse, Edinburgh. In : *The Telegraph*. [online]. Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/9969811/Quiz-Show-Traverse-Edinburgh.html> . [viewed 10 January 2015].
- CAILLOIS, R. 1967. *Les Jeux et les hommes. Le masque et le vertige*. 2nd ed. Paris. Gallimard.

- CRIMP, M. 2008. Face au mur, Martin Crimp, Hubert Colas. Entretien avec Marie Louchard. <http://www.oc.tv.net/face-au-mur-martin-crimp-hubert-colas.html>. Quoted in ROUSSEAU, A., 2013. L'horreur acoustique musiques « anempathiques » dans le théâtre de Martin Crimp. *Sillages critiques* [online], n°16, mis en ligne le 01 juin 2003, [viewed 17 January 2014] available from: <http://sillagescritiques.revues.org/2955>
- DRUMMOND, R. 2013. Quiz Show. London. Methuen Drama.
- FISHER, M. 2013. Quiz Show-Review. *The Guardian* [online]. [viewed 10 January 2015]. Available from : <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2013/apr/03/quiz-show-review>
- HAMMOND, W. and STEWART, D. eds. 2007, Verbatim, Verbatim: Techniques in Contemporary Documentary Theatre, London, Oberon.
- HOLDSWORTH, N. 2008. The Landscape of Contemporary Scottish Drama: Place, Politics and Identity. In : N. HOLDSWORTH, M. LUCKHURST, eds. *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British and Irish Drama*. Oxford. Blackwell Publishing. pp.125-145
- HUTCHEON, L. 1988. A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction. London. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.
- KANE, S. 2001. Sarah Kane: Complete Plays. London. Methuen Drama.
- KNOWLES, R. 2004. Reading the Material Theatre. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- MACHON, J. 2013. Immersive Theatres. Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance. London. Palgrave MacMillan
- MACMILLAN, J. 2013. Theatre Review : Quiz Show, Traverse, Edinburgh. In: *The Scotsman* :[online].[viewed 10 January 2015]. Available from <http://www.scotsman.com/what-s-on/theatre-comedy-dance/theatre-review-quiz-show-traverse-edinburgh-1-2876182>
- MCAULEY, G. 1999. Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre. Ann

Arbor: University of Michigan.

NEVEUX, O. 2013. Politiques du spectateur. Les enjeux du théâtre politique aujourd'hui. Paris. La Découverte.

PASQUET, L. 2013. Le Rire de l'horreur sur la scène anglaise contemporaine: vers une nouvelle poétique de la comédie?. 22 November. Unpublished PhD Thesis.

Endnotes.

¹ I will further develop this idea and wish to acknowledge that I use Laetitia Pasquet's conclusions in her unpublished doctoral thesis entitled « Laughing at horror on the contemporary English stage: towards a new poetics of comedy? » Pasquet, Laetitia, Thèse de Doctorat « Le Rire de l'horreur sur la scène anglaise contemporaine: vers une nouvelle poétique de la comédie ? » defended on 22/11/2013. p.475

² Sir James Wilson Vincent 'Jimmy' Savile who died in 2011 was an English DJ, television presenter, media personality and charity fundraiser. Much of his career involved working with children and young people, including visiting schools and hospital wards. He spent 20 years presenting *Top of the Pops* in front of a teenage audience, and an overlapping 20 years presenting *Jim'll Fix It*, in which he helped the wishes of viewers, mainly children, come true. In 2012 he was accused of sexual abuse on more than 300 children during his career. This led to the Operation Yew Tree (a police investigation into sexual abuse on children by British media personalities.)