

Located Stories: Theatre Makes Place with the Body

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Murdoch University, Perth, 2008.

I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Angela Campbell

Consult the genius of the place in all;
That tells the waters or to rise, or fall;
Or helps th' ambitious hill the heav'ns to scale,
Or scoops in circling theatres the vale;
Calls in the country, catches opening glades,
Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades,
Now breaks, or now directs, th' intending lines;
Paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs.

(Alexander Pope)

Abstract

The journey into theatre-made places offered here is both analytical and creative. It is comprised of case studies analysing three theatre productions that occurred in Perth between 2004 and 2006 and two of my own creative works, forming the Prologue and Conclusion to the thesis. Throughout, I am informed by Edward Casey's philosophy of place as I work to develop both a poetics and a dramaturgy of place in theatre. I draw upon a range of thinkers in order to interrogate the limits of theatrical representation and to suggest that an active engagement in the process of place-making in theatre offers a touchstone and paradigm that can release both thought and the body from totalizing and foreclosing cultural imperatives. This dramaturgical and poetical journey into place works, I hope, toward creating an open and dynamic field from which to experience the 'here and now' of being in place in theatre, and in the world.

I argue that the notion of place as embodied meaning frames the body and the mind in contexts that are personal, emotional, historical, ethical, and political; that to be in place, to be aware that one's body is a particular place, suggests that the body and mind are listening to each other. This conscious connection, I believe, offers a radical challenge to the bifurcation of body and mind that runs as a consistent theme throughout the history of Western thought. More particularly, I aim to demonstrate that a voyage into place, in theatre, conveys the body and mind together in ways that allow us to "resume the direction, and regain the depth, of our individual and collective life once again – and know it for the first time" (Casey, 1993: 314).

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Acknowledgments

My sincere thanks to the creative personnel involved in all the productions and especially to those who gave generously of their time and energy to contribute to my research. I extend my thanks to Doris Eaton, Stephen Stuart, Jolly Read, Michael Kantor, Tom Wright, Sally Richardson and Zoe Atkinson who all agreed to be interviewed by me. I also extend my thanks to the staff of Black Swan Theatre Company, Malthouse Theatre and Steamworks Arts Production.

I would particularly like to thank those people who have shared their thoughts, skills, passion, experience and knowledge with me on this journey into place; Paul Monaghan, Gregory Pryor, Dr Ian Wilson, Louise Gough, Holly Storey, Jennifer Bowen, Paul Jackson, Dr John Hall, Bagryana Popov, Joely Sobott, Howard Pederson, Margaret Mills, Stephen Armstrong, Prof. Ian Buchanan and Dr Jeff Malpas. I also have appreciated the timely support and enthusiasm of the staff at Murdoch University.

As I am about to leave them, I would like to thank all my Fremantle friends who have welcomed me and my family into their lives, and I think, into their hearts. They certainly hold a place in my own heart.

I could not have made it through without the humour and keen wit of my friend and fellow PhD traveller, Josephine Wilson, and her husband Chris Hill. I have particularly appreciated our stays at Lancelin. (So long, and thanks for all the fish.) Also thanks to my mother for her regular phone calls and to my sister, Janet, who has read some of my chapters with a sharp solicitor's eye and advised me on how to organise my notes.

My supervisor Dr Helena Grehan has been a pillar of professionalism and has also become a very good friend. She has accompanied me with humour, insight and generosity on every step of my journey, even when I have insisted on taking her up hill and down dale, two steps forward and one step back. I am very grateful to her for her help, in all things.

Last of all I would like to thank my husband, Tom Gutteridge, who is my partner in the greatest adventure of all. His unforgiving director's eye has been fabulously useful in helping to clarify the flow of my arguments in all the parts of the thesis, particularly in rehearsing my piece on Georgiana, and in writing *Orchids and Insects*.

And to my darling boys, Alec and Hugo, who were small boys when all this began, and who are now much bigger boys; thank you for always being 'here and now' with me, in place.