Drama PhD by Practice

The Dramatic Property: a New Paradigm of Applied Theatre Practice for a Globalised Media Culture

Paul Sutton

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*See footnote 31 on page 99.

**This is a plain black disc in a transparent trigger case. Click trigger to release.

Acknowledgements

Credit where credit is due. First, thanks to all my C&T colleagues over many years, for their patience, encouragement and for engaging in the debate. And of course thanks to all the animateurs, practitioners and young people who have contributed enormously to my thinking by making these Dramatic Properties real. Gratitude too to C&T's Board of Directors who have steadfastly supported me and this project, to Rob Lines for his disciplined proof reading and to Tom Knight whose idea this thesis was in the first place.

Secondly, in the academic community, grateful thanks to everyone at the University of Kent, with a special word of thanks for Dr. Nicola Shaughnessy, my supervisor. Her conviction and high expectations demanded I constantly raised my game. Also, to Dr. Derek Paget, who first inspired my interest in so much of what is here.

To my mother and father, many thanks for encouraging and supporting my passion for drama in my own youth and well beyond.

Without my wife, Wendy, this project would not have been possible. Her love, optimism and faith underscore every word (and binary digit) here. And finally, thanks to my young daughter Ella, for reminding every day through her life and her play why all this feels so important.

Abstract

This thesis tests through theatre and drama the Dramatic Property as a new paradigm of Applied Theatre activity. It does this through the artistic practice of *The Dark Theatre, Cambat* and *the livingnewspaper.com* – projects developed by Paul Sutton, Artistic Director of the Theatre Company, C&T – and through the analysis of these works. These are presented here as four *Dark Theatre* comics, an archive CD-ROM of the *Cambat* website and two CD-ROMs for *the livingnewspsaper.com.* The first of these is an actual part of *the livingnewspaper.com* project, as used by participants. The second disc is a presentation of the processes and functions of the project on and off line.

The written component of this thesis marks out the practical and theoretical territory that the paradigm of the Dramatic Property seeks to occupy. It does this by setting out the early practice of C&T and by identifying the factors that led the company to seek to develop a new model of practice. It then moves on to explore young people's relationship to the fabric of early twenty-first century media culture and their engagement with it. It argues that the processes of drama naturally underpin this fabric, particularly when considering immersive digital media. It then goes on to extrapolate from the practice-as-research dimension of this thesis the concepts, forms and synergies that underpin the paradigm as a whole. In particular it identifies five qualities so far generic to all Dramatic Properties and maps out the synergies that underpin their value to the paradigm.

Finally, case studies of the three Dramatic Properties under examination contextualise and theorise the practice documentation.

Chapter 1
Towards The Dramatic Property

C&T is a theatre company specialising in the creation of applied theatre experiences, predominantly for audiences of children and young people. This thesis addresses the practice that has shaped C&T in the twenty-first century; a practice that defines the company's distinctiveness in this already diverse and eclectic field.

This practice is this thesis: it is theatre applied to a question, or rather to two questions. Firstly, in the dramatised landscape of our emergent digital culture, what synergistic relationships can be built between applied theatre and other dramatising media; and secondly, what form(s) might such applied theatre practices take?

Together these questions challenge C&T to be more than just makers of theatre projects (although three projects do form the basis of this argument), they imply the necessity for a paradigm that unifies practice with theory. For C&T, as for applied theatre researcher Philip Taylor, paradigm means a framework, or a holding-form: 'contain[ing] ideas about how reality in drama and arts education can be defined, investigated and reported on' (1996:16). The paradigm at the centre of this thesis is thus validated by the simultaneous development of knowledge through the experience of practice and through its theoretical justification. This process of research through symbiosis is (as Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel argue) in itself symptomatic of the dramatising digital culture at the centre of this thesis:

> The people best fitted to thriving in the world of postmodern knowledge described by Lyotard will include people who have strong multi- and cross-disciplinary expertise, who can cross-dress conceptually, theoretically and methodologically in order to come up with new rules and new games…this kind of expertise and competence is developed in performance and not through absorbing content (2003:176).

Reflecting this ethos, this thesis comes in complementary components. Just as the argument that unifies these components was constructed through a repeating cycle of

what Dorothy Heathcote might call profligate/parsimonious practice[1], so these components exist in symbiosis. Consequently, in approaching this thesis you may wish to find your own style of 'cross-dressing.' There are four written chapters, four comics and three CD-ROMs to be interrogated. The comics and the CD-ROMs represent the practice.[2] Two of these CD-ROMs are actual practice; the third is documentation of practice. The written component breaks down into two parts. Chapters 1-3 construct the theoretical substructure for the paradigm, whilst Chapter 4 discusses the three practice-based 'experiments'.

C&T and Dramatic Properties: a brief history

C&T, founded as Collar and TIE Theatre-in-Education Company in 1988, can most easily be characterised as a small scale theatre company operating within the field of practice most commonly described as Applied Theatre. Based in the City of Worcester in the rural West Midlands of England the company is committed to working predominantly with audiences of children and young people as well as with a diverse mix of community groups (both geographic and interest-based). The company makes a special commitment to working with learning disabled people.

Yet whilst its audience, its size, even its original name, would appear to locate C&T within the field of Theatre-in-Education, the particulars of C&T's artistic policy now frame a distinctively different set of applied theatre practices. C&T's Business Plan sets out the company's underpinning philosophy:

> We believe, in our post-modern, globalised culture, new media can be harnessed by the medium of drama to enable creative, learning and

[1] Heathcote's model proposes two stages of dramatic developments: first a profligate creative practice, followed by, second, a process of reflection and distillation of thinking. The cycle, much used by Belgrade Theatre-in-Education is discussed in an interview with that company's one-time administrator, Jack Shuttleworth, in Appendix 1 of this thesis.

[2] Materials relating to the Dramatic Properties *Cambat* and *the livingnewspaper.com* are actually the formal practice-as-research component of this thesis. *The Dark Theatre* comic books were written before this period of research but are included here as firstly they frame much of the subsequent research and secondly because they continued to be used as part of C&T's applied theatre work throughout the period of research, thus informing parallel research activities (for example, as we shall later, in the area of vertical integration).

> democratic opportunities for all, particularly children, young people and those at risk of social exclusion, thereby challenging and changing our world (Sutton 2004:5).

This philosophy has led the company to develop a distinctive approach to its applied theatre-making:

> C&T is a Theatre Company that uses popular culture forms and new media to create drama experiences that inspire, educate and empower. These dramas are a valuable source of intellectual property, enabling the production of quality creative and learning properties: plays, websites, CD-ROMs, toys and publications. C&T licenses and facilitates these programmes to partners in the arts and education sectors, nationally and internationally (Sutton 2004:5).

Implicit in this policy is the belief that the company's ambition to inspire, educate and empower its audiences can not be achieved by theatre alone. This is not to suggest that theatre as a medium is not capable of enabling these outcomes, rather that within C&T's philosophical framework, theatre is not the sole means of achieving these ends. Instead the company utilizes a hybrid mix of performance, learning and new media, distilled into what it describes as 'original dramas'. C&T chooses to signify these dramas as 'creative and learning properties' rather than using an existing applied theatre signifier (such as 'a play', 'a Theatre-in-Education programme' or 'Forum Theatre') indicating C&T's belief that these dramas cannot be accurately defined by existing terminology.

But for C&T even the terms 'creative and learning properties' or 'original dramas' are not wholly adequate. C&T more commonly uses a hybrid of these two terms, describing these works as Dramatic Properties. C&T defines a Dramatic Property (DP) as:

> an original, concept-driven theatre text harnessing applied theatre methodologies and encoded through digital media. Dramatic Properties are constructed as vertically integrated intellectual

properties, engaging audiences through performance and disseminated via cross-media platforms (Sutton 2004:5).

Unpacking this definition is the central ambition of the written component of this thesis, but in the first instance, the hallmarks of this proposed genre are perhaps made the most accessible through the descriptions of the three Dramatic Properties currently in C&T's portfolio and that form the practical component of this thesis:

The Dark Theatre: A participatory murder mystery whodunit that takes the form of a comic book, written by Paul Sutton and illustrated by Roberto Corona. Each edition of the comic (published termly for participating schools over two years) included drama tasks embedded in the narrative of the comic for students to participate in. Students used drama to decode the text and reveal its meanings. The results of this work were then fed back to C&T who used it to inform the content and narrative direction of future editions of the comic.

Set in a fictional town called Factford, playwright Nathan Page is murdered and the manuscript of his final play lost. His son, Robin, begins to investigate only to be confronted by the ghost of his father and the characters from his lost play, offering guidance, cryptic clues and plenty to provoke the imagination.

The Dark Theatre is an unusual twist on the murder-mystery genre: a whodunit happening in real time with readers actively engaged in authoring its narrative and meaning. In beginning the project C&T genuinely did not know the identity of the murderer. The participants in the project (young people in some fifty schools) helped to shape the eventual outcome through their drama. Consequently, *The Dark Theatre* can be said to explore the relationship between reader, writer and text, both through its choice of content and through its dramatic processes: a collaborative drama that liberates the text from its apparent authors.

Cambat explores young people's attitudes to Closed Circuit Television through performance, participation and video streaming technologies. A CCTV security guard watching his monitors day and night becomes so bored he plays a trick on his unsuspecting, monitored, public. One of his victims turns on him, steals his CCTV

camera and proceeds to force the Security Guard to watch as she tracks him down, breaks into his home and finally humiliates him, as he did her, by filming him in the toilet.

Designed to operate on a number of performative and mediated levels, initially the project toured as a Theatre-in-Education programme. This programme mixed live performance and filmed CCTV sequences with which the security guard (alone on stage throughout) interacted. At intervals during the performance the action was stopped, and the audience was asked to dramatically reconstruct the scene they had just witnessed on screen, enabling them to flesh out a more sympathetic view of the character of the CCTV thief and compare and contrast her point of view with that of the security guard.

But in parallel with *Cambat* as Theatre-in-Education, the drama also played to a wider audience via the internet. *Cambat* online enabled visitors to the project's website to engage with the original fiction of the play by framing them as computer hackers, hacking into the CCTV company's online archives and accessing the CCTV footage through streamed video sequences. This enabled schools to re-create the project independently of C&T, using the internet as the medium for the drama so users could decode the video sequences through the same participatory drama techniques used in the TIE programme.

The livingnewspaper.com: This Dramatic Property reinvents the classic documentary drama form of the Living Newspaper for the internet age. The project builds a virtual network of schools, colleges, universities and community groups who can all collaborate through a website driven by a multi-media content management system enabling them to create dramas that explore topical news stories and issues of the day. In schools this work is initiated by a CD-ROM of materials that enables the project to operate as a process drama. In community contexts (for example working with adults with learning disabilities in social care settings) the project is directly facilitated by members of C&T's team of applied theatre practitioners, known as Animateurs.

It would be unusual for any theatrical innovation not to proceed from an existing body of practice or practices, or from the individual or collective perspectives and experiences of its practitioners. The development of the paradigm of the Dramatic Property is no exception to this rule. To inform the later discussion of theory and practice of C&T's new model of activity it is therefore useful to briefly give an account of C&T's historical place within the Theatre-in-Education movement.

C&T was founded in 1988. Originally called Collar and TIE, the Company's self-appointed mission was to provide a Theatre-in-Education (TIE) service to schools, young people and their educators in the then County of Hereford and Worcester. As Claire Cochrane notes, this was 'an inauspicious time to launch a new theatre-in-education venture' (2000:188) coinciding as it did with the launch of the Education Reform Act, the devastating effect on arts in education of Local Management of Schools and following on from seven previous failed attempts to set up a TIE company in the area.

The company quickly established a strong reputation for its work, evolving along the model of a 'classic' Theatre-in-Education company. The company created a mixture of performance and participatory theatre, with a balance between issue based projects and curriculum-derived programmes. Youth theatre and work with people with learning disabilities played an important dimension in the company's output. Collar and TIE secured funding from West Midlands Arts and its LEA within its first twelve months and from the Arts Council within two years.

Theatre-in-Education

Since its inception at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry in 1965, Theatre-in-Education has evolved into a global movement of practices and practitioners. Diverse practices now shelter under the broad umbrella of TIE: a body of work that can be relentlessly subdivided into a number of sub-genres, related fields of activity, and a complex taxonomy that implies a rigid demarcation of methodological approaches and artistic activities. In actuality, Theatre-in-Education is a hybrid form, drawing on a mix of arts practices and pedagogy and operating with flexibility

within the constraints imposed by a range of political, social and cultural systems. Tony Jackson bravely attempts a definition of the genre:

> The TIE programme is…a co-ordinated and carefully structured pattern of activities, usually devised and researched by the [TIE] company, around a topic of relevance to the school's curriculum and the children's own lives, presented in school by the company and involving the children directly in an experience of the situation and problems the topic throws up. It generally utilizes elements in a variety of permutations of traditional theatre…educational drama...and simulation. There is however no set formula (1993:4).

Geoff Gillham, TIE practitioner, adds to this by focusing on the qualitative value of the TIE process:

> The participants may therefore be involved in dramatic interactions with the characters in the play, in formulating their understandings by making depictions, discussions, writing or drawing. Their activity while containing elements of theatre is orientated not to theatrical performance but to experiencing problems in dramatic form and expressing their understandings of them (2000:67)

C&T located itself within the dominant strand of TIE practice typified by major UK companies such as Belgrade TIE (Coventry), Dukes TIE (Lancaster) and TheatreVan (Harlow). Whilst these companies all had their own distinctive approaches to TIE, what they held in common was a shared sense of values, typified by their membership of the professional association for the TIE sector, The Standing Conference of Young People's Theatre (SCYPT). SCYPT's 1992 manifesto defines its mission as to 'undertake to continue to fight for the theoretical and practical development of TIE, to defend it and advocate the real needs of the young' (2003:9). This emphasis on, and balance between, theory and practice struck a cord with C&T's emerging priorities. However, by the mid-1990s the company found itself increasingly at odds with SCYPT and its overt political stance ('Socialism starts out from the basis of the satisfaction of human, social needs…the same requirement

exists for artists in Britain and throughout the world' (2003:9) – not because it was an invalid political philosophy but because it increasingly became a pre-requisite for 'acceptable' TIE practice modelled by SCYPT companies.

For C&T, founded in the year that the Conservative Government introduced the National Curriculum and Local Management of Schools (legislation that as Eirwen Hopkins notes 'had a profound impact on the development of the [TIE] work' (2005:8) by introducing a 'new market relationship' (2005:9) to Theatre-in-Education provision), such 'acceptable' practice was never part of its reality. Whilst C&T embraced the methodologies and techniques of Theatre-in-Education, the actual range of activities it undertook were far more eclectic. Classic TIE formed part of this mix, but so did classroom Drama-in-Education activities, Young People's Theatre (YPT), youth theatre, inclusive theatre projects with adults with learning disabilities and community arts projects, including involvement in a number of community plays. Much of this activity had no status within the self-referential terms of SCYPT's model of Theatre-in-Education and thus increasingly C&T sought to validate its work through different means. However eccentric SCYPT's membership might have chosen to view this range of activities (and there was more than just an underlying sense that C&T's motivations in taking on such a diverse portfolio of projects were driven by financial constraints), there were, for C&T, three unifying trends that increasingly informed these activities.

Firstly, was a pre-occupation with what Norman K Denzin describes as performance ethnography (or more accurately performance autoethnography). Denzin's belief that 'performance-based human disciplines can contribute to radical social change, to economic justice, to a cultural politics that extends...the principles of a radical democracy to all aspects of society' (2003:3) is an imperative shared by C&T. Writing in 2003 (several years after these activities were identifiable in C&T's work) Denzin's description of a performance practice that brings 'together members of the community, as cultural workers…[creating] community-based interpretations [that] represent an emancipatory commitment to community action that performs social change' (2003:17) comfortably embraces C&T's underpinning working methodology and the company's aspiration for its audiences. Peter Hall describes

the honesty and integrity that such performances can embrace in his description of his 1964 community-based film *Akenfield:*

> They [the amateur performers] are not actors – they cannot easily repeat their inventions without lapsing into self-consciousness or artificiality. But put them in a situation they know because they have lived it...and they can fantasise richly (2004:19)

Such performative qualities were largely devoid from SCYPT's schematic for TIE, but for C&T processes that engendered such responses proved not only theatrically powerful but often individually empowering,

Secondly, was a pervading interest in the mass media, and its relationship to youth culture. For C&T these fields were intrinsically linked: youth culture was increasingly shaped by their consumption of television radio, film and advertising. What's more, any drama activity that interrogated this relationship seemed to implicitly demonstrate ethnographic qualities, so ingrained were these media and their conventions in the lived experiences of C&T's young audiences.

Finally, looking beyond SCYPT's brand of Marxist cultural materialism, the company sought out a different critical and theoretical framework by which to understand its activities. Influential were aspects of interpretive ethnography, structuralism, post-structuralism and post-modernism.

The differences between C&T and SCYPT were crystallised during 1996, triggered by the association's increasing hostility towards non-Marxist, modernist critical theories, typified by Geof Gillham's attack on Post-modernism in SCYPT Journal 32. Gillham framed SCYPT's view that Post Modernisms' pre-occupation with the elusiveness of meaning meant that as a body of theory it was anti-knowledge, which seemed to C&T to deny its potential to engage learners in new ways in the shifting culture that surrounds young people.

SCYPT's suspicions of Post-Modernism are understandable. As Birringer points out '...while fashion and high technology invent newly designed bodies all the

time…the theatre, in this respect, tends to confirm the failure more concretely than the other arts since its inventions take more time.' (1991:19) SCYPT's structures implied that member companies needed to move the TIE movement forward in unison, strength deriving from solidarity. However, in the Post-Fordist consumer society embodied by the Education Reform Act's mantra of choice, and with new arts policy initiatives focusing on the big theme of celebrating localised cultural diversity, (1999:19) the one-size-fits-all model of a TIE company seemed neither to embrace the needs of C&T's audiences nor the company's artistic aspirations. C&T chose a more flexible, independent future and resigned from SCYPT.

Against this background C&T began work on its own intellectual project: developing a new paradigm of applied theatre (as opposed to Theatre-in-Education) practice that reflected both its priorities and those of its audiences. As Helen Nicholson puts it, 'making a difference is a struggle, as Brecht understood, and it depends on breaking old certainties and creating new artistic methods to represent changing social circumstances' (2005:13). The following chapter defines the changing social circumstances that inform C&T's model of practice: The Dramatic Property.

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Chapter 2

Applied Theatre in a Dramatising Culture

The first Dramatic Properties were developed by C&T for use with audiences of children and young people (although C&T now uses the model with a variety of audiences, including adults with learning disabilities). Underpinning the rationale for the model was the belief that in the post-modern era young people needed a method and system for engaging in theatre practice that equated to their culture and their values, not one driven by the pedagogic considerations of the National Curriculum or by, for example, the Marxist-driven ideological considerations of SCYPT. Paul Willis' study for the Gulbenkian Foundation in to youth culture argued for the placing of young people's culture and values at the centre of youth-related arts provision:

> In our thinking about youth and the arts we must start from the unpalatable truth or from no truths at all, it is 'worse' truths we need, not 'better' lies. The worst truth is that the traditional arts play very little part in young people's lives. Accepting, believing, acting on this worst truth is the only way to a better truth – 'the arts' may be dead, but not 'art in life.' For its high time we started from where young people are rather than from where traditional arts or youth policies think they ought to be. In order to do this we need to pose different questions. Not exclusively 'how can we bring 'the arts' to youth?' but 'in what ways are the young already in some sense the artists of their own lives?' Not exclusively 'why is their culture not like ours?' but 'what are their cultures like?' Not 'how can we inspire the young with art?' But 'how are the young already culturally energised in ways which we can re-inforce?' (1990:9)

For C&T the importance and value attached to young people's own cultural experiences is crucial to the dynamics of the model of the Dramatic Property. But whilst Willis constructs his analysis against the broadest possible definition of youth culture (his study embraces activities as diverse as music, fashion, drinking and fighting) C&T, as theatre practitioners, seek to localise the values and the

'better truths' he asks for within the field of drama and theatre. Ironically, to achieve this localisation C&T grounds its 21st century model of theatre practice in a 1974 essay by Raymond Williams.

In 'Drama in the Dramatised Society', Williams argues that:

> Drama is no longer...coextensive with theatre; many dramatic performances are now in film and television studios....New kinds of text, new kinds of notation, new media and new conventions press actively alongside the texts and conventions we think we know (1991:11).

Williams' 'new media' are of course today anything but new. Britain in 1973 enjoyed only three television channels: BBC1, 2 and a regionalised ITV. Radio provision was entirely the remit of the BBC. However, Williams' analysis of the fabric of society permeated by a variety of dramatising media and texts, with these new forms of notation creating a new dimension to our culture, is as valid today as it was then. As Jonothon Neelands observes:

> In our world the term 'drama' is used to refer to a diverse range of cultural practices which range from dramatic literature through to dramatic events in the news. In between we find the drama of TV and film [and] live theatre (1997:1).

Williams' analysis implicitly points to theatre as the generic point of origin of these mediated dramatic experiences. His argument proceeds from a narrow, western theatre-centric definition of a dramatic text, illustrating his thesis with examples of classic literary theatre scripts, notably the works of Chekhov. However, as we will see later, this idea of textual notation is central to the concept of the Dramatic Property. Similar classification arrangements underpin a central strand of Theatre-in-Education theory, but derived from very different understandings of dramatic terminology. Belgrade TIE's 1992 Statement of Artistic and Educational Aims asserts:

> The term Drama is here being used to refer to a generic concept: a concept that will include within it a number of more specific forms, including Theatre-in-Education...as a generic concept it will also include forms such as theatre, film, Drama in Education as well as other specific forms (1993:26).

Articulating a similar dramatic genealogy, David Davis, in his attack on the 2001 Edexel English GCSE Drama examination syllabus, chastises the examining body for identifying characterisation as an element of drama, when he, from the perspective of a Drama-in-Education practitioner sees it as 'belong[ing] in the category of the performing art of theatre.' (2005:165), a descendent of the art form of Drama. Whereas Williams' arrangements proceed from the desire to systematize the interdependence of various forms of mediated dramatic notation, Belgrade and Davis are motivated by a belief that the processes that underpin drama are pivotal to the specifics of all dramatic forms. This emphasis on drama as a set of processes underpins a variety of applied theatre forms, not just Theatre-in-Education, and reflects the pervasive influence of the school of practice most commonly referred to as Process Drama and initiated by Dorothy Heathcote.

For C&T, conflating Williams' model of Drama (and dramatic text) in the Dramatised society and applied theatre's model of Process Drama offered tremendous theatrical and educative potential. A whole generation of young people have drama almost genetically encoded into their daily diet of mediated cultural consumption and for these same young people the processes of drama inform the pedagogy that largely underpins their experiences of theatre – predominantly drama in schools. Will not a young person, steeped in what Philip Auslander calls 'the rhetoric of mediatisation' (1993:25), see the similarities in a sporting event's instant replay and a moment of Forum Theatre, with the facilitator explaining 'that the scene will be performed once more, exactly as it was the first time' (1979:139)? Constructing synergistic relationships between drama as process, drama as latent theatre text and the fabric of our dramatised society is central to the model of the Dramatic Property.

These potential synergies are not purely constructed through the conflation of disparate theories; they are also observable in the fabric of young people's theatre-making. David Hornbrook has observed the symptoms of Auslander's rhetoric in children's classroom drama: ('any casual observation of dramatic improvisation in school will quickly reveal the extent to which pupils have absorbed the form and vocabulary of the dramatisations presented to them by television' (1998:115)), while Sandra Gattenhof, utilizing Brad Haseman's collection method of 'the researcher as artistic auditor' (2004:123), observes similar performative traits outside of formal education in a number of examples of Australian youth theatre 'illustrating this developing narrative in contemporary youth performance' (2004:123). Gattenhof also provides evidence of another crucial facet of evolving nature of the dramatised society in the twenty-first century: its relationship to and interdependence with the forces of globalisation.

Globalisation is often conveniently characterised in the context of the arts and media by the notion of cultural imperialism. Williams, in 1973, was writing within the context of British media culture, pre-Lyotard and post-modernism and dominated by BBC public service ethics. In the early twenty-first century we experience the same dramatising processes but within a globalised media culture largely driven by vast capitalist corporations such as Disney and Time Warner, who see drama not so much as an art form, but as a business strategy: 'a world embracing trend that rides roughshod over local cultures and practices' (2004:2).

For example, Pixar, the Hollywood studio responsible for digitally animated films such as *Finding Nemo* (2003) and *The Incredibles* (2004) founds its creativity on commercially driven, NASDAQ-listed principles:

> A single animated feature film has the ability to generate billions of dollars worth of consumer spending. Such revenues are derived from marketing campaigns surrounding the theatrical release of the animated film, which, in turn, drive demand for home videos, television, toys, and other film-related merchandise (2004: http://www.pixar.com).

As Neil Postman points out, America was perhaps always likely to be the natural breeding ground for this marriage of creativity and capitalism: '[the media] has found in liberal democracy and a relatively free market a nurturing climate in which its full potentialities as a technology of images could be exploited' (1985:8). However, Diane Crane disassociates America as a political-liberal democratic state from this process arguing that in the twenty-first century notions of cultural imperialism are less plausible than notions of corporate media imperialism (2002:7). But this has not prevented numerous theorists and artists decrying the global cultural hegemony that they see as having emerged from these conditions and the corporations they have spawned, regardless of any overt political motivation. Barber is typical of these pessimistic hyperglobalisers, describing a 'superficial American popular culture assembled in the 1950s and 60s driven by expansionist commercial interests...transforming the world into a blandly uniform market' (2003:73). Whilst, in the twenty-first century, America no longer dominates in quite the same way it did (for example in the global popular music industry, due to the rise of the competing model of cultural globalisation derived from network flows), it still occupies the pre-eminent role in dramatising mediated forms such as film and TV (Crane 2003:8).

Whilst global capitalism's entrepreneurs may have successfully accommodated the electronic media as tools for the dissemination of their cultural products, theatre has not been immune to the rise of globalisation. For example, Baz Kershaw identifies the 'so called mega-musical' as being a 'crucial cosmopolitan part of the international cultural industries in a late capitalist, post-modern world' (1999:34). In anticipation of the 2005 sale of Andrew Lloyd Webber's Really Useful (theatre) Group Webber planned a copious portfolio of international productions: 'new British, world and European tours of *Cats*; *Jesus Christ Superstar* in the Netherlands, Australia and Korea; the Australian premiere of *The Women in White*; *Whistle Down the Wind* for New Zealand; *Tell Me On A Sunday* in Australia and Korea; *Bombay Dreams* on tour in America and Asia, new productions of *Phantom* [*of the Opera*] in Germany and Brazil and a *Phantom* tour of 11 countries, including China' (Wapshott 2005:Business 5). With a back catalogue valued at over £500m it is not surprising that the Conservative British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher urged Peter Hall during his tenure at the National Theatre to borrow Webber's

business model, asking 'Why can't you be more like him?' (Wapshott 2005: Business 5).

However, when it comes to characterising globalisation, it is the electronic dramatising media that are most often described as 'the enemy' by those at work in the performing arts. In particular I would suggest that applied theatre practitioners are by nature pessimistic hyperglobalisers. Applied theatre aspires to bring about change within the particularities of specific communities rather than aspiring to produce culturally homogeneous theatrical experiences as Webber does. These communities may be geographic, ethnic, pedagogic or institutional, but in each case the applied theatre experience must engage with the ideology that underpins that particular community. As Kershaw puts it: 'performance deals in the values of its particular society, it is dealing with ideology' (1992:18). If 'a community is hurting and theatre can enable people to process their hurt' (Taylor 2003:xx). The applied theatre practitioner seems unlikely to have much sympathy with, or inclination to seek creative solutions to those specifics within a bland, uniform profit motivated culture.

Augusto Boal exemplifies applied theatre's antagonism with the forces of the globalised Dramatised society. He correlates Aristotle's coercive system of tragedy (designed for 'the intimidation of the spectator' (1997:xxvi) with 'TV soap operas and Western films: movies, theatre and television united through a common basis in Aristotelian poetics, for the repression of the people' (1997:xxvi). Even observers of Boal's theatrical enemy – the so-called bourgeois theatre – are drawn to compare like with unlike, in an attempt to help theatre to score the knock-out blow to its upstart global mediated dramatic rivals:

> We can...scarcely calculate the mutations in our experience of texts...in the new world of CD-ROM, of virtual reality, of cyberspace and the internet...yet these changes will put a fresh premium on physical immediacy (Nightingale 1998:6).

For C&T, as practitioners at work with the concept of the Dramatic Property, this is a highly negatively orchestrated reading of the fabric of the globalised dramatic

culture. Whilst it is true that capitalism has its own motivations, and these are not always as altruistic as Bill Gates might want us to believe (Nicholson 2005:134-135),[3] it is also true that Postman's identified hallmark of this system, the free market, is by definition anarchic and fluid. While Boal sees these dramatising media corporations acting as a unified force of repression, it is also possible to see them as competing elements, battered by the ebb and flow of the market: youth culture. Are young people the pawns of these corporations or do their fluctuating tastes actually dictate the activities of these market suppliers? Willis argues the latter:

> The cultural industries in helter-skelter growth and anarchy are hardly in any shape to dominate and plan their own consciousness and future, never mind those of ranks of refractory and restless youth (1990:11).

Or as Ien Ang puts it:

> The capitalist world system is not a single undifferentiated, all encompassing whole, but a fractured one, in which forces or order and incorporation...are always undercut...by forces of chaos and fragmentation (1995:177).

Whilst for John Birt, former Director General of the BBC, it is the plethora of technological innovations that has driven this economic democratisation of media culture:

> Multiple devices engage today's viewer – PCs, mobiles of growing functionality, games consoles, iPods and PVRs. Today's audio visual consumers have been liberated (2005:25).

For the Dramatic Property, holding these opposing views in tension with each other helps to construct the theoretical sub-structure that supports the model of the Dramatic Property. The Dramatic Property sees its audience (let us identify them

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[3] Helen Nicholson usefully interrogates the complex configuration of globalisation, human rights and theatre for development in *Applied Drama: The Gift of Drama.*

here as those 'restless youths') as acting in symbiosis with the producers of these dramatic mediatised texts and the technologies that underpin them: the media imperialists. The audiences' strength in this relationship is driven by their power as both economic and cultural consumers. The first gives them financial influence, which literally and metaphorically empowers them to 'buy into' these cultural commodities. The second, when viewed through the prism of reception theory, empowers them as interpreters of media texts, giving them authority within the context of their own localised ideology (characterised by their being 'restless,' 'young' and through their intuitive understanding of the processes of drama developed through a childhood of play, in and out of school).

I recognise that there is a danger here of an (un)virtuous circle. If young people's localised ideology is so dominated by the popular media, then their approach to interrogating them is unlikely to be founded on an objective distance but on a subjective love of the familiar. I am not proposing that because such mediated experiences underpin so much of young people's daily cultural diet that the forces of cultural globalisation are merely to be celebrated. The Dramatic Property proceeds from the creative potential of applied theatre praxis not from the potential of the *X Factor.*[4] C&T's aim is to orchestrate the potential of applied theatre so to construct original media texts that exploit the fabric of this (young people's) media culture, enabling participants in a subsequent live drama to critically deconstruct what David Hare has referred to as 'the infantile psycho-babble of popular culture' (2004:92).

The paradigm of the Dramatic Property develops from the view that while corporate cultural imperialism is a creeping reality it is not the only manifestation of cultural globalisation and that for applied theatre practitioners to focus on it as if it were is to misrepresent the reality of young people's engagement with the dramatised society. For example, the multi-directional capacities of reception theory as a model for interpreting cultural globalisation offers a more constructive template for critiquing this phenomenon, empowering audiences rather than disempowering them and is therefore a far more appropriate mindset for the applied theatre

[4] An ITV reality TV talent contest for budding pop stars (2004-2005).

practitioner who sees theatre as a 'medium for action, for reflection but, most importantly, for transformation' (Taylor 2003:xxx). Yet whilst writers such as Liebes and Katz (1990) use reception theory primarily as a tool to interrogate drama as the product of cultural imperialists such as the TV producers of *Dallas*, for C&T reception theory offers itself as part of a framework of tools to validate process drama theories and methodologies in relation to media.[5]

This emphasis on drama as process, drama as participation, and drama as interaction inevitably leads to an exploration of the potential of new media technologies, particularly those in the digital domain, rather than resting purely on those 'old' media characterised by Williams' definition of the Dramatised society. In the connected, networked, wireless twenty-first century, young people are more likely to share Nicholas Negroponte's view of the 'old media', seeing television 'as perhaps the dumbest appliance in your home...an example of a medium in which all the intelligence is at the point of origin...if you have a microwave oven, it likely has more microprocessors than your TV' (1995:19).

In the early years of the twenty-first century digital technologies are beginning to permeate every aspect of contemporary life and young people are driving the cultural transformations that these technologies enable. MP3 players, DVD players, games consoles and mobile phones, complete with high speed data connections and cameras, play an increasingly pivotal role in the texture and interactions of young people's lives. In China more houses now have DVD players than hot and cold running water: the electricity is easier to install (Aaronovitch 2005:G2,5). The average college graduate today spends less than 5,000 hours of their lives reading but over 10,000 playing video games (Prensky 2001:1). Negroponte talks of the digital haves and have-nots being defined by the generations, not on economic, gender or racial grounds (1995:19).

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[5] Jane M Gangi and Robert D Taylor have also explored the potential of reception theory as a tool for drama in our electronic age, developing a classroom practice that mixes 'detachment and involvement' (2005:115) whilst placing the 'text and reader in dialogic relationship (2000:102). However whilst their framework is similar to C&T's (in that it is designed to enable students to develop a 'critical vocabulary to interact with their media world (2000:115)') it operates through existing dramatic texts (Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* are both exampled) rather than through original applied theatre texts specifically shaped to achieve these ends, as, we shall see, is the case with Dramatic Properties.

Inevitably these technologically-driven developments are shifting the parameters of the Dramatised society, both in terms of the production of dramatised mediated experiences (which I will discuss later) and in terms of how young people engage with the fabric of this society. Marc Prensky talks of young people as Digital Natives – 'our students today are all 'native speakers' of the digital language of computers, videogames and the internet' (2001:1) – and identifies the hallmarks of this digital language[6] (2001:2-15). Performance artists Michael and Ludmila Doneman characterise very similar hallmarks through the idea of the verb to 'multimediate' (2003:33).

By creating allies of drama, learning and new media the Dramatic Property locates itself in the home territory of the Digital Natives. For C&T and the Dramatic Property, Prensky's hallmarks can be customised and characterised thus.

Today's young Digital Natives operate, learn and engage in life at computer twitch speed (that is 'processing information quickly...scrolling rapidly...' (Prensky 2001:2-15)), parallel processing this information, drawing it from divergent sources and with divergent meanings. They can randomly access this content through their freedom of choice and the process by which they make these choices is cued through visuals and graphics rather than by words and text. The experience is connected and therefore social. It is active, demanding engagement and involvement. It more resembles play than it does work and consequently it is invested with a strong degree of fictionality rather than being rooted in mundane reality.

I would suggest that such hallmarks are not exclusively the preserve of electronics engineers or software developers as Prensky's 'digital' prefix implies. If a theatre audience were able to identify these same hallmarks in a live drama experience I

[6] These hallmarks are predominantly defined by Prensky's interest in the role digital technologies can play in classroom learning. He identifies ten main cognitive learning style changes that he observes in the Digital Native generation as opposed to those learners of the previous generation, whom Prensky describes as Digital Immigrants ('they always retain, to some degree, their accent, that is, their foot in the past.'(2001:2-15)). These changes are twitch speed vs. conventional speed; parallel processing vs. linear processing; graphics first, text second, random access vs. step-by-step; connected vs. standalone; active vs. passive; play vs. work, payoff vs. patience; fantasy vs. reality; technology-as-friend vs. technology-as-foe.

would suggest they would be most likely to be engaging in some kind of applied theatre experience. Certainly you can recognise these qualities in Gillham and Jackson's definitions of Theatre-in-Education quoted in Chapter 1, or in the ambition of Boal's Forum Theatre:

> No idea is imposed: the audience, the people, have opportunity to try out all their ideas, to rehearse all the possibilities, and try to verify them in practice, that is, in theatrical practice (1979:141).

The Dramatic Property aims to make a virtue of this association: creating synergy between young people's saturation in the fabric of the Dramatised society and their 'native' familiarity with digital culture and its technological means of media production. The prism through which it strives to achieve this is the theory and practice embodied by applied theatre. But it is Prensky's final hallmark that is perhaps the most telling for C&T, its work using Information Communication Technology (ICT) and that moves it in a different (but parallel) direction to say, Boal's. Prensky sees Digital Natives as seeing Technology as Friend, whilst Digital Immigrants see Technology as Foe.

I would suggest that whilst Prensky and applied theatre practitioners such as Boal have much shared vocabulary, what delineates them (apart from their chosen media) is the culture they use to define their native-ness. Hornbrook (for rather different reasons) questions the validity of Boal's approach in western, technological consumer societies:

> To what extent Boal's methods were successful in helping First World students to make sense of their advanced consumer-dominated culture is less certain (1998:48).

Hornbrook's argument is constructed from within a context designed to destabilise the 'phantom revolution' (1998:41) he says underpinned the 'pedagogy of the oppressed' (1998:48) in educational drama during the 1980s. Even if we ignore this ulterior motive, his comment never the less does draw attention to the cultural difference between Boal's native operating context and the cultural fabric with

which C&T's Dramatic Properties seek to engage. Prensky pinpoints the crux of this difference describing how young people now treat as their birthright access to ICT, lapping the adult generation (and their educators) in terms of their capacity to engage and use these technologies (2001:02-24).

For C&T and the Dramatic Property, this notion of Technology as Friend manifests itself in the familiarity young people demonstrate in speaking the 'native tongue' of the digital territory they inhabit. This 'tongue' is equitable with what Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel describe as New Literacy (2003:21): young people's capacity, as Digital Natives, to fluently speak the language of ICT. For C&T, this New Literacy subdivides into two domains. Firstly, literacy as readership skills – how young people decode and interpret meanings contained within these new, technology-enabled texts.[7] Secondly, these New Literacy skills exist at the level of what I shall describe as authorship: the manipulation of these media technologies to construct and compose texts.[8] What is more, the technologies that enable these processes of authorship are increasingly affordable and accessible. Whilst in the nineteenth century Karl Marx saw the means of production as beyond the grasp of the disempowered proletariat, in the post-modern twenty-first century the means of media production are available to all, often at pocket money prices. Yesterday's economically disempowered are today's technologically empowered.

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[7] For example, young people seem to have evolved an intuitive understanding of what is known as 'game play' a quality of software designed for videogames platforms such as Sony's Playstation Portable and Microsoft's Xbox 360. 'Game play' manifests itself in terms of the responsiveness of controls: the interface between the physical action of manipulating real world controls and the effect they have in the virtual environment of the videogame itself. Young people will talk of *Splinter Cell's* (2002)'responsive game play' as opposed to the 'sluggish game play of *Star Wars: Jedi Knight Fighter* (2002), attributing an almost grammatical sense of eloquence to game play. Similarly, players understand the significance (or not) of 'cut scenes', an established convention of the videogame form. Cut scenes are short animations that act as 'rests' in between 'chapters' of the interactive phases of the game, often serving as points for narrative exposition or as a mechanism for imparting information or instructions to the player(s).

[8] For example, young people have now developed a sophisticated new sign system that maximises the potential of SMS text messaging systems in mobile telephony. Young people are now able to compose often complex meaning and messages within the narrow constraint of 160-character messages. Predictive text writing systems built into these devices have now lead to the word 'book' becoming common in spoken youth dialect as an alternative for 'cool', because when typing 'cool' into a predictive text-enabled phone the word 'book' is offered as the first option. So why not replace 'cool' with 'book' in spoken English too? Also, with the integration of digital still and video cameras into mobile phones, users are now beginning to record images, mix these with text and 'send' these compositions to other users. With the advent of 3G high speed data connections the sophistication of such multimedia dialogues can only increase.

Identifying this territory is not purely about understanding the cultural context of C&T's audience. The globalised, technologically-enabled dramatised society also provides C&T with the content for its work to explore. For the Dramatic Property, the medium is the message.

As the fabric of the twenty-first century dramatised society is constantly evolving in symbiosis with the new technologies on which it depends and the citizens who consume it, it is perhaps rash to attempt to define the parameters of the content it makes available for C&T to explore. However, it is broadly possible to mark out three domains of interest in this fabric that recur in C&T's work, either within existing Dramatic Properties, in particular techniques or methods, or in embryonic ideas that have yet to be fully developed into new DPs (a process C&T describes as prototyping).

First is an interest in the literacies and grammar of dramatising media. For example *The Dark Theatre* uses semiotics as a strategy to enable participants to deconstruct hidden meanings contained in the text's filmic, comic book-styled storyboard, through the participatory dramatic fiction of a whodunit.

The second domain relates to the social, cultural, economic and political significance of dramatising media (both 'old' and 'new'). Norman K Denzin has noted how Hollywood movies 'became a technology and apparatus of power that would organise and bring meaning to everyday lives' (1995:15). This sphere of interest embraces two sub-categories. Firstly, a Dramatic Property can scrutinize the role and function of media organisations in society. For example, *the livingnewspaper.com* enables participants to scrutinize how the global news media shape our perceptions of world events through differences in editorial stance. Secondly, they can look at manifestations of dramatising media in the fabric of everyday life, as for example with *Cambat,* which looks at the surveillance society and young people's relationship to it.

The third domain, relates to what Williams describes as 'drama as habitual experience' (1991:12) or as Jonathon Neelands puts it 'the lived dramas of our

personal social lives' (1997:1). Because of our saturation in mediated dramatic experiences Williams argues that our everyday actions 'attract dramatic comparisons...leaving us continually uncertain whether we are spectators or participants. The specific vocabulary of the dramatic mode – drama itself and then tragedy, scenario, situation, actors, performances, roles, images – is continually and conventionally appropriated for these immense actions' (1991:17).

Let's examine a particular for Williams' assertion that resonated through C&T's practice during 2004. British shoe manufacturer Clarks mounted a TV advertising campaign encouraging viewers to enter their fantasy: that, if you let them, Clarks shoes will transform the streets of your local community into the same streets of New York inhabited by the likes of Joey, Chandler, Ross, Monica, Rachel and Phoebe.[9] As a young woman (wearing Clarks shoes) strides her high street as if it were some international catwalk, Odyssey's 1977 chart hit *Native New Yorker* plays as the soundtrack:

> You grew up ridin' the subways, running with people
> Up in Harlem, down on Broadway
> You're no tramp, but you're no lady, talkin' that street talk
> You're the heart and soul of New York City (Linzer & Randell 1977)

The streets bustle, black kids play basketball, she rides the bus, chews gum, eats hotdog, looks up at the tower blocks, munches a pretzel, before being brought back to reality by an accident prone local: 'sorry duck!' The ad's final caption reads:

> Nottingham is My New York: Clarks (Clarks Shoes: http//:clarks.com)

On one level – advert as media text – the piece intertextually draws on popular cultural references, stereotypes, iconic sounds and images that consciously seek to evoke in the reader a global city and its values, as typified through the cultural

[9] All characters from Warner Bros global hit TV series *Friends* (1994-2004)

products of corporate media imperialists.[10] On another level, ad as sales pitch, the piece is an invitation: buy Clark's shoes and buy into the lifestyle of the cosmopolitan lifestyle of global cities like New York.[11] Whether it works on this level is a matter for media analysts. What is of interest to C&T is the way adverts like this typify the way our society invites us to build such ritualised imaginings into our actual, lived experiences. So a shoe advert attempts to re-shape our view of our local streets. Retailers re-design their stores so they resemble futuristic film sets or international catwalks, whilst lighting fixtures dazzle customers, as if shopping were akin to some form of Theatre of Cruelty. Manchester United fans refer to their Old Trafford stadium (complete with its own TV channel, MUTV) as The Theatre of Dreams. Management consultants coin phrases like 'the experience economy', suggesting that 'at every level in any company, workers need to understand that...every business is a stage, and therefore work is theatre' (Pine & Gilmore 1999:x). Newspaper headlines scream of 'political dramas'. Jackie Stallone enters, in peak viewing time, the Big Brother ('do people in Britain really watch this?' (Channel 4/Endemol 2005: 12.1.2005)) house to confront her estranged, ex-daughter-in-law, Brigitte Neilsen, who in sombre soliloquy in the Diary Room prophesises: 'don't ever forget, all of you, she is the mother of Sylvester Stallone...and anything is possible' (Channel 4/Endemol 2005: 12.1.2005). In Disney theme parks employees are called 'cast members,' there are 'onstage' and 'backstage' areas and customer experiences are shaped by staff that perform, deploying sales strategies known as 'emotional labour' ('labour is always about acting' (Bryman 2004:103-104). This is the territory C&T and its work seeks to inhabit and interrogate.

Hornbrook echoes some of these ideas in relation to young people and drama (although he seems a little disingenuous in not fully acknowledging Williams' work in this area) describing this fabric as 'a complex matrix of meanings over which we have only intermittent control' (1998:116). Whilst he may be right, Hornbrook's tone frames him more as a negative hyperglobaliser, rather than as a practitioner

[10] The same technique is used by the American Tourist Board, who early in 2005 launched a poster hoarding campaign in London using images from films such as *Spider-Man* and *Thelma and Louise* under the caption 'you've seen the film, now visit the set.'

[11] In fact the pitch is little more self-knowing than I characterise it here: the ad's bathetic ending clearly emphasises the illusionary quality of such a 'purchase.'

reaching out to the potential theatre offers to explore, or synergistically draw on this matrix for the benefit of young people. C&T's practice seeks to demonstrate, by contrast, that as digitally empowered natives of this all-pervading dramatising matrix young people are capable of interpreting this culture through the authoring of their own technologically enabled, autoethnographic performance texts. As Denzin put it: 'performance autoethnography now becomes a civic, participatory, collaborative project' (2003:17).

Playwright and theatre Literary Manager Ben Payne, investigating the relationship between theatre writing and live art seems closer to understanding this potential (although even he seems touched by the gloom of the negative hyperglobalisers):

> Against a culture of purported information, fabricated images, media saturation and of manufactured consent, theatre might advance a plurality of voices, approaches and dissents. It may not be a losing battle. It may be that disenfranchised and enervating audiences find new inspiration in theatre. But it may demand an equal diversity of approaches to inspire them (1998:47).

For C&T, the dramatised society offers opportunities to build new synergies between mediated drama, globalisation and the processes of drama and live theatre. The fabric of the twenty-first century dramatised society, operating, as it does through the new technological media that power the forces of cultural globalisation, also provides C&T with a rich seam of content for its applied theatre practice to explore. With live drama's processes theoretically validated as the generic source of all mediated drama experiences in the dramatised society C&T is able to logically move to a practice that utilizes those processes to deconstruct these derivative, but now all-pervasive, dramatising media and, equally importantly, the society which symbiotically produces and feeds on them. As C&T's audiences are natives of this connected, active, dramatised society they are automatically literate in its vocabulary. Therefore C&T's approach does not frame them as passive cultural consumers, but as dynamic, creative producers in their own right. As active producers they are enabled to move beyond pure deconstruction to dramatic construction and production and thus, through creative activity, towards a valuable

goal of applied theatre praxis: social transformation. Dramatic Properties aspire to be the mechanisms that enable these processes.

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Chapter 3

The Dramatic Property: Concept, Form and Synergies

C&T is not unique in the field of Theatre for Young People in choosing to scrutinize digital media culture. For example, Douglas Maxfield's *Helmet* (2002) debated youth alienation and virtuality through the metaphor of computer games. *Helmet* is an engaging piece in that its staging relies on many digital technologies, immersing the audience in the digital realm of games consoles and virtual reality. However, for all its merits and its sense of technological zeitgeist, it is still, unsurprisingly, a play. Its first production toured to established theatre venues such as the Traverse in Edinburgh and Soho Theatre, London, engaging its audiences through the delivery mechanism of the mid-scale touring theatre circuit and the theatrical form most typically demanded by these venues: plays. Regardless of the ideological motivations that C&T's work may, or may not, share with such plays, Dramatic Properties distinguish themselves from such theatrical explorations through their rather more playful approach to dramatic form itself. The intention behind this desire to create innovative new dramatic forms is simple: to successfully interrogate the content of the contemporary media age we need appropriately designed theatrical tools to do the job. For C&T, in our globalised, digitally enabled, post-modern culture it is more useful to frame applied theatre less as theatre practice that can be applied and more as applications that are driven by drama processes and implemented through theatre practices. An applied theatre of applications shaped to be solutions.

So in this new world of globalised networks the model of the Dramatic Property aspires not only to be a theatre of applications but also to fulfil some of the networking functions (in the realm of applied theatre) attributed to what Friedman (2000:202) calls 'shapers'. Whilst in Thomas Friedman's eclectic analysis of globalisation, 'shapers' are largely seen as governments and corporations the same aspirant qualities can be identified in creative practitioners seeking to engage in the new 'Evernet world':

> Shapers design rules, create interaction frameworks and set new standards for global practices. Adapters, on the other hand follow

> shapers' leads and adapt to the scene being created (Knobel & Lankshear 2003:137).

To be a shaper is thus a bold ambition, but I would suggest one that is in keeping with one of applied theatre's underpinning precepts: that of bringing about social transformations. At its core, applied theatre is about shaping, an aspiration articulated for theatre by Brecht: 'to see vital questions freely aired with a view to their solution' (1964:76).

The practice of the paradigm of the Dramatic Property falls into two discrete sections. First is the Dramatic Property itself; second is the process of animation,[12] that being the range and nature of activities that bring the text of the Dramatic Property to life as a live, applied theatre experience for participants. This second facet will be explored in the three case studies of DPs in the next chapter. This chapter will focus on the first dimension of the practice, that of the Dramatic Property itself.

Dramatic Properties aim to shape dramatic form in relation to their content. This is not a new idea; for example, the practice was used by the early TIE companies in the 1960s. As David Pammenter recollects 'Having avoided a restriction which, for reasons of finance, the children's theatre companies were obliged to work under, the TIE teams were able to adopt more specific educational aims and explore new approaches with the license of the theatre to create new forms' (1993:55-56). Whilst for Pammenter and his colleagues this freedom was 'deeply rooted in the newly adopted educational theory to do with 'learning by doing' [and]...focused itself on the methods by which communication could take place' (Pammenter 1993:55) Dramatic Properties proceed from this hybrid mix of theatre methodology and liberal pedagogy to also embrace the techniques, strategies and forms of many of the cultural industries they seek to interrogate.

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[12] The term 'animation' was coined because it usefully implied several meanings for C&T's practice. Firstly, it evoked something of the style of drama activities required to 'animate' DPs as dramatic texts, secondly, it suggested digital media processes, for example those required in CGI digital animation, thirdly, it linked the paradigm to its roots in the comic book form of *The Dark Theatre* and finally it connected the practice to the role of C&T's Animateurs. .

By re-configuring Iser's view of the literary text to the concept of the Dramatic Property we can more accurately identify the territory DPs as applications seek to occupy through this fusion. Iser notes that 'text as such offers different schematised views through which the subject matter of the work can come to light' (1988:212). Each Dramatic Property can be identified as having its own 'subject matter' in need of illumination. It consequently has its own distinctive schematic through which its dramatic meaning is encoded. But where as Iser's schemes rely on the variable permutations possible within the genres of the literary text (or more specifically, with my previous example of *Helmet*, the play text), for each new Dramatic Property the schematic is additionally shaped by the constraints and possibilities that the encoding media forms impose on the drama.

Richard Courtney has articulated similar values, framed not by the imperatives of a literary theorist but by those of Drama-in-Education practitioner. Writing in a pre-digital world and whilst focusing on arts-based mental health therapies he asserts:

> In our electric age, all of the arts *are* media. All of them *are* messages. And all of them *are* messages in the war to bring about positive mental health...the distinctions between art therapy, music therapy, drama therapy and dance therapy are nowhere near as important as their similarities (1988:181).

C&T's aspirations for the paradigm of the Dramatic Property are not dissimilar: the valuing of the potential of all media forms as dramatic tools for making texts that achieve change (be that through therapy, education, or personal, social or political development) over and above any narrow, self-referential art-form defining criteria. What guides the choice of media and textual schematic are the needs of the audience, the content under exploration and the nature of the planned engagement with its participants.

Subsequent chapters will scrutinize the particular textual schematics of three Dramatic Properties: *The Dark Theatre, Cambat* and *the livingnewspaper.com.* However, whilst the schematic of each new Dramatic Property is uniquely fashioned

for its particular purpose, it is possible to identify common hallmarks to the paradigm.

Dramatic Property as intellectual property

Dramatic Properties are concept-driven dramas. They are consciously shaped and organised to exploit the drivers of our increasingly knowledge-based society, or as Harvey puts it 'a society in which knowledge is the primary product and material products are derivatives of the knowledge produced' (Bjőrkegren 1996:37). In keeping with Lyotard's three types of knowledge, Dramatic Properties can be identified as a mix of narrative knowledge and performative knowledge: narrative because DPs 'allow narratives about the world to be communicated even in media other than the written or spoken word' (Bjőrkegren 1996:38), performative because 'it justifies itself by changing the world' (Bjőrkegren 1996:39), that is, through its application it possesses a value beyond its pure aesthetic worth.

Of course, other theatre genres and other forms of artistic expression conform to such a definition of performative and narrative knowledge (classic Theatre-in-Education, for example, or even the latest Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, arguably driven by commercial motives rather than artistic merit), suggesting that a DP is anything but unique in the knowledge-driven society. However, what distinguishes the Dramatic Property from a play is that its configuration of narrative and performative knowledge is most sharply orientated around the concept that frames and conditions the entire dramatic experience and its relationship to the wider manifestations of the knowledge society, particularly digital technologies and media. So whilst we might talk of plays being 'character-driven', or 'action-driven', Dramatic Properties are concept-driven. The concept comprises two complementary components: the Concept Rules and the Concept Ludic Narrative (CLN). These two components work in synergy with each other to shape the dramatic experience. But regardless of the particularities of each Dramatic Property it is the centrality of the concept that allows the drama of the piece to be articulated and exploited across a range of dramatising media, not purely as live theatre.

Plays are often re-worked into other mediated dramatic experiences. Patrick Marber's play *Closer* (1997) for example, was adapted into a Columbia Pictures film, directed by Mike Nichols in 2004. However, I would assert that Marber did not consciously author the original play with an eye to its cinematic potential, only realised some seven years later.[13] His predominant instinct was to fashion a play for staging in theatres. By contrast, from the outset, Dramatic Properties are structured through their Concept Rules and Concept Ludic Narrative to exploit their cross-media potential, delivering content and engaging participants over a number of platforms, some live, some technologically enabled.

Similarly, Thomas Vinterberg's 1998 Danish film *The Celebration* was successfully adapted by playwright David Eldridge into the stage play *Festen* (2004). Its Co-screenwriter Mogens Rukov initially had little sense of his text's cross-media potential, articulating astonishment at the prospect of seeing his screenplay adapted for the stage ('Next autumn, in London, there will be an English theatrical version. A London Opening, my God, what are the horizons? Where does it end?' (Rukov 2002)). However, what perhaps differentiates *Festen* from *Closer* is the existence of a linking intellectual property, not very dissimilar from the idea of Dramatic Property Concept Rules, that I would suggest helped facilitate this successful transfer between media. To shed light on the idea of DP Concept Rules, I shall spend a little time examining these similar forces at work in *The Celebration/Festen.*

Three years before the release of *The Celebration,* the two Danish film makers, Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, spent 45 minutes defining a set of rules for a new school of filmmaking they called Dogme 95. In Dogme 95's manifesto and their *Vow of Chastity*, the two film makers proclaimed their intended cinematic values, with an emphasis on immediacy, and austerity in the use of conventional film production techniques (not overly produced sound, no special lighting, etc):

[13] Instincts supported by an interview with Marber conducted by Jack Bradley for the programme for the West End transfer (Lyric Theatre, London) of the original National Theatre production of *Closer* in 1999. Marber comments: "the commercial success of the play has been a great surprise; when I was writing it I thought it would have a strictly limited appeal." p8.

> I regard the instant as more important than the whole. My supreme goal is to force the truth out of my characters and settings (Trier & Lintberg 2005: www.dogme95.dk).

It is such self-imposed rules that not only shape the now identifiable genre of Dogme films[14] to which *The Celebration* belongs, but also help to make it eligible as a work suitable for transference from a cinematic to a theatrical environment. I would argue that Dogme 95's cinematic rules underpin *The Celebration's* potential currency as a theatrical experience. The self-conscious imposition and public declaration of these constraints must make a qualitative difference to the playwright's job of adapting such a work, with a sense of underscoring dramatic values informing the process of transferring a film from screen to stage. In an interview with Eldridge for this thesis the writer[15] describes how he was at first struck by the original film's conformity to a set of rules – relating the piece to his own medium, theatre. Eldridge's rules therefore were not in fact those of Dogme 95, but what he interpreted, as a playwright, as Aristotelian poetics. However as Eldridge acknowledges he was far from oblivious to the rules of the *Vow of Chastity*. He also describes how Trier and Vinterberg used these constraints to impose limitations on the way the playwright adapted the film for the stage ('I could cut or reshape...but not alter the narrative...it was about them having control of their material'[16]). In helping us to understand the paradigm of the Dramatic Property, what is important to draw on here is that *The Celebration* and *Festen* represent different material products but for different media, but each is enabled by the same underpinning intellectual property.

On another level it is of course misleading to suggest that Dogme 95 represents a kind of innovative type of intellectual property. Obvious similarities can be drawn between it and other genre-defining polemics, for example Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty manifestos. What's more, the *Vow of Chastity* was never intended to facilitate the transfer of Dogme films to theatrical settings – the rules were created to support film-making alone ('you can shoot on whatever format you want, but the

[14] Though of course, ironically part of Dogme's Vow of Chastity states that "genre movies are not acceptable" (2005: www.dogme95.dk).

[15] See Appendix 2 – my interview with David Eldridge, play from 6 minutes and 30 seconds.

[16] As above – 9 minutes and 15 seconds.

final picture has to be transferred to Academy 35mm' (Trier & Vinterberg 2005: www.dogme95.dk)). But even though its intentions may have differed from its outcomes it's a useful analogy for helping understand the function of DP Concept Rules. If *Festen/The Celebration* were a Dramatic Property *The Vow of Chastity* would go some way to being its set of Concept Rules.

Concept Rules

Dramatic Property Concept Rules are guiding sets of principles that both build synergies between chosen dramatising media and/or theatre forms (genres, techniques or methodologies) and consequently impose valuable constraints on the shape of the resulting applied theatre praxis. Here are some examples of Concept Rules at work in particular Dramatic Properties. In *The Dark Theatre* the Concept Rules build synergies and exploit the constraints between the comic book form, filmic storyboarding techniques and interrogating levels of meaning within key dramatic actions and events, as practiced in Theatre-in-Education and Drama-in-Education. In *Cambat* they focus on the demonstrable performative qualities of the subjects of closed-circuit television footage and the constraints of handheld camera filming (not very dissimilar to the ideas of Dogme 95, as we shall discuss later). Whilst in *the livingnewspaper.com* the Concept Rules build synergies between the techniques of the genre(s) of Documentary Drama and the constraints online content management systems impose on shaping Process Dramas.

Concept Rules are vital ingredients for shaping Dramatic Properties, giving theoretical rigour and dramatic consistency to the exposition of the Concept Ludic Narrative. As can be seen from the examples above, because each new Dramatic Property is a hybrid of two, three or more media or theatre forms, borrowing, customising and adapting conventions and techniques for their own content-driven purpose, they appear to operate free of the constraints or terms of any one particular form. At first this can appear a liberating innovation, freeing the creator and the creative process. In practice, freedom from any rules can be a recipe for confusion, obscuring meaning rather than illuminating it. This is particularly true when we reflect on DPs as applications and tools for use not by a single author or creator, but by numerous participants, sometimes collaborating with each other over great

distances through digital communications technologies. There is often no single authorial voice shaping the meaning of the piece under construction, so ground rules need to be established to ensure all users are able to understand the scope of what is being creatively demanded of them. Participants need clear rules for engagement and participation. Concept Rules help to define the constraints that enable effective participation, for both C&T as artists shaping the Dramatic Property and participants using it.

The idea of constraint is essential to Dramatic Property Concept Rule conventions, as it is to mainstream Process Drama methodologies. John O'Toole defines it thus: 'the constraints faced by the characters in their pursuit of the resolution of the purpose' (1992:27). However, within the context of DP Concept Rules the term seems most apt when drawing on another of O'Toole's definitions, that regarding what he identifies as the process/product continuum. Here he sees constraint as a term embracing dramatic form, as well as being a catalyst for creating tension. He defines constraint as

> specific givens...within the author's control over content, context, style and convention [which] have to be renegotiated which in turn entail renegotiation of some of the elements of the drama itself (1992:10).

For Concept Rules, constraint is largely about these givens, but what is also useful here is the linkage O'Toole makes between these specifics and the process of negotiation and renegotiation that happens within the Process Drama itself as a consequence of these constraints. For the Dramatic Property, this symbiotic relationship between the processes within the drama as perceived by its participants and the form the drama actually takes, highlights the interdependence of DP's as hybrid, artistic products in their own right and their role as applications that enable processual drama activities. It is almost as if each new Dramatic Property, through its hybrid mix of media, invents itself as its own sub-genre of applied theatre. Concept Rules are therefore the generic rules particular to each DP that enable effective participation.

The Concept Ludic Narrative

The second, complementary component of the Dramatic Property as concept-driven drama is the Concept Ludic Narrative. For Dramatic Properties the idea of narrative is very important, recognising the potential of form as a valuable mode of semiotically-driven meaning-making in theatre, popular culture and other dramatising media:

> A narrative is a text structured by the time sequence of the events it represents (Thwaites, Lloyd & Mule 2002:118)

But it is a mistake to see the Concept Ludic Narrative as the same thing as a narrative, it is not. The CLN is not the narrative of a Dramatic Property; it is the concept of the narrative of a Dramatic Property. It is the conceptual framework which embodies the Dramatic Property's potential to frame and hold narratives, be they true stories, mythologies, fictional contexts, political events, mediated experiences or social encounters. This framework aims to make accessible the fullest range of levels of meaning of the unfolding drama through the playful potential released by participants who engage in its dramatic activities. This playful potential means that the Concept Ludic Narrative is at the heart of the textual schematic that enables each Dramatic Property to engage audiences and participants, both as drama process and narrative product. It is a dramatic concept that has narrative potential, potential that can only be released through active, improvised engagement with the material product of the concept – the Dramatic Property itself.

To illuminate these ideas further it is perhaps useful to deal less with abstracts and more with particulars. Here are the Concept Ludic Narratives that underpin the three Dramatic Properties scrutinised in this thesis:

The Dark Theatre is an episodic whodunit with a difference: as detectives investigate the death of playwright Nathan Page, his final, lost script appears to take on a haunting life of its own, provoking ever more curious plot twists both on and off stage.

Cambat is the continuing adventures of a post-modern Robin Hood: if you could steal a CCTV camera, at who would you choose to point it at?

The livingnewspaper.com is a covert network of young docu-dramatists engaged in a perpetual struggle: to subvert the global media and their misrepresentation of young people through the power of drama and the internet.

There are common threads here. Firstly, all three Dramatic Properties as described above imply an ongoing narrative structure, using words like 'episodic,' 'perpetual' and 'continuing.' Whilst no actual narrative is described (there is little sense of a beginning, middle or end), there is a sense of progression and purpose. The concept invites us to speculate, imagine and be playful with what might happen next. Secondly, they draw on a number of popular cultural genres: secret organisations (for example, the *Mission: Impossible* film and TV franchise), heroic figures (as prevalent in any number of Hollywood blockbuster movies or the character-based superhero properties of Marvel Enterprises) and pulp fiction detective stories. Thirdly, the implied narratives are always evoked by an underpinning mission, purpose or motivation: solving a crime, subverting global media barons or turning the cameras back on those who watch us. Finally, these missions always imply a place for the reader/audience in the fiction they invoke. Are *you* the reader/writer/detective in the *Dark Theatre*? Who would *you* point that CCTV camera at? Are *you* up for joining this covert network? The audience are implicitly part of the implied narrative: active, playful participants in the drama.

Parallels can be drawn between the Concept Ludic Narrative and the idea of the high concept in film and television drama production. Coined in the 1960s by Will Eisner and Barry Diller, the term was originally designed as a descriptor for the single, punchy sentence used for marketing TV programmes in American TV guides, but the term has now expanded beyond this narrow definition to embrace the defining characteristics of say a blockbuster film treatment presented in a form as if to be pitched to a Hollywood producer:

> The essence of high concept is that it is both brief and provocative. It piques the imagination and promises that big things are going to happen out of an ordinary situation (2005: www.themegahitmovies.com)

These qualities of provocation and promise present in a high concept are similar to the dramatic intentions that underpin a CLN and clearly echo the hallmarks identified in the three Concept Ludic Narratives described above.

The Concept Ludic Narrative also echoes dimensions of the narrative phenomenon that H. Porter Abbot calls masterplots, as distinct from the narrative components of individual stories:

> Works like *War and Peace* and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* are narratives. The masterplots that undergird these narratives are much more skeletal and adaptable, and they can recur in narrative after narrative (Abbot 2002: 43).

Abbot's analysis goes on to portray cultural trends or belief systems as masterplots, the qualities the concept demonstrates (of being skeletal, adaptable and underpinning the specifics of stories or plots) seem to aptly describe some of the central functions of the Concept Ludic Narrative in Dramatic Properties.

In a sense, the Concept Ludic Narrative pushes to an extreme two of the most powerful signifying effects of narratives: the motivation to follow and engage in them and the satisfaction derived from doing so. The aim of a CLN is to translate these forces into a virtuous cycle: motivation and engagement leads to satisfaction, which in turn motivates greater engagement. Thwaites, Lloyd and Mules, in their analysis of the narrative implicit in the sign system of a Simona poster advertisement, coincidentally articulate some of the qualities that C&T strive to make real and flourish in any CLN:

> It has an enigmatic quality and seems to raise questions rather than give information…it puts readers to work, forcing them to weigh up contrasting possibilities…the text does not resolve these alternatives, but

> rather triggers a desire to know the answers...[and] the desire to know the answer motivates our engagement with the text (Thwaites, Lloyd & Mules 2002: 121).

Van De Broek's research indicates that it is not only adult-orientated texts that invite and achieve such sophisticated readings, nor are such readings capable from only print-based texts. Children are capable from a young age of such inferential readings of both dramatising media texts and visual or print-based materials (Buckingham 2005:13). So whilst Thwaites, Lloyd and Mules' text is a two dimensional poster, the CLN similarly operates as a dynamic force on imaginations, which when articulated through a Dramatic Property, can come to life through theatre practitioners and participants engaging in its dramatic processes.

In our post-modern, digital culture, the narrative structures of videogames in many ways demonstrate far more accurately the enticing, playful qualities that the Concept Ludic Narratives strive to create through their virtuous cycle. They playfully and often contradictorily mix the narrative form with the ludic, creating neatly packaged CD-ROM products designed for use on platforms such as PlayStation consoles, blurring the boundaries between participatory games and digitally-generated fictions. Are they about reading or interacting? Are the pretences they draw the game player into 'dynamic, adaptive simulations' (Newman 2004:91) in the manner of a Process Drama or are they '...putatively static narratives' (Newman 2004:91)? By conflating the ludic and the narrative C&T aims to find a signifier that signs the universal aspiration for the CLN for each DP. The company strives to find an appropriate conceptual framework that can transform ludic and narrative tensions into synergies, helping us to find new playful ways of shaping dramas that exploit the capacities of the media to their most appropriate potential.

The field of Process Drama also offers a strong model for the Concept Ludic Narrative. O'Toole identifies five categories of context in Process Dramas. Firstly he discusses what he calls the real context (that being the percipient's), secondly the context of the medium ('the coming together of people' (1992:48) for drama, say in a theatre), thirdly the context of the setting (the localised environment of this coming together, say in TIE terms, a school) and finally the fictional context ('the selected

and focused pattern of fictional or fictionalised human beings, their location and their relationships which are the subject matter of the dramatic narrative'(1992:51)). Further consideration of the first three of these contexts will be given in the later case study of *The Dark Theatre,* but the final one – the fictional context – has clear resonances with what C&T is trying to achieve with the idea of the Concept Ludic Narrative. In fact in many ways O'Toole's definition embraces many of the components C&T would seek to see in place in any given CLN: fictional/fictionalised human beings, location and relationships, and all of this arranged in a focused pattern, or perhaps something that Iser might recognise as a potential textual schematic.

And this is perhaps where the only significant gap opens up between the idea of the CLN and the fictional context. O'Toole's contexts are expressed within two overarching categories: what he calls the context of the medium and the context of the setting (1992:48 & 50). Together these contexts impose a non-linear framework for understanding drama based upon the processes derived from 'the coming together of people…in places' (1992:50). However, this 'coming together' may contribute to the definition of a Fictional context for drama, but it is not what actually shapes or defines a Concept Ludic Narrative. A CLN is a form of intellectual property that underpins DPs as theatre texts and is therefore abstracted from the realities of the performed moment. O'Toole's contexts are important to Dramatic Properties, but this 'coming together' is something that is evident in the processes of making the text of a DP live as drama – the process of animating it with participants, which we shall expand on in the subsequent case studies and the practice documentation CD-ROMs. On the process-product continuum the CLN is closer to the notion of Dramatic Property as a product – a textual encoding of dramatic meaning ready to be brought to live as theatre – than it is to the actuality of live drama itself. Given this distinction it is perhaps useful to interrogate these differences further.

Narrative is a problematic term in Process Drama practices, particularly in the field of classroom drama. On one level, it is possible to argue that these problems are self inflicted and based on inaccurate use of terminology. For example, the quote below bemusingly uses and confuses three different terms as if they mean the same thing: narrative, story and plot. In the interest of semiotic consistency I shall continue to use

Thwaites, Lloyd and Mules' definitions of these terms. First narrative, as quoted earlier:

> A narrative is a text structured by the time sequence of the events it represents (Thwaites, Lloyd & Mules 2002:118)

secondly:

> Plot is the sequence in which the narrative tells the events (Thwaites, Lloyd & Mules 2002:126)

and thirdly:

> Story is the logical and chronological sequence of the events being told (Thwaites, Lloyd & Mules 2002: 126).

Compare these definitions with the following quotation from O'Neil and Lambert's *Drama Structures:*

> Although it may be tempting for the teacher to think in terms of narrative development, drama does not work in the same way as story...it is not the simple unfolding of a sequence of events...the teacher's task is to make the present moment of the drama significant, and to work in a sense to suspend plot' (1982:28).

Of course it would be obtuse to pretend that O'Neil and Lambert do not make a fair point, and that it is not a valuable one for the practice of the classroom drama teacher (even if their wholesale dismissal of narrative/plot/story on behalf of all drama practitioners is a little sweeping). However their muddling of terminology reveals more than a hostility to narrative, it reflects a similar set of interests to O'Toole's: a valuing of the non-linear potential of drama for the purpose of learning as made real by the 'coming together' of people. The value and, more importantly, nature of the experience can only be represented through its live processes, not through any potential the text may have as a medium for encoding dramatic experiences.

But this quotation also reveals a wider dissatisfaction with the idea of narrative in Process Drama. Of course, when O'Neil and Lambert say that 'drama does not work in the same way as 'story,' they in fact mean that it does not work for them in their particular field of drama activity: Drama-in-Education. As educators their writings aim to shape drama through 'the way it sets out *to teach*' (O'Neil and Lambert's emphasis) (1982:7) not through the stories their dramas tell. O'Neil and Lambert are attempting to describe drama not as an art form or their activities as cultural product, but through 'the kinds of learning which drama can promote' (1982:9): drama as pedagogy. This approach reaps significant benefit from a lessening of emphasis on the unfolding of events and by an increased weighting of the interrogation of specific actions as a key to understanding motives and meanings. For example, Dorothy Heathcote's five levels of explanation of action founds itself on the 'challenging of chronological sequencing in drama' (Gillham 1997:11). It does so through an invitation to understand drama not through narrative but through a hierarchal levelling of meanings as contained in specific moments of drama, events or discrete actions:

> Action – the behaviour, the way something is done
> Motivation – why somebody does it what he/she wants out of doing it
> Investment – what's at stake that drives them to do it
> Model – where the behaviour is that is being 'copied' or rejected
> Stance – why life is as it is (Gillham 1992:17).

But whilst Heathcote shares the same disdain for narrative as O'Neil and Lambert, her motives are not articulated in a way that polarises art and pedagogy. She chooses to describe these levels in almost Stanislavskian terms, seeing them as 'layers of behaviour' (1997:17), moving from particularities to the universal themes that underpin the human condition. By invoking these almost Aristotelian values she asserts an underpinning creative, rather than pedagogic value to this anti-narrative approach:

> Thus the schism regarding education and the art form of drama becomes invalid (1997:17).

Regardless of your perspective, artist or educator, it would be wrong to suggest that these motifs in Drama-in-Education practices are anything less than tremendously valuable for the structuring of meaningful and engaging Process Dramas. The value of Heathcote's work continues to be debated by numerous scholars and practitioners, characteristically by Gavin Bolton (1984) and David Davis (1997). Whilst writers such as Hornbrook sought to discredit the value of this work by trying to fortify positions in the art vs. pedagogy debate, Heathcote undeniably 'came to mark out the acceptable parameters of drama in schools' (Hornbrook 1998:13) during the 1980s and that her intention of making ''the present moment' of drama significant, and to work in a sense to suspend plot' (O'Neil & Lambert 1982:28) still shapes many applied theatre practices. Similarly, these methodologies are valuable resources for understanding and structuring Dramatic Properties. For example, HTML programming is an ideal medium for achieving the suspension of plot, through the cross-fertilising of ideas, themes and knowledge via hypertext links that operate without regard to the realms of narrative. Dramatic Properties exploit these synergies, making the internet an ideal medium for the sequencing of disturbed chronologies and for the layering of dramatic meanings—vertically as well as horizontally (that is, chronologically).

However, whilst drawing on the theories and techniques that have sought to diminish the value of narrative in Drama-in-Education, the paradigm of the Dramatic Property also challenges the tendency of these pure Process Drama methodologies to myopically dismiss narrative in drama as the 'simple unfolding of a sequence of events'(O'Neil & Lambert 1982:28). Leaving aside the merits of any number of plays from which meaning is derived from their narrative structure; such reasoning is intellectually dishonest, even when viewed from the narrow realm of Drama-In-Education practices. Despite the protestations of O'Neil and Lambert it is surely easily possible to see all Drama-in-Education activities as taking place within a narrative – the narrative of the drama lesson. Teachers sequence children's engagement with dramatic fictions by carefully structuring materials to achieve particular effects, climaxes, tensions or sought-for resolutions: one activity follows another. Heathcote has even tacitly acknowledged the importance of this 'narrative' in DIE methodologies without consciously naming it:

> Sequencing is the ordering of processes which are required so that the class always have the prior experiences they need in order to progress to the next stage of their drama (Heathcote 1994:11).

Whilst teachers may be playful in the way they interrogate the chronology of their fictions, thus attempting to defy the trappings of story, but this interrogation nevertheless takes place in a very consciously structured and meaning-laden sequence. Perhaps for the classroom teacher, preoccupied with learning rather than dramatic form, these narratives are less conspicuous, but for C&T, working as theatre-makers, these patterns are self-evident and important.

John Somers, whilst still arguing from within the discipline of Drama-in-Education, seems more open to the potential of narrative and text (both literary and mediated) in dramatic learning and is thus closer to the territory the Concept Ludic Narrative seeks to occupy. He argues that story is crucial to Drama-in-Education as it is to all human processes as it enables us to

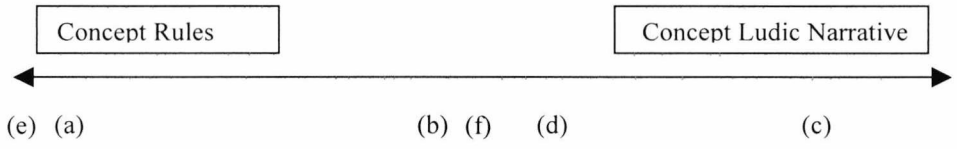
> organise momentary experience into a series of memories; predict a future; experience vicariously through the stories of others, aspects of the world we ourselves do not experience (2002:65).

In so arguing he founds his thinking in less conventional territory for pedagogically-driven Drama teachers, that of reader-response theory. Somers argues that we should see an intertexual relationship between the 'personal story' of the learner and that of the 'told story' of the drama experience (Somers 2002:66). He goes on to valuably argue that understanding concepts of story are crucial to understanding how education functions. However Somers' thinking has greater synergies with the paradigm of the Dramatic Property when he considers the idea that the Process Drama experience is itself a narrative text, independent of the personal stories that participants bring to it. We shall examine these ideas later in this chapter when we view Dramatic Properties as theatre texts.

Somers goes on to suggest that the stories that resonate most significantly with readers are those that 'have the greatest chance of productive interaction' (2002:66). This term 'productive interaction' is worth interrogation within the context of our consideration of the CLN. By productive, I assume Somers means 'of some constructive use', either to the reader or to the social context of which they, the readers, form a part. By interaction, I assume he means some sort of imaginative, playful, cognitive exchange. With such an analysis Somers is closest to the heart of the rationale of the CLN (at least when considered within the context of the pedagogically-driven field of Drama-in-Education): a DP's Concept Ludic Narrative aims to serve the wider Dramatic Property by being the catalyst that provokes such productive interactions, drawing participants into its playful narrative through dramatic activity.

Concept Rules and the Concept Ludic Narrative

So we can now see the two components that define the Dramatic Property as 'concept-driven' drama. First are the Concept Rules, which impose constraints on the drama by building synergies between selected theatre methods or genres and particular mediatising technologies, and second the Concept Ludic Narrative, the concept of a narrative which through its playfulness has the potential to create productive interactions between the text and participants. Both components are present in the conceptualisation that underpins each Dramatic Property. However, the weighting attached to each component's significance in a particular DP can vary. It is more useful to see the two components existing as binary forces, operating at opposite ends of a spectrum:



A DP concept may be placed at any particular point on this spectrum, depending on the nature of its particular conceptualisation. For example, *The Dark Theatre* was first conceived not as a murder-mystery whodunit but through experiments designed

to bring comic books and drama together. Its initial conception was at point (a) on the spectrum. However, at the point *The Dark Theatre* was published as a comic and ready for use in schools, the CLN component had been developed and mixed into the concept moving the balance of the concept to point (b).

In contrast, *Cambat* developed from a very particular sense of injustice experienced in the daily lives of young people. Consequently, the CLN ('if you could steal a CCTV camera who would you point it at?') was conceived first, at point (c). By the time the project had been shaped by the mediated constraints required to deliver it online, the concept found itself placed nearer the centre of the spectrum, although still more dominated by its CLN than *The Dark Theatre,* at (d).

The practice of *the livingnewspaper.com* means that this particular Dramatic Property exists at two points on the spectrum simultaneously. Some users of the project (particularly adult users with learning disabilities and groups working in informal learning settings) find the CLN to be inappropriate and restrictive and so purely engage with the DP through its online tools and web-based resources. This locates them at the most extreme point left, (e). For these users *the livingnewspaper.com* is solely about the Concept Rules – creating and sharing documentary drama materials through bespoke Living Newspaper templates available through an online content management system. However, in other contexts the fiction that the Living Newspaper CLN provides (contextualising the above activities within the idea of being members of a covert network of docu-dramatists) deepens the experience for these participants enabling them to refract their use of the Concept Rules through the prism of process drama methodologies, deepening their particular engagement with the project. Their experience places them at point (f).

Vertical integration as creative methodology

Having a strong concept at the heart of the Dramatic Property also means the paradigm is well placed to exploit the techniques and methods commonly used by the producers of other cultural properties in our post-modern, globalised, consumer age. Pivotal to this approach is vertical integration. Vertical integration is a common business strategy in all manner of industries, but in the cultural sector it most

successfully manifests itself amongst 'a small number of media conglomerates, based in a few western countries, dominating the production of and global distribution of film, television, popular music and book publishing' (Crane 2005:6). The business principle behind vertical integration is in many ways very simple and most lucidly exemplified through an example of a typical Hollywood blockbuster:

> Audiences who have seen the film may buy the book, the magazine with the star on the cover, the music from soundtrack and maybe a T-shirt. They may even rent the video or watch the film again on television or listen to the theme song on radio or music television (Burnett 1990:26).

Thus a single framing intellectual property can engage with a diverse range of markets to reach its fullest potential audience. As comic book creator Stan Lee describes the intellectual properties he created at Marvel during the 1960s (now successfully deployed across toy manufacture, TV animation and Hollywood studios):

> The trick as we see it, is to create a fantastic premise and then envelop it with as much credibility as possible (Raviv 2002:31).

McChesney argues that such synergies are now crucial to these global media conglomerates: without the vast economies of scale such vertically integrated strategies bring to their businesses these corporations would be unable to compete in the global market place (Crane 2002:5). The trend towards media convergence – the increasing integration of media platforms and technologies prompted by the implications of the digital revolution – means that these synergies are now easier to produce, creating more sophisticated and tightly woven, vertically integrated cultural properties:

> *Harry Potter* or *Lord of the Rings* are well positioned for a plethora of other commodities attached to the images presented in the original films and in their digital constructions are easily convertible to new games, new toys and new elements of a 'film cycle' that appear in websites and fan reconstructions of the film (Marshall 2004:87).

In 2000, US-based internet service provider AOL merged with conglomerate Time Warner, owners of a vast array of media interests including Hollywood film and TV studio, Warner Brothers, owners of the *Harry Potter* franchise and global TV brand *Friends*, the iconic Time Magazine and DC Comics, proprietors of characters such as Superman and Batman. AOL's Chief Executive at the time hailed this coming together as 'the high-water mark of this 'new paradigm'...we're at the cusp of what we think will be a new era as the television, PC and the telephone start blurring together.' (Bazalgette 2005:165)[17] At the core of Case's new paradigm was the notion that 'content was king' and that a major component of building successful, vertically integrated brands was the core concept. Debating the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* phenomena and Marvel Enterprises' *Spider-Man,* Lindstrom notes:

> The concept[s] tap into the tweens' deepest emotions and ideals...cleverly the story is open ended...the concept travels seamlessly between the cartoon, creating its own life on the movie screen, energising the play on the floor and sparking the competitive element on the computer screen (2004:28).

Marsh's study of young children's engagement with such popular cultural and media texts observed how much of children's play is conditioned by these convergent forces and that media interests are usually at the centre of the communicative practices these concepts engender

> These children inhabited a rich, multimodal world and moved across the various textual platforms with ease' (2005:36).

The paradigm of the Dramatic Property enables C&T to exploit these practices to enrich its own creative objectives and transformational ends. DP concepts are therefore structured to enable C&T to use the principles of media convergence to build vertically integrated Dramatic Properties. For example, *Cambat* operates

[17] Although following the collapse of the so called 'Dot Com bubble', the AOL Time Warner merger seemed to imply that whilst the principles of bringing a media distributive platform such as AOL together with a content provider like Time Warner were theoretically desirable the actualities of managing such scales of activity brought their own costs and challenges.

simultaneously as both a staged performance and an interactive website; *The Dark Theatre* as a process drama and comic book, whilst the future-planned Dramatic Property, *Playing with Food*, ngages under-fives through the development of nutritionally-balanced MacDonald's Restaurant-style 'Happy Meal' complete with toy and an accompanying digital shadow play performance.

These synergistic strategies benefit Dramatic Properties in several ways. Firstly (and pragmatically) they build on the established hybrid traditions of Theatre-in-Education practices that are inbuilt to the history and genetics of the company. Secondly, they provide a theoretical framework that enables C&T to shape the content addressed in any particular Dramatic Property through the form and media they choose to adopt. Thirdly, vertical integration as a principle enables C&T to naturally build synergies between Dramatic Properties as texts and their manifestation as applied theatre experiences. Just as Disney's *The Lion King* can simultaneously exist as an animated film and a West End stage musical so a Dramatic Property can exist simultaneously as a website and a live applied theatre experience. Finally, what Marsh calls the phenomena of narrative webs (that are usually the by-product of such vertically integrated business strategies and brand products) have been used by C&T to create ''narrativised' semiotic system[s] in which [children] encounter the same narrative in a range of different modes' (2005:37). These systems, driven by Concept Rules and the Concept Ludic Narrative, enable participants to engage with meaningful content through vertically integrated drama experiences that resonate with the popular cultural forms that help shape the rhythms of their daily lives, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Even the most vertically integrated brand or product has to begin its creative life in one particular medium. Pixar Studios create properties that have 'the ability to generate billions of dollars worth of consumer spending...revenues derived from marketing campaigns surrounding the theatrical release of the animated film, which, in turn, drive demand for home videos, television, toys, and other film-related merchandise' (Pixar 2005). However, the intellectual property that drives the developments of such products is initially generated by 'a single animated feature film' (Pixar 2005). Marvel Enterprises Inc. describes itself as 'one of the world's most prominent character-based entertainment companies...entertainment, licensing,

publishing and toys...feature films, DVD/home video, videogames and television...collectibles, snack foods and promotions' (Marvel Enterprises 2005). However it identifies its core creativity within its comic book publishing activities:

> Marvel's characters and plot lines are created by its publishing division which continues to expand its leadership position in the U.S. and worldwide while also serving as an invaluable source of intellectual property (2005: www.marvel.com).

So for all of C&T's aspirations to develop Dramatic Properties as vertically integrated dramatic experiences, exploiting the emerging potential of converging media technologies, it is appropriate that the company still locates its core creativity in the creation of applied theatre and applied theatre texts.

Dramatic Properties as applied theatre texts

Dramatic Properties aim to use electronic media as tools for dramatic notation, finding new ways to encode and construct theatrical meanings through the media tools of our globalised, post-modern culture, in ways that have resonance for contemporary audiences.

For many schools of applied theatre, for example Theatre-in-Education, the traditional form of dramatic notation, the play script, has long been regarded as unsatisfactory. TIE has historically been associated with devising and improvisation, for Actor-Teachers both in the rehearsal room and in performance, where children might co-author the TIE experience through role play and other participatory techniques. Schweitzer encountered this dilemma in the 1980s when with the support of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, she tried to bring TIE to a wider audience by publishing three volumes of TIE programmes:

> Of all theatre forms Theatre-in-Education is perhaps the most difficult to convey in print. It is essentially collaboration between a professional theatre company and a group of children. What the actors say is re-produced here. The children's contribution is not. It is described in

> general terms, and those who have seen TIE in schools may be able to interpret these descriptions fairly accurately. But for those who have never seen the work in its intended setting, a great imaginative effort will be required in order to sense the real programmes beneath the texts (1980:7).

This struggle of dealing with language as a sign system when recording drama is not confined to Theatre-in-Education. Hilton's critique of Aristotle's poetics reveals the same fundamental problem: '...in the theatre any plot or action exists only in the moment of performance and has no stable meaning or identity outside of the performance process' (1993:7).

Many practitioners have circumvented this struggle by utilizing 'the moment of performance' as a process for the creation of dramatic authorship in its own right. Devising has for many years been widely acknowledged as a legitimate form of theatrical authorship, often never more readily than in the field of educational drama, where improvisation and role play have long drawn on the natural creative instincts of children's playful imaginations. However, it is strange that Theatre-in-Education chose not to couch such collaborations with young people in the language and terminology of dramatic authorship. A collaborative process founded on sentiments like 'participants must have autonomy, including the power and authority to make mistakes' (Jones 1980:9) was clearly designed to create texts with unstable meanings reflecting the values and aspirations of their young audiences. Consequently the form of Theatre-in-Education appropriately reflected the empowering aspirations that underpinned much of the TIE movement's original revolutionary zeal.

Many TIE companies chose not to root their theatre-making in a devising process, preferring to commission playwrights to create the performed elements of their TIE programmes,[18] but this was rarely the sole authoring methodology used by companies. The play script, traditionally the tool for the single-authored literary drama, was broadly perceived by companies as something of a blunt instrument for

[18] For example, Leeds-based Theatre Company Blah, Blah, Blah, under the direction of Anthony Haddon commissioned several pieces by playwright Mike Kenny including *Bag Dancing* (1988) and *Not Like That Like That* (1991) (Whybrow: 1995).

the effective encoding of dramatic meaning as embodied by TIE practices. Yet despite the recognition of these inadequacies little attention has been paid in the Theatre-in-Education community to the question of how young people's contribution to these improvised, live performance texts can be validated as legitimate acts of dramatic authorship, equivalent to those of professional writers and theatre practitioners. So whilst Oddey, for example, writes that 'the Theatre-In-Education company wants its intended audience to participate in the making of the programme' (1994:105) she still repeatedly refers to these makers as 'audience,' rather than with terminology that would validate young people's vibrant, creative contribution to the participatory TIE experience.

Of course, in the actual field of practice, the contribution of children and young people to TIE has always been valued. The needs and voice of young people is an essential ingredient to the child-centred approach to learning that defines TIE. Such practices have long been grounded in the work of educational psychologists such as Piaget, Bruner and Vygotsky. However, this pedagogically-driven methodology has consequently meant that Theatre-in-Education practitioners have historically tended to frame the contribution of participants to the drama in terms of their role in the educational institutions within which they encounter the TIE experience, rather than as creative artists in their own rights. So for example, two different TIE case studies published in two separate editions of SCYPT Journal and separated by some ten years, both describe their participants as firstly 'the class' (Hesketh & Underwood 1994:34) and secondly as 'pupils' (McEntaggart 1984:41). Rarely are young people credited with the appropriate signifier that acknowledges their creative contribution to the participatory realm of a Theatre-in-Education experience: author.

Of course this is not the case in all fields of applied theatre practice. Boal has, of course, devised his own signifier for the role of the participant in his Theatre of the Oppressed, describing them as Spect-actors:

> He will be able to free himself from his condition of spectator and takes on that of actor, in which he ceases to be an object and becomes a subject, is changed from witness into protagonist (1979:126).

Yet even Boal's democratisation of the traditionally polarised relationship between actor and spectator rarely seeks to validate the participants' contribution in terms of their contribution to the process of authoring dramatic meanings. Instead he prefers to characterise Spect-actors through what we normally consider to be the instruments of dramatic authors: characters. So for example, as in the quote above he sees the participant as 'protagonist'.[19]

In less participatory forms of theatre for young people, where the traditional craft and status of the playwright is well established, a myriad of creative solutions have been devised by which children's ideas are valued and integrated into the theatre-making process. For example, John Hazlett, Artistic Director of Making Space Theatre Company spoke in 1998 of his belief that children 'are creative artists. I try to discover what they desire and find pleasure within the process of theatre making' (APT: 1998:3).[20] Yet translating this sentiment into action is often problematic. Despite an overwhelming commitment to the 'cause' of theatre for young people, many practitioners are wary of surrendering artistic control of their work to those who they fundamentally regard not as collaborators, but as audience:

> There is nothing worse than the disappointment on the face of a child who imagined that their improvisation was going to form a scene of your play (APT 1998:9).

In 1998 the Association of Professional Theatre for Children and Young People convened a seminar of fifteen leading practitioners and companies to debate these issues. Amongst their concluding points of principle was:

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[19] A notable exception to this is in the 'Simultaneous Dramaturgy' (Boal 1979:132) of the Theatre of the Oppressed, where Boal talks of participants 'writing' the drama with the performers. But this is soon surpassed by the fourth degree of the model, Forum Theatre, and then again by the fourth stage of his poetics, theatre as discourse.

[20] Hazlett's valuing of children's contribution to making theatre is clearly framed by his TIE experiences of working closely with young people. Before joining Making Space Hazlett previously worked at Belgrade TIE, concluding his period with the company as their resident Director. On leaving Belgrade he pursued a freelance career first as a director (including C&T's *Cracks in the Concrete* (1992) and then as a writer. In 1992 he received his first commission as a writer from C&T to write *The Civil War Experience,* a TIE play exploring the English Civil War in the context of a contemporary theme park.

> The main benefit of this work [collaborating with young people] is of the development of the company itself and of its relationship to its audiences rather than of the writer of the individual piece of work (APT 1998:10).

This territoriality on behalf of theatre writers is perhaps not surprising. Theatre may be a collaborative form but each collaborator brings different skills. Writers as a breed take pride in their contribution to this process: what they see as their distinctive, authorial voice. Theatre as a discipline, unlike film or television drama, invests the contribution of the writer with a particular significance and an almost omnipotent weighting. As playwright Steve Gooch puts it, on behalf of his profession:

> Playwrights are expected to have something striking and original to say, almost as if they were speaking to the audience directly...the sense of the author being on display is much more powerful than in any other medium (1988:15).

For better or worse, the craft and discipline of theatre writing as it has evolved within the ecology of British (or, to contextualise it more widely by reiterating Postman's phrase from the previous chapter, in capitalist liberal democratic) theatre has ascribed playwrights this potent significance. However, in applied theatre and particularly in British Theatre-in-Education, with its emphasis on child-centred approaches to learning, such attempts to monopolise the process of authorship would seem to be strangely inappropriate for a medium whose *raison d'être* is the empowerment of its intended beneficiaries. It seems ironic that applied theatre practitioners are rarely seen invoking Barthes' call for *The Death of the Author* (1977).

Conversely, professional artists at all stages of their careers and of all disciplines need to nurture and hone their imaginations and talents. It is perhaps naive to think that such growth and development can be solely nurtured (over maybe a thirty- or forty-year career in arts education) by collaborating with, say, six- and seven-year-olds. Artists grow older, develop new tastes, react to new artistic movements, form

adult relationships, watch their parents die, have children – and all of these experiences affect the practice of their art. This, in part, is what makes their contribution distinctive and valuable. No matter how committed they are to the principles of empowerment or child-centred learning, or Friere's zones of proximal development, they are not in the first instance educators. They are artists.

In its framing of participants as authors (alongside C&T's artists) of meaning-rich theatre texts, Dramatic Properties seek to square this circle: valuing and validating the contribution of participants whilst at the same time allowing the professional artist the freedom and the space to grow their own artistic practice at their level and in keeping with their aspirations and values. So whilst each Dramatic Property bears the distinctive signature of C&T as author/creator, each DP is implicitly designed to frame participants as more than audience. Of course, this process of authorship is not the conventional craft of playwriting, but as both Payne and Willis noted earlier, our moving culture requires a diversity of new approaches to keep theatre writing alive.

Orientations

Driven by their Concept Rules, their Concept Ludic Narrative and shaped by the conditions of the dramatised, media-saturated society, Dramatic Properties are realised as theatre texts through digital media: new technologies used as writing tools, encoding dramatic meanings just as a pen, or a typewriter might be used by a conventional playwright. There are three complementary axes to which each Dramatic Property orientates itself. The configuration of these orientations differs from DP to DP, but each plays an important role in their signification of meaning, the process and form of encoding the actual drama and the nature of their engagement with audiences and participants.

So just as John Birt observed (in his 2005 James MacTaggart Memorial Lecture at the Edinburgh International Television Festival) that 'technology has been and will remain the root of the challenge to broadcasting' (2005:25), so it is similarly true that those same technologies, through these three orientations, set the pivotal challenges

for the future of the paradigm of the Dramatic Property, particularly in relation to their processes of authorship.

These orientations are:

1. Convergence in artistic practice/convergence in media technologies.
2. Using theories of convergence, applied theatre practices and digital media to schematise and encode dramatic meanings.
3. Using theories of convergence, applied theatre practices and digital media to develop immersive drama experiences.

Before considering these orientations in some detail, it is useful to consider what the advantages are in using digital technologies in the process of developing applied theatre practice. The primary justification can be found in the argument constructed in the previous chapter – that to meaningfully engage and interrogate our contemporary, drama-rich society, its citizens and its cultures, C&T's practice needs to similarly engage with the technologies and media that enable that complex creative matrix. However, there are other, synergistic reasons why utilizing these tools and media can help to facilitate C&T's creativity.

James Woudhuysen argues[21] that information technology has 'put mainstream entrepreneurs and multinational corporations in the culture business – their screens need the attention of designers and, ultimately, of artists...[and it has] enabled cultural production and the creative industries to become more entrepreneurial' (1999:3). Woudhuysen may well be correct, but his analysis proceeds from a model where such creative activity is instigated by corporate values and resources with an artist's role in the process being defined by their status as employees of large, profit-driven companies. For C&T, as makers of Dramatic Properties, the inverse is true:

[21] Woudhuysen in fact identifies four domains in which information technology has created synergy with the arts and artists he says: (1) IT ushers in a new, knowledge-based, networked society, in which status of signs, symbols, intellectual creativity and the arts is enhanced; (2) It puts mainstream entrepreneurs and multinational corporations in the culture business – their screens need the attention of designers and, ultimately artists; (3) It allows cultural production and the creative industries to become more entrepreneurial; and (4) It fundamentally transforms the basic working materials of the arts: time, space, identity and play. Whilst here I discuss only points (2) and (3) it is clearly possible to cross-reference his point (1) with earlier discussion on the relationship between the Dramatic Property as concept-driven, intellectual properties, and point (4) more generally throughout this whole thesis.

IT has the capacity to independently empower artists as if they were mainstream entrepreneurs, enabling them to adopt similar (or more accurately, adapted) modes of cultural production to those of multinational corporations. John Howkins suggests exactly this, arguing that creativity is best placed to exploit the current trends in technological innovation:

> It can use them to produce more, or more quickly, or differently. It becomes easier to put an idea to work; to turn it into a product. The cost of failure is lower (2001:191).

For example, as discussed earlier, the scales of cultural production traditionally needed to enable vertical integration to take place across media such as film, book and magazine publishing, music CDs and television animated tie-ins, could normally only be envisaged by corporations the size of Walt Disney or Time Warner. However, advances in information technology now means that all of these processes of cultural production are now firmly within the grasp of small and medium scale entrepreneurs and therefore arts organisations such as C&T. This democratisation of the production process embraces two complementary domains: first, media production and second, media distribution.

Writing in 1995, Nicholas Negroponte drew parallels between the evolution of photography as a popular, mass participation, technologically-driven art form and the rise of personal computing as a creative tool:

> Computing is no longer the exclusive realm of military, government and big business. It is being channelled directly into the hands of very creative individuals at all levels of society, becoming the means for creative expression in both its use and development. The means and messages of multimedia will become a blend of technical and artistic achievement (1995:82).

So it is with Dramatic Properties. The technological tools for shaping and producing sophisticated multimedia resources and cultural products are now widely available and affordable, enabling C&T to produce innovative new drama-based experiences

that utilize these technologies and production tools. C&T is thus capable of using these tools to create mediated dramatic products that have the potential to compete with mainstream cultural entrepreneurs and corporations who similarly see their core audience, or market, as children and young people. More significantly, this increased accessibility to the tools of media production extends not only to arts professionals such as C&T, but also to the company's core audience, young people. This increased accessibility drives equality in creativity between C&T and those who participate in its work, which, for C&T, infuses and informs the ethos of collaborative authorship that underpins the paradigm of the Dramatic Property as a whole.

However, Negroponte's evangelical assumption that the digital revolution is all embracing ignores the wider socio-economic evidence that suggests that ICT is not quite the leveller that many hoped it might be. Such technological determinism has many weaknesses, particularly evident to the applied theatre practitioner whose working ethos is commonly framed by a commitment to 'voicing the views of the silent and the marginal' (Taylor 2003:xxvi). Often in reality such citizens have little economic power to buy the 'consumer products [that are]...the driving force' (Negroponte 1995:82) behind Negroponte's digital revolution. In the United Kingdom in 2004, 88% of middle class children had home internet access compared with 61% of working class children. Middle class homes had 1.9 computers per household as opposed to 1.3 in working class homes (Livingstone & Bober 2004). These socio-economic realities undermine the simplicity of the technological determinists' position as well as the potential of many young, aspiring Digital Natives to embrace this new culture that Prensky suggests is their birthright.

Whilst it is true that at the bottom end of the market computers constantly become cheaper [22] and software more accessible, it is also true that at the top, corporate end, these same reducing prices combined with computer and software engineers constantly achieving new levels of sophistication and quality (as regularly demonstrated by the latest CGI-rich Hollywood blockbusters) ensures that the quality

[22] A Yale University study in 2001 assessed the average annual decline in the performance-based price of computers over the period 1970-2001 to be 40%. See http://cowles.econ.yale.edu/P/cd/d13a/d1324.pdf (18.9.2005)

threshold that separates 'rich' from 'poor' media producers are not being eroded at all, rather that the quality and sophistication goalposts are being moved.

Similarly, just because these technologies are now affordable for performance practitioners, it does not follow that theatre companies can engage with these media on the same scale as a Hollywood film studio. As James Newman notes, where videogame development was 'once a cottage industry finding its feet' (2004:37), in 2005 'perfecting artificial intelligence routines, designing complex, sprawling levels, inventing characters and drawing animation cycles, programming physics engines...are beyond the ability of the individual...requiring development teams and most importantly formal development and management methodologies' (Newman 2004:37). Whilst it is part of C&T's strategy to appropriate such methods for the benefit of its applied theatre (for example, contracting out website content management to a commercial developer rather than creating such software in-house as might be true of a company wedded to the traditional production methods of a classic TIE ensemble) C&T's actions in the field are still dwarfed by the sheer economic scale commercial software development houses bring to their software development projects.

However, putting these caveats to one side (but without being seduced by the pure rhetoric of the technological determinists), C&T's utilization of new media technologies as tools for creative production bases itself on the evidence and belief that young people are increasingly capable of overcoming these potentially compromising barriers. And even if they alone are not, the interventionist and facilitative traditions of applied theatre activity make C&T well placed to support and enable young people in gaining access to these production tools. In any case, young people are notorious for creating sophisticated, pragmatic and often anarchic responses to these obstacles.

The original Napster website for example, created by teenagers, used innovative file-sharing software to enable young people across the internet to subvert the profit-driven strategies of the global music industry enabling anyone to copy and share music tracks for free online, through the MP3 format. Another example is the rise of Machinima, a new media film genre utilizing Computer Graphic Image (CGI)

techniques. Working from a home PC, a young person can effectively hijack and cannibalise the software engines that drive existing 3-D computer games such as *The Sims* (EA Games 2003). First they simulate dramatic action using these games engines and then capture these CGI sequences on their home computer. These sequences are then exported and transposed into new film-making contexts, allowing anyone who owns a Xbox 360, video and PC to make original, high quality CGI animated films, by effectively pirating the expensive software developed by companies such as Ubi-Soft and EA Games.[23] As Jeff Jarvis writes on the impact of these production tools on the television industry:

> Thanks to new tools anyone can make a show. Just as blogging liberated publishing cheap gadgets and ever-easier software can turn anyone into a broadcaster (Jarvis 2005:6).

Dramatic Properties aim to utilize this evolving custom and practice for applied theatre, shaping dramatic texts that reflect and exploit these 'moving' (to evoke Willis again) cultural phenomena as and when they arise.

Secondly, for the Dramatic Property, operating in a globalised market and a globalising culture, digitally-based new media platforms offer themselves as ideal mechanisms for the dissemination of mediated theatre texts. The internet is the backbone of this strategy. Whilst, in the interests of vertical integration, a Dramatic Property may utilize a number of complementary media forms, the internet, at this stage of the paradigm's evolution, occupies a pivotal role as the globally accessible medium for publication, interaction and mass participation. So whilst other digital media texts can be crucial for the effective implementation of a Dramatic Property (a CD-ROM, for example, plays a crucial role in framing participants for the drama of *the livingnewspsaper.com* long before participants ever go online), its web presence is usually crucial, both as an enabler of creativity and as the conduit for engaging with participants locally, nationally and internationally.

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[23] C&T has plans to use Machinima techniques and technologies in future Dramatic Properties, notably *The Sixways Scenario,* which aims to build synergies between drama simulation techniques, computer-based simulations and processes of hypothecation in applied science research, with reference to a real-life simulated public health emergency (an anthrax attack at Worcester's cricket ground) undertaken by the government's Health Protection Agency in 2005.

The internet enables two types of dramatic activity within a Dramatic Property. Firstly it is a means of delivering or downloading pre-prepared dramatic product, professionally authored and produced by C&T. For example in *Cambat* the ADV-Security website at the heart of the drama enables audiences to stream video sequences (scripted and filmed by C&T) that encode both a dramatic narrative and act as stimuli for drama activities. They are mediated dramatic texts. Scott McCloud's analysis of the impact of digital technologies on the comic industry predicts similar trajectories for this industry:

> Digital delivery does not refer to comics on CD-ROM or other storage media which may exist as zeroes and ones on the inside, but still need to travel as objects – plastic discs in plastic cases...stuffed in freight trucks...digital delivery could refer to comics delivered through online services or sent within an organisation's own internal network (2000:164).

Or again, in the realms of television:

> The internet enables us to distribute what we make to the world. No longer do we have to beg the guy who owns the broadcast tower for time (Jarvis 2005:6).

The paradigm of the Dramatic Property (rhetorically) asks the question why the principles of digital delivery should not apply to theatre practitioners who make mediated drama texts as much as they do to publishers of comics and producers of TV programmes?

Secondly, the internet as a medium enables the participatory processes that underpin applied theatre practices in general to be transferred to a new medium and made possible in a mediated textual form.[24] For example, as we shall see later in the practice-as-research documentation for *the livingnewspaper.com*, accessing the secret

[24] As we shall see in the later case study, *The Dark Theatre's* reliance on a print-only publication to enable its relationship with its audience was both a significant strength and weakness, undermining opportunities for exchange and collaboration that an internet-based resource would not.

messaging function on the website triggers a real-time sequence of on-screen pop-up messages and instructions to participants that initiate interaction and exchange through the multi-media functionality of the site. As Marc Pachter and Charles Landry observe, these online technologies are altering 'the ways in which people perceive participation, actively or passively, by promoting a different, profound interactivity' (2001:91) (we shall return to this issue of participation more specifically rather than within the terms of distribution when we consider the third of our three orientations for later in this chapter).

C&T's decision to adopt these modes of production and delivery signals the company's belief that it can accrue creative, cultural, pedagogic and business benefits by using digital media and technologies in its activities. However, in additional to these benefits, the three orientations detailed earlier more specifically focus on the way digital technologies build synergies with C&T's applied theatre practices and thus add distinctive shape to the paradigm of the Dramatic Property.

Let us now move to consider the three orientations in turn.

1st Orientation: Convergence in artistic practice/convergence in media technologies.

Pachter and Landry, part of the Commedia[25] consultancy and think tank, identify the concept of convergence as a phenomenon that evolves from the mixing of evolving cultural forms and media, a phenomenon brought about at the start of the twenty-first century by the rise of the information society:

> Technology too is the enabler of convergence and boundary blurring between artforms as it was in its time photography or film, and interactive web-sites are already being created as works of art (2001:91-2).

Gattenhof interrogates similar territory, but within the particular field of youth performance, identifying what she describes as deterritorialisation in youth cultural

[25] Commedia were one of the most influential think tanks working in the area of UK cultural policy at the turn of the twenty-first century.

practices. She defines deterritorialisation as 'convergence in the use of live and mediated texts; art forms and genres...an openness of form' (2004:123). She goes on to argue that such processes allow 'for the synthesis of new cultural and performance genres by fragmenting and hybridising traditional cultural categories and forms' (2004:123) (a process Birringer refers to as 'intertextualising abstractions of advancing technologies' (1991:180)). It is clearly possible to trace these motifs in C&T's work and there is an obvious synergy with what Gattenhof identifies as activities resulting from 'the forces of globalisation' (2004:122) and the types of performativity that occupy aspects of various Dramatic Properties. It is also unlikely to be accidental that both Gattenhof and C&T are preoccupied with studying and making theatre for children and young people. For example, it is possible to exemplify the characteristics Gattenhof identifies in a Dramatic Property scheduled for development by C&T by 2007: *Lip Sync*.

Lip Sync experiments with mixing live performance, original music videos, DJing and the emerging medium of podcasting. With creative convergence at the core of this practice, it uses digital technologies and products of the globalised music industry to facilitate a hybrid mixing of forms. *Lip Sync* will fuse sophisticated digital DJing techniques (such as automatic beat warping, track freeze, plug-in delay compensation and Mackie Control, all made possible by hard- and software such as Ableton Live) and live speech-synchronised performances, adapting for the stage the technique pioneered by Denis Potter in his TV dramas *Pennies from Heaven, The Singing Detective* and *Karaoke* (1996) and more recently in BBC TV's *Blackpool*.

In twenty-first century club culture, DJs no longer just play other people's songs. DJs now are 'more creative with how they present and mix tracks, bringing the DJ inside their songs...they have total control' (Terry 2005:21). *Lip Sync* aims to build synergies between this covert process of authorship and the processes of authorship that underpin collaborative, improvisational drama. The end product should be an eclectic mix of performance, mixed music, and original video: a lip synced performance by young people of a contemporary music track that resonates with the values and stories that underpin their daily lives. These hybrid, live performances will also be available online, both for audiences to consume and for potential new participants to download as podcasts and replicate in new performance contexts.

However, in the context of our first orientation, the term convergence is not purely intended to invoke a set of performative practices based on a collision of forms. Peter Bazalgette of Endemol International (in common with the rest of the media and technological sectors) roots the term in the process of media integration triggered by the vast corporate investments in the so-called dot com listed NASDAQ stocks that took place in the late 1990s. For Bazalgette such investments, often from cash-rich TV and media conglomerates, initiated a drive towards convergence between such apparently disparate media technologies as telephony, websites and TV channels:

> They could not afford to ignore the stampede towards convergence of media. If everything was going to be available from everywhere they felt they had to be there. And this was only the beginning (Bazalgette 2005:51).

It was only in the analogue past that these platforms for communication were truly disparate. The so-called dot com revolution might have acted as a catalyst for Wall Street investors to become interested in the likes of Netcom and Netscape, (Bazalgette 2005:50-1) but what underpinned and sustained the drive towards media convergence was the underlying technological shift away from analogue to digital technologies. As P David Marshall puts it in his discussion of the convergence of PCs, mobile telephony, digital television and games consoles, these media are 'an extension of the uses made of computer technology into other consumer, information and entertainment domains' (2004:17). For example in the newspaper industry whilst papers '...like the *New York Times* still have segregation on the editorial floor, other smaller operations mix digital print, TV and broadcast in a brain hub' (Preston 2005:Business 6). This trend to convergence through digitisation does not only transform the material (or virtual) base of the implicated media but also the working practices of those staff who contribute to them. As one journalist working on the *New Orleans Times* observes:

> Reporters are seeing they can get their story in and have the news [on the web] at the same time as TV news. But this has thrown out all the

> rules...now it's pretty clear the advantages of doing it this way (Preston 2005:Business 6).

Television drama is discovering these potentials as well. In late 2005 Channel 4 broadcast an interactive drama serial 'offering viewers the chance to shape an entire storyline by voting on the direction it should take...and takes advantage of innovations in mobile phone and interactive TV technology' (Gibson 2005:3). Such interactions are limited by applied theatre standards, using technology purely as voting mechanisms, offering no greater sophistication and subtlety of participation than 'yes' or 'no', 'him' or 'her', or 'in' or 'out', patterns of interaction dictated by binary technology's all-defining '1s' an '0s.' Nevertheless, Dramatic Properties seek to refine and enhance these potentials for their applied theatre practices, exploiting the symbiotic relationship between digital technologies, media convergence and vertical integration. They are consciously structured to maximise the benefit from the synergies that digitisation enables. This then allows them to exploit these potentials for the benefit of applied theatre practices and audiences.

To demonstrate these potential synergies let us parallel the paradigm of the Dramatic Property as discussed so far with a global, converged TV/media franchise from the Endemol International stable. Bazalgette charts how 1990s cross-media platform convergence resulted in phenomena such as *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?, Big Brother* and *Survivor*, each with its own TV presence, supporting website complete with complementary (or subscription-based) video streaming, and vast income flows from public telephone votes at premium call rates. Such histories are far from irrelevant when considering how Dramatic Properties seek to make creative capital from such theories of convergence. *Big Brother*, for example, clearly bears strong similarities to the form and functions of the genre of the Dramatic Property (even if we choose to ignore the obvious similarities in content with say, C&T's *Cambat*).

Big Brother, it is arguable, is like any DP: a concept-driven intellectual property with performative events (if not drama itself) at its core. It is a vertically integrated experience, using converging media technologies in TV, the internet and telephony to build interactive entertainment experiences. The formula observes constraints that might be called Concept Rules and it has a self-perpetuating Concept Ludic

Narrative (albeit largely defined by the rules of the game show format rather than an externally constructed fiction). Whilst the actual practices of making say, *Cambat* and *Big Brother* are of course artforms and paradigms apart, the way that both choose to utilize new media production methods and tools, platforms for distribution and theories of convergence, and engage fully with the fabric of the dramatised society is totally deliberate.

Moving on from the 1st orientation, it is perhaps useful to pause before proceeding to the 2nd.

The 2nd and 3rd orientations actually work as counterpoints to each other, each approaching the tasks of authorship and signification from opposite ends of the process-product continuum. As we shall see later, the third orientation associates itself more closely with the participatory, immersive processes of meaning-making in drama, whilst the second orientation, is more familiar with what might be considered the production of authored, media-rich theatre texts.

Signifying these orientations as the 2nd and the 3rd may inadvertently imply a chronological progression between them. This is not intentional nor would it be accurate. Just as in any theatre-making, here process and product exist in reciprocity. The immersive, process-based drama generated through activities related to the 3rd orientation will on many occasions need to be encoded and recorded through production techniques associated with the 2nd. Conversely, digitally recorded dramatic meaning enabled by the 2nd orientation may act as the catalyst for participants engaging in immersive, process drama, under the umbrella of the 3rd. To therefore accurately understand the fabric and creative dynamic of shaping a Dramatic Property it is important to remember that these orientations are exactly that – compass points by which C&T identify the landscape and chart progression within the territory marked out by the Concept Rules and the Concept Ludic Narrative. It is therefore useful to see both these orientations (if not all three) acting in a dynamic, unstable flux, responding to the intuitive needs of the artists and participants working within the paradigm as a whole and within each Dramatic Property's overall concept.

So, by accentuating the 3rd orientation of a particular Dramatic Property the experience becomes weighted in favour of the processual, immersive dimensions of the DP. However, if the 2nd orientation becomes the bias then the weighting of the experience shifts to favour the consumption and production of dramatic product.

2nd Orientation: Using theories of convergence, applied theatre practices and digital media to schematise and encode dramatic meanings.

The ambition of this 2nd orientation is to enable the creation of effective theatre texts that encode and distribute dramatic meanings through the use of a range of media, particularly those enabled by Information Communication Technologies.

To attempt to recast established theatrical and dramatic signifiers such as 'text' and 'author' within the digital domain may at first seem problematic, if not wholly unnecessary. However, Barry Atkins has successfully invoked and justified the use of such literary terminology in his examination of the computer game, describing the genre as 'an independent form of fictional expression' (2003:5), but one that is still eligible to critical deconstruction through post-structuralist and post-modernist textual analysis. He concludes:

> Is it [the computer game as a fictional textual form] representative of a truly radical break with the ways in which we have previously told ourselves our stories? 'No', or at least 'No, not yet.' (2003:10)

Similarly, in the field of software development, engineers choose to cast themselves as authors in their own medium, describing the process of programming CD-ROMs and websites as 'authoring'.

Consequently I would suggest that in the post-modern realms of twenty-first century popular culture, Richard Schechner's definition of a performance's script offers multiple synergies with the form of the Dramatic Property as a digitally enabled textual schematic:

> All that can be transmitted from time to time and place to place; the basic code of the events. The script is transmitted person to person, the transmitter is not merely the messenger. The transmitter of the script must know the script and be able to teach it to others. This teaching may be conscious or through empathetic, empathic means. (2003:71)

Whilst for Andy Kempe and Marigold Ashwell, working in the field of classroom drama, this basic code embraces 'performance [that] can be electronically recorded or notated through words, sketches and diagrams' (2000:11).

Such definitions are useful because they do not place limitations on what a script might be: they are not constrained within a literary tradition. For Schechner, Kempe, Ashwell and for C&T, what is being signed and transmitted in the script is what is significant: the 'process of imparting meaning to an audience through the dramatic form' (Kempe & Ashwell 2000:11). For young participants in C&T's dramas, schooled as Prensky's Digital Natives, a semiotics of dramatic texts based purely on 'the linguistic theory of speech-acts' (Page 1992:8) appears a rather one-dimensional tool for signifying meaning.[26]

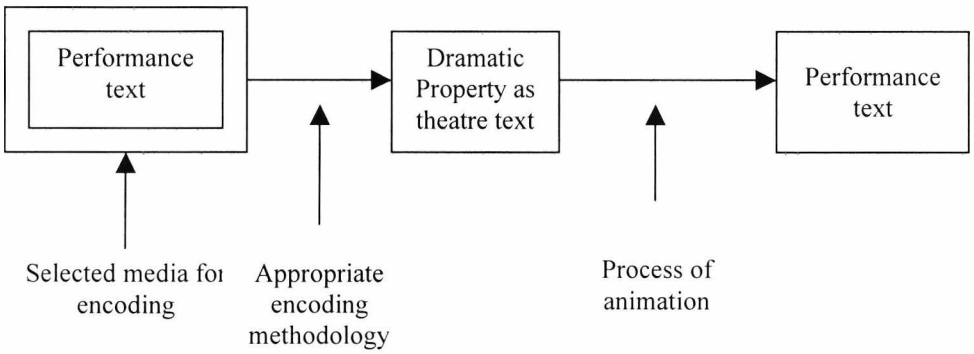
Schechner's definition also asserts a quality of independence for the text, echoing Atkins' arguments about the computer games as fictional form. In the spirit of Roland Barthes, Dramatic Properties accentuate this quality, making a virtue of the implicit ambiguity that Derrida detects in the playwright's craft:

> How can the playwright work within the semiotic conversations which do not compel the audience to decode the text precisely as he or she stipulates yet at the same time direct them to the play's ideology and limit their freedom of interpretation? (Page 1992:8)

For the Dramatic Property such 'semiotic conversations' are more dynamic and participatory than those usually adhered to by those who practice the craft of play-

[26] An AOL survey of 600 ten-year-olds found that 40% expected that children in the future would wear virtual reality helmets to bring learning to life. (*The Guardian* 26.9.2005. 5). It is these high expectations of the potential for new technology and creativity in learning that I suggest should be helping to shape our future models of applied theatre.

making. Dramatic Properties are not authored through a hierarchical, one-way process that moves from initial literary textual authorship, to printed form, to crowded rehearsal room, to the stage and then to an audience. DPs are created through collaborative drama activity with their audience: the conversation begins at the start of the process of authorship. They do this firstly through the application of applied theatre techniques and methodologies, then, when they exist as performance texts, they can be appropriately encoded through digital media or other appropriate forms. This script (now existing as a media text) can then be transmitted to new audiences, where as participants they (with the support of a drama Animateur, akin to Schechner's 'teacher') can reveal its meaning again by decoding its sign system and then reconstructing it as a re-interpreted live performance text. This process underpins this 2nd orientation and is most clearly described in the following diagram:



The above abstraction by definition ignores the particularities that arise in the development of any specific Dramatic Property. Later in this thesis we shall more closely observe these particulars in the practice-as-research documentation of *The Dark Theatre*, *Cambat* and *the livingnewspaper.com.* However it is useful here to interrogate the elements of this process in abstract, to more closely understand the value and purpose of the 2nd orientation.

Viewing the applied theatre praxis of a Dramatic Property as a performance text is crucial to the 2nd orientation. Schweitzer's anxieties about the inadequacies of Theatre-in-Education script-making seem less troublesome when the texts being authored are liberated from the 'semiotics of speech-acts'. The 2nd orientation invites us to see the applied theatre practice of a Dramatic Property as conforming to Julian Hilton's definition of a performance text: a triangular set of forces – performer

(including the audience as a dynamic contributor), space and time (Hilton 1993:6) and that this triangulation successfully embraces the fullest range of qualities of that drama experience; both in its performative and in its potentially encoded textual forms.

By using vertical integration, not as a business strategy deployed for the benefit of global capitalism, but as a creative strategy for the structuring of multi-media applied theatre experiences, Dramatic Properties strive to enable the Animateur and participant to draw on the inter-disciplinary, convergent potential of a range of dramatising digital media as tools for authoring media-rich dramatic texts that both encode the processes and performative qualities of their drama whilst remaining 'audience-centred dramatic performances...with multiple speakers, protagonists and antagonists...attempting to break down the wall between performer and audience' (Denzin 1997:99). C&T has already used DV cameras, video streaming, MP3 audio formats, podcasting, machinima, content management systems, flash animations and weblogs in its work, using them both for the recording of process and improvisatory drama and for the mixing and shaping of those recordings into consciously-authored encodings of the original performance texts, in the shape of, say, CD-ROMs or websites.[27]

C&T sees this distinctive methodology for encoding performance texts as very different in character and purpose to the allied activity of using digital media to document performative activities. Digital technologies have a clear and important role to play in the fields of academy-based research, the archiving of performances and in artists' own evaluatory processes. For example Christie Carson's *Cambridge King Lear CD-ROM: Text and Performance Archive* clearly occupies a place in the first of these categories describing itself as 'a digital library of material' (Carson 2003:17). Similarly, Anna Furse identifies I.T. is the 'hot topic' (Furse 2002:69) when it comes to the documentation and archiving of performances and performance culture.

[27] All of the examples listed have been or are being considered for use by C&T within its growing portfolio of Dramatic Properties.

By contrast, the paradigm of the Dramatic Property seeks to enable a far more synergistic relationship between the performance text and the digital media forms and platforms that encode it. In many ways the above examples almost inherently imply a degree of distance between their original texts and their digital archives (such distance constructively giving each project a sense of academic objectivity, rigour and independence). For Dramatic Properties there should be no distance. What conditions the quality of the relationship between text and performance here (and moves it beyond the realm of documentation) are the Concept Rules and the Concept Ludic Narrative. These represent the values of the drama (as an intellectual property) and thus enable all these convergent creative forces to work with each other.

For example, without its Concept Rules and Concept Ludic Narrative *Cambat* reads as a sequence of sterile, low budget films that require no more from the viewer than the behaviours of passive consumer; their use of the medium of photography and the fragmentary nature of these films divorcing the audience from the 'temporal procession' (Auslander 1999:52) that was part of the original fabric of these dramas as live performance. However, with its Concept Rules and CLN, *Cambat* re-engages with the temporal, becoming an active, sensuous text, framing, in real time, participants as subversive internet hackers. The configuration of its schematic and its sign system invites audiences to become active participants in the live drama and through this participation to interrogate the values of the surveillance society.

To compose a definitive list of such qualities would be reductive to the potential of the form. However it is possible to suggest representative characteristics of these qualities by building synergies between two complementary bodies of work: applied theatre and performance ethnography. Both serve the theory and practice of the Dramatic Property well. Taylor's hallmarks of applied theatre identify the majority of the generic qualities C&T seeks for it's encoding of meanings through the form(s) of Dramatic Properties:

> Applied theatre is thoroughly researched; applied theatre seeks completeness; applied theatre demonstrates possible narratives; applied theatre is task orientated; applied theatre poses dilemmas;

> applied theatre interrogates futures; applied theatre is an aesthetic medium; applied theatre gives voice to communities (2003:27) [28]

whilst Denzin's call to develop 'an emancipatory discourse connect[ing] critical pedagogy with new ways of writing and performance culture' (2003:3) embraces C&T's ambition to shape such texts and related practices through the fabric and tools of the digital, dramatised society.

3rd Orientation: Using theories of convergence, applied theatre practices and digital media to develop immersive drama experiences.

Brenda Laurel's seminal *Computers as Theatre* widely reconfigured the software development community's perception of what interface design could be. Laurel argues that information technology offers new ways to shape creative, interactive experiences, particularly those shaped 'around the fundamental precepts of dramatic form and structure' (1993:35). The 3rd Orientation sees similar potential in making allies of drama and immersive computer-based media such as websites and videogames, but whilst Laurel roots her arguments in the classicism of Aristotelian poetics, for C&T the greater resonance lies in the poetics and pedagogy of Process Drama, as crystallised by Dorothy Heathcote:

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[28] Taylor's definitions are valuable in an eclectic field with little unifying theory. However, in many ways, what he presents as a definition of 'the applied theatre' is not ultimately particularly definitive. Much of what he catalogues and describes (to good effect) bares striking similarities to what in Britain would be most obviously recognisable as Theatre-in-Education. This seems to be the area of practice Taylor is really interested in. His aim seems to be re-categorise or re-define Theatre-in-Education for other informal educational contexts. For example he regularly describes Applied Theatre experiences as 'Programs" (2003:53). He goes on to describe Applied Theatre performers as "Actor-Teachers" (2003:27). Both terms have currency and value when viewed through the prism of Taylor's guiding principles; however these are not innovatory terms. Both can be traced back to 1965, to the Belgrade Theatre-in-Education Company, and to their Interim Report on the first term of their pioneering Theatre-in-Education work in Coventry (Belgrade TIE 1965). None of this diminishes Taylor's principles; they are comprehensive (within his self-imposed terms of reference), but he repeatedly refers to *the* applied theatre as if what he is writing about is The Definite Article. I would suggest it describes *an* applied theatre: activities broadly derivative of what he himself acknowledges as "the techniques and strategies familiar to drama educators" (2003:28). He creates further muddle whilst discussing the "transformative principle" of (his) the applied theatre. He argues that this principle "shares much with other participatory and community theatre movements, where a central emphasis is on the applications of theatre" (2003:1). One cannot help but wonder why that these other forms of theatre, with their shared commonality of 'the application of theatre', are therefore not eligible to be described as forms of Applied Theatre themselves.

> Drama is such a normal thing...all it demands is that children shall think from within a dilemma instead of talking about the dilemma (1984:119).

The 3rd Orientation seeks to create immersive digital texts that draw participants inside 'dilemmas', creating dramas that are simultaneously and symbiotically actual and virtual.

Laurel's work has proven revelatory to many working in the field of human-computer interface design. For those working in theatre, her work may initially seem contrived. How can the live, spontaneous, human medium of theatre be compared to the binary, two dimensional, mechanised medium of computing? On the surface such comparisons may seem implausible, but for Laurel (and for the concept of the Dramatic Property) it is the metaphoric potential of the analogy rather than the physical similarities of these media that reveals the strengths in her conceptualisation.

For example, her argument for the valuing of dramatic purpose over superficial visual representation in the development of computer programs ('focus on designing the action. The design of objects, environments and characters is all subsidiary to this central goal' (Laurel 1993:134)) seems plainly desirable to those steeped in the practice of making applied theatre, but in the world of digital media it can represent an alien conceptualisation of native working practices. This is perhaps not surprising when we consider that the dominant skills required by these new and emerging creative industries, are those gained by students and practitioners schooled in either the visual arts, commercial graphic design, computer science or engineering, not the performing arts.[29]

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[29] During the development of *the livingnewspaper.com,* C&T collaborated with a number of computer programmers, notably the London-based new media agency Other Media (http://www.othermedia.com,14.10.2005) who were subcontracted to customise their content management system, Other Objects, to C&T's bespoke specifications. The process of developing the site was fraught with the kind of interface metaphor dilemmas Laurel identifies. For example, during the early stages of the development process Other Media's web designers became enthusiastically preoccupied with the Living Newspaper template of the Camera Voice, attracted to the concept as a dramatic metaphor: giving photographs a voice (see the later practice as research documentation for further details). However, having grasped the concept and its purpose and then having moved on to establish the graphics and database tools needed to power the Camera Voice, they subsequently (but unsuccessfully) tried to impose this metaphor on other facets of the website,

But for a better understanding of C&T's work, where Laurel's metaphor is most useful is not simply in seeing the computer screen as a stage and the user as audience; nor is it that participation is about actor and audience breaking down the proscenium arch and simultaneously occupying the same space (Laurel 1993:17)[30]; but rather, that when participants enter virtual environments, they, like participants in a process drama, think and act from inside the 'dilemma':

> they [the audience] become actors – and the notion of 'passive' observer disappears (Laurel 1993:17).

Yet just as it may be challenging for theatre practitioners to perceive the similarities in their practices and those of computer programmers, so many digital authors allow the constraints of their binary field of enquiry to unnecessarily constrain their understanding of the potential that the processes of drama offer. For example, Marie-Laure Ryan in *Narrative as Virtual Reality,* takes on Laurel's agenda by critiquing how computer-based narratives can utilize the genres of Greek tragedy, the Theatre of Cruelty, and 60s agitprop experimentation. However, she completely ignores the Theatre-in-Education movement, Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and applied theatre in general. Consequently she mistakenly proceeds to dismiss the idea of 'actors becoming their own audience' (Ryan 2001:305) concluding, frustratingly, with a generalised, self referential air of authority, that the idea of the

> total engagement of actors, [is] of course, far too utopian to offer any kind of useful guidelines for the developers of electronic forms of

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regardless of its appropriateness to the dramatic activity trying to be facilitated. This desire seemed to derive from a genuine enthusiasm for the dramatic metaphor at the heart of the Camera Voice. However, once the developers had engineered the graphics and designs that represented the Camera Voice's on-screen representation they seemed to develop a blind spot as to the activity the tool was originally designed to enable. At one point their chief software engineer went as far as suggesting getting rid of all the other components of the site except for the Camera Voice, effectively making the project *www.cameravoice.com* as opposed to *www.thelivingnewspaper.com*. Their design instincts were over-ruling an interest in the dramatic purpose of the website.

[30] Here Laurel shows limits to her understanding of theatre, perhaps largely conditioned by her pre-occupation with Aristotelian poetics. She chooses to see such non-hierarchical actor-audience relationships purely in the negative – creating "clutter, both psychological and physical" (Laurel 1993:17) rather than appreciating that a theatre event can be configured in any manner of creative permutations depending on its goal (ironic, given her own preoccupation with the need to focus on use of purpose in software design).

> interactive arts. Nor is it practical to coach large numbers of participants to perform a script, even one that allows ample room for creative improvisation (Ryan 2001:305).

Gonzalo Frasca is more catholic in his influences, starting from Laurel but then drawing on Boal and Friere to construct the concept of Videogames Of The Oppressed, designed to 'engage children in questioning the ideological assumptions of videogames' (Frasca 2004:90), through a 'computer-based equivalent of Boal's Forum Theater' (Frasca 2004:90). While Frasca benefits by liberating his thinking from purely the Aristotelian system of poetics that pre-occupies Ryan, his model seems only to be viable in his eyes if Boal's work is not perceived as drama but as 'closer to games and simulation than to theatre' (Frasca 2004:89). Frasca uses Auslander to justify this position, citing him as arguing that he (Boal) has 'abandon[ed] performance' (Auslander 1999:56). However, I would suggest that whilst Auslander does highlight Boal's pre-occupation with 'bridging the gap' (Auslander 1999:56) between performer and audience, he recognises that this is a constructive constraint within the Theatre of the Oppressed and one that does not necessarily make it undramatic, even if it does change the nature of the performance event.

Regardless of these differences, Frasca's model of the Videogames of the Oppressed offers many constructive synergies with the paradigm of the Dramatic Property, not only in terms of the utilization of technologies to construct immersive dramatic scenarios, but also the importance of interrogating the nature and content of the twenty-first century mediated dramatic culture, as discussed in chapter 2. However his model of practice exists purely within the computer. It is about making interactive videogames (albeit for transformative social and educational purposes, as with applied theatre). For C&T the aspiration is to create interactive virtual dramatic texts that operate as applications, provoking real participatory dramatic activity in the real world.

Dramatic Properties aim to achieve this by harnessing convergence theory as the mechanism for building real, synergistic energies between these two domains of activity, driving the drama forward. It is the concept that powers any given Dramatic

Property and that therefore drives these synergies, enabling participants to immerse themselves in the Concept Ludic Narrative through each DP's digital media texts and the process dramas that these enable.

Laurel also echoes C&T's aspiration for a Barthesian levelling of the relationship between applied theatre participant and practitioner/author, reflecting the creative empowerment brought about by the all-pervasive digitisation of the dramatic fabric of contemporary culture. Of course it is arguable that Laurel uses 'actor' in the same way that, say, Boal uses 'Spectactor' – to denote a performative role rather than an authorial one. This to some degree is true, but equally, in human-computer software interfaces such actorly qualities also demonstrate authorial qualities (perhaps akin to young people at work in an improvised drama) rather than being purely re-enactive. For example, in Macromedia's website-authoring programme *Director,* the software incorporates functionality that calls for the manipulation of 'actors' on 'stages,' moved and adjusted within timelines to create original, events, structures and narratives. Clearly this is a process of authorship, reflected in the fact that the verb to make a website is 'to author'.

So, as discussed earlier, while it seems that for many theatre practitioners the ebb and flow in the control of the means of (applied theatre) production is determined by holding (to some degree) maker and participant in polarity with each other (thus perpetuating the professional/amateur teacher/student divides), if we draw on practices from the digital domain, it seems possible for an immersive computer programme to become an interface that levels this relationship. They can act as the mediating force between the variety and source of contributions made to the evolving collaborative drama. Dramatic Properties aim to be such immersive digital texts, ascribed an independence of process and thought, distinct from the intentions of its originating authors. By ascribing them this level of independence the intention is to enable their users to frame themselves as the authors of the dramas that these immersive digital texts stimulate. They may be texts themselves, but they are also catalysts that enable the making of new texts.

It seems important to prove all of this. Is it in fact possible to build such reciprocal interdependencies between the forms and pedagogy of process drama and computer-

based digital experiences and videogames? Obviously, how these synergies might be made real will vary from Dramatic Property to Dramatic Property, particularly in response to the demands of subject matter, CLN and Concept Rules. However, in her observational study of the playful use of conventional CD-ROM games with the under-fives, Cynthia R. Smith does use Bruner, Vygotsky and Rosenblatt to construct four generic strands of the mental processes involved in all computer-based dramatic play:

> (a) Abstract transformation of objects and roles, (b) internalisation of technical tools, (c) efferent stance involving computer-based dramatic play, and (d) aesthetic stance involving computer-based dramatic play (Smith 2005:113).

For clarity, I shall attempt to identify examples in practice of how these strands manifest themselves in existing Dramatic Properties.

In *The Dark Theatre,* participants mirror, through drama activities, Robin Page's journey to solve his father's murder as he (a) 'transfers what he has learned...from one context to another' (Smith 2005:113). In *Cambat* audiences are invited to interrogate and dramatically re-construct online sequences of closed-circuit television footage (an example being the 50p glued to the paving stone sequence). They do so through a variety of activities derived from established applied theatre conventions (thought tracking, for example) so as to better understand the context and motivations of those caught, depersonalised and dislocated from reality by the original sterile CCTV footage. For participants, this process represents (b), the 'internalis[-ation of] technological concepts and...recreating events by transforming real-world objects and creating stories and scripts, removed from the original' (Smith 2005:114). When participants first try to enter the drama of thelivingnewspaper.com covert network via the CD-ROM, the dilemmas and learning challenges they face to secure their login password require them to problem-solve by taking 'an efferent stance while engaged in computer-based dramatic play' (Smith 2005:115) (c), just as they might whilst playing Atari's videogame *Fahrenheit* (Atari 2005). Finally, once participants have accessed this CD-ROM, the Living Newspaper Manifesto and Sign Up sections of the main menu invite users to commit to the values and aspirations of

this covert organisation. Only when they have committed to these values can they proceed. This process of contracting in to the drama requires a commitment to the aesthetic stance of the experience (d).

Ludologists such as Espen Aarseth suggest that for the genre of the videogame, arguing the benefits of such synergies is counter-productive. The videogame form does not need to borrow from other fiction-based genres such as drama, cinema or the novel to justify its own 'vibrant aesthetic' (Wardrip-Fruin & Harrigan 2004:35) and inherent playfulness. For C&T, whilst ludic theory is a powerful school of thought for the paradigm of the Dramatic Property it is the synergies it offers with other disciplines that are crucial. This is because C&T is seeking to use process drama methodologies as resources for the *occupation* of the ludic qualities of the videogame genre and from this occupied territory move on to consciously structure interactive digital texts that enable applied theatre experiences.

In particular, one model of process drama and one theory of Theatre-in-Education practice underpin this occupation: Heathcote's notion of Rolling Role and Geof Gillham and Chris Cooper's Rigidity/Flexibility Contradiction.

First theorised in 1991 the Rigidity/Flexibility Contradiction was developed as the educational method of the 1991 SCYPT conference at Bradford University (which C&T attended). The conference was delivered through an over-arching participatory structure mixing drama activity, performances and key note speeches. Gillham and Cooper, on behalf of the organising committee, describe this as 'very much 'our' structure, which was then given over to conference participants and group leaders to use as 'theirs'' (Gillham & Cooper 1992:6). In arriving at a structure that embodied this joint ownership, SCYPT sought to develop a methodology that combined

> a degree of rigidity which would keep people at the matter under consideration, and at the same time a flexibility that would enable participants to take control of their own learning at whatever level was most productive for the individuals concerned, and for the aggregate of the group (Gillham & Cooper 1992:7).

The Rigidity/Flexibility Contradiction is thus:

> born on the one hand of the committee's responsibility to determine what is at study, and on the other hand of the requirements of conference participants (any learner) to really 'own' their learning (Gillham & Cooper 1992:7).

Usefully, Gillham and Cooper's aspirations for participants 'owning' their own learning echoes C&T's ambition for Dramatic Properties, for users to own their own authored contributions to the evolving drama, but within the paradigm of the Dramatic Property, the contradiction takes on another, wider significance. For C&T it embodies the creative and educative tensions that arise in shaping applied theatre experiences, both as actual drama and as interactive digital texts, that are firstly structured (i.e. rigid) to achieve maximum dramatic value (and thus inevitably encoding the creativity of C&T as its authors) and yet genuinely open (flexible) to the creative, ethnographic potential and democratic will of participants for whom it is designed. Helen Nicholson identifies similar considerations for the classroom drama teacher when she notes 'the tension between, on the one hand, the demands of an education system driven by standardisation...and on the other the processes of working in drama which are often most interesting when the unexpected or unforeseen is accommodated and accepted' (2000:4).

However, looking beyond drama, I would suggest that the rigidity/flexibility polarity also reveals the very real constraints that the binary opposition that underpins all digital activity can inadvertently impose on the telling of participatory digital narratives. In the digital world everything can be reduced to a simple choice: ones and noughts. Every decision is an either/or. This may be a workable system in most digitally driven-devices such as TVs (do you want to evict Craig or Kate?) or mobile phones (home or work number?) but in the telling of participatory narratives this choice is potentially limiting.

Aarsreth describes this choice in digital narratives as 'ergodics' or 'pathway in the moment: we have reached a fork in the road. Beyond this point the traditional narrative interest leads one way while a second track diverges' (Moulthrop 2004:56).

Such choices inhabit most videogames, particularly in the genre of first-person shooters like *Half Life 2* (Valve Foundation 2005): do I go left or right? Do I use my pistol or the hand grenade? Sometimes the permutations are more sophisticated, but ultimately it always comes down to a binary choice. Whilst Ludologists like Aarsreth see such choices as playfully liberating, they are hardly choices at all for those who have experienced the complex performative matrix of a process drama, or Forum Theatre.

At the 1992 SCYPT Conference in Bradford, the Rigidity/Flexibility method was again used, this time with the conference delegates enrolled as designers of a CD-ROM about the value of Theatre-in-Education. At the plenary on the final day Theatre Director Gwenda Hughes expressed misgivings with this choice of structure, complaining about the limitations of the 'binary thing,' commenting that computers were only about ones and noughts, yes and no. Her theatre work was about exploring the gap between yes and no. This was a memorable, insightful moment, and one that regularly informs the development of Dramatic Properties. If DPs are to take the best of the digital domain and not the worst, they need to enable the maximum flexibility for participants to articulate themselves, enabling them to inhabit these ambiguous creative territories whilst operating within the rigid constraints the selected digital media allow.

So, within the 3rd orientation it should be the particular mix of the Concept Ludic Narrative and the Concept Rules that enables the rich complexity and potential of drama as an immersive medium for meaning-making to achieve its potential, rather than simplistic binary choices. It is how these two forces are orchestrated that conditions the rigidity of the experience and the flexibilities offered to participants, firstly in the digital realm and then in the live drama experience. Here, Dorothy Heathcote's third context for active learning, the Rolling Role, takes on significance.

Although the Rolling Role model was developed during the 1970s, Heathcote herself is alert to the contemporariness of the form, eulogising 'what a website opportunity Rolling Role provides!' (2000:38) Whilst Rolling Role shaped the development of the paradigm of the Dramatic Property from the outset (*The Dark Theatre* in its original comic book form is in essence an example of the form) its real benefits can

be seen most clearly when considering the shaping of Dramatic Properties online. The similarities and therefore potential mutual benefits are easy to grasp.

Just as the internet enables people to build virtual communities of interest (for example reminiscing with old school friends through *Friends Reunited*), so participants in a Rolling Role can 'build beliefs in the lives of the people and the events they are meeting' (Heathcote 2000:37-38). Just as these online communities can be 'a platform for interaction, where reactions to new products and services are gauged' as well as being 'an excellent communication forum that can allow dialogue to take place' (New Media Knowledge 2005: www.nmk.co.uk), so too can the form be used to build reciprocal energies with the processes of a Rolling Role where 'the base work [drama, is designed to]...roll from teacher to teacher and many classes can share in the common context' (Heathcote 2000:36). Finally, just as an online community must orientate itself to its collective objectives and goals (New Media Knowledge 2005: www.nmk.co.uk), so must the community of a Rolling Role 'together decide upon a disturbance factor which will trigger changes for the modern citizens to deal with' (Heathcote 2000:37).

So just as a Rolling Role can allow groups of learners at distance from each other to roll materials, experiences, documentation and narrative evidence backwards and forwards as they mutually author and advance their drama, so too can an online community, as long as the initial drama has been effectively facilitated by the presence of the CLN and a robust online content management system can enable the uploading and subsequent sharing of video files, audio, text and images (*The livingnewspaper.com* demonstrates the practicalities of how this model is made real. The subsequent case study and practice-as-research documentation illustrates the case in a more concrete fashion).

What this re-configuration of a rolling role model within the 3rd orientation achieves is a way of overcoming the potential limitations of the Rigidity/Flexibility Contradiction in an online environment. It places the emphasis not on participants making binary choices (although this may be a useful, rigid constraint at points), but on the hermeneutic value that participants can invest in digital documentation of their process drama work: photographs of still images, videos of improvisations or mp3

recordings of hot seating activities. What is more, the qualities of these materials when located within the ludic narrative of the overall Dramatic Property concept take on an additional weight and currency.

So in summary, the three orientations described provide the material base for the development of any given Dramatic Property, making the abstract qualities of the overall concept, Concept Ludic Narrative and Concept Rules real. They do this by firstly, practically converging the digital tools and media platforms available to today's digital natives with applied theatre techniques. Secondly, they enable these hybrid tools and practices to be used as mechanism for the encoding of participants meaningful dramas reflecting their values, aspirations and life experiences. Finally, they allow participants to immerse themselves in the live drama, enabling participants to contextualise their learning and meaning-making.

The following chapter particularises these three orientations, along with Concept Rules and the Concept Ludic Narrative, within the context of the first three Dramatic Properties developed by C&T.

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Chapter 4

Dramatic Properties.

The following scrutinizes three Dramatic Properties in the light of the context, hallmarks and theoretical base of the paradigm outlined in previous chapters: Concept Ludic Narrative, Concept Rules and the 1st, 2nd and 3rd orientations. The three Dramatic Properties considered in turn are *The Dark Theatre, Cambat* and *the livingnewspaper.com.*[31]

[31] Please note that *The Dark Theatre* case study and related materials are not submitted as part of the practice-as-research dimension of this thesis as they were produced before this period of research. However, it has been included here as the project's contribution was pivotal to shaping the overall paradigm of the Dramatic Property.

The Dark Theatre

The research activity that shaped the paradigm of the Dramatic Property was undertaken through three phases of project-based research practice. At the beginning of each phase C&T set a number of creative and theory-based ambitions, each to be reflected in the developing practice. For the first of these three phases C&T identified four ambitions. These were:

1. To find a new way of collaborating with children and young people and those who enable their meeting and learning
2. To build synergies with other dramatising media that play a central role in popular culture
3. Develop this practice as a creative methodology
4. Find appropriate ways of theorising this practice

The result was the first Dramatic Property: *The Dark Theatre*.

> Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognises before it can speak (Berger 1972:7).

> Comics give an imaginative freedom which is to be celebrated. You can take chances with the stories, with the characters, with the morality. It's also a popular medium and I'm a democrat. I have no interest in elitist art. (Barker 1993).

The Dark Theatre is applied theatre as comic book. It is a sequence of four, original 16-page comics[32] that were published over a two-year cycle from 1994-96. They were devised and written by Paul Sutton and illustrated by Roberto Corona (issues 1-3) and Paul Rafferty (issue 4). During this period these comic books were used in over fifty primary and secondary schools and, in subsequent years, by many others. *The Dark Theatre* uses the comic book form to tell its story through the genre of the whodunit. However, in writing the first issue of the whodunit C&T had no idea Who

[32] There were in fact eight issues of *The Dark Theatre*; however issues 5-8 did not form part of the central narrative cycle and consequently have been rarely used by C&T.

Did It. Children and young people interrogated the termly publication through drama, drawing suppositions and conclusions from the developing mystery and then feeding the results of these deliberations back to C&T, who then integrated their ideas into the narrative of the next issue of the comic.

Consequently, to take part in the project participating schools did not book a Theatre-in-Education company; they took out an annual subscription. This subscription not only entitled them to three class-size sets of thirty *Dark Theatre* comics (one set per academic term) but also acted as a membership fee. Schools became part of a collaborative network, not only working together on drama activities stimulated by the comic, but also enabling teachers to come together to undertake training courses led by C&T and for the sharing of ideas and good practice. This sense of belonging was crucial to *The Dark Theatre* (and is something that would be developed in later Dramatic Properties that were able to draw on the potential of the internet to create and enable online communities): it not only underpinned the organisation of the project but also the process drama methodology that most influenced its activities – Dorothy Heathcote's third context for active learning, Rolling Role.

The Dark Theatre takes place in the fictional town of Factford. The elliptical, cryptic story focuses on the death, in suspicious circumstances, of noted local playwright Nathan Page and the loss of the manuscript of his final, great play, just weeks before it is to be delivered to the town's local rep, The Canon Theatre, for production. This loss plunges the theatre into crisis and eventual closure, not least because of the subsequent Machiavellian manoeuvrings of local politician Mayor Reilley. Meanwhile Nathan's youngest son Robin uncovers documents that shed new light on his past which prompt him to begin investigating his father's death. Late at night, on the stage of the Canon Theatre, he is haunted by his dead father and by characters enacting scenes from the lost play, which seem to provide clues to the growing mystery in which he and his sister are now embroiled. Fax machines whirr, trap doors open, nightmares appear real and at every step of the way the plot thickens. And the only method to shed light on these events is through drama.

The Dark Theatre's Concept Ludic Narrative has two core components. Firstly it is conceptualised as a Barthesian whodunit, with participants framed as detectives [33] investigating the murder of playwright Nathan Page. However, by engaging in this process these participants are not simply uncovering predetermined evidence that will eventually reveal the identity of the murderer, but rather, by the very act of participation, they are contributing to the authorship of the future narrative of which they are a part. The very 'death of the author' that informs the central narrative tenet and dramatic motivations of *The Dark Theatre's* central plot line is also a metaphor for the creative methodology that underpins the practice of the project:

> We are now beginning to let ourselves be fooled no longer by the arrogant antiphrastical recriminations of good society in favour of the very thing it sets aside, ignores, smothers or destroys: we know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of author (Barthes 1977:171-2).

The Dark Theatre makes narrative this challenge to release readers and texts (be they a participant in the drama or a character in Nathan Page's lost play) from the limitations of the author.

This represents the earliest outing of the paradigm's ambition to blur the role distinctions between audience and author, as outlined in the 2nd Orientation. Whilst here the tools for encoding the performance text are line drawings on a printed page rather than digital imagery or video (*The Dark Theatre* was conceived in the years preceding the rise of the internet) the intention is the same as in later Dramatic

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[33] *The Dark Theatre* makes much use of Dorothy Heathcote's nine levels of dramatic frame, repeatedly shifting participants' distance from the comic's narrative and the drama's fictional context. So describing young people as detectives frames them as Researchers: "My job is to see how much I can find out about the event from contemporary evidence so that new light can be cast upon it." (Heathcote: 2003) At certain points the participant's role and their corresponding distance from the drama do change, each change relating to a change in subset of the fiction. For example, in issue 1, when children agree to enter the drama of the press conference their role changes from detectives (Researcher) to journalists (the frame Heathcote calls Participant: "I am in the middle of the situation and I am experiencing it now in terms of the world view I represent."(2003)) and therefore become immersed in the fiction. However, such frame shifts are only temporary and are always motivated by the 'top' frame of detective ('let's see if we can imagine what it must be like to be there, maybe that will shed some light on things').

Properties: to find, through diverse means of representation, ways of constructing collaboratively-authored drama texts that draw on contemporary media and cultural forms.

However, whilst *The Dark Theatre* represented an innovation for the company in terms of the way it collaborated with young people, there is little in the project that draws directly on the lives and life stories of its audience, unlike later DPs, *Cambat* and *the livingnewspaper.com.* Here the imperative is in finding ways of encoding the performative values and intentions of the participants within the constraints of the highly fictionalised context. The aspiration to make those performative texts reflective of the fabric of the dramatised society itself (and participants' experience of it) comes later in the evolution of the paradigm.

The Dark Theatre builds its Concept Rules from an analogist relationship between comics and drama. Firstly by building synergies between the constraints of the comic book form and those of process drama methodologies and secondly by using the concept of comic book continuity to shape and condition the fictional context.

The Dark Theatre is built on a simple premise: as media, comics and drama have a lot in common. Comics adapt theatrical devices and conventions to tell their narratives through "sequential art" (McCloud 1993:8). They tell their stories through characters and settings, there is lighting (or at least light and shade to achieve focus), sounds and noises (encoded as 'Crakkk!' or 'Wooooosh,' often qualitatively and semiotically represented by an infinite variety of type fonts and graphic representations). The action of the story is character-driven. There is little (often no) third person narration, except for minimalistic narrative boxes that demonstrate almost Brechtian qualities. Most significantly, all these factors are orchestrated to achieve dramatic tension and meaning encoded through action.

But in the spirit of the overall paradigm's 1st Orientation, *The Dark Theatre* tries to transcend these generalised dramatic qualities by building particular convergent synergies between sequential art and many of the tools of process drama. It does this by shaping particular dramatic tools and strategies from the hallmarks of the comic book form. A simple contrast is useful here. Pierce talks of theatre's capacity for

"unlimited semiosis" ("the endless play of meaning and regeneration of signs in time") (Fortier 1997:20). McCloud defines the comic book form as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence" (1993:8). Conflating these two perspectives offered C&T a new textual facility for freezing key moments of semiotic activity for scrutiny and deconstruction. In conventional text-based drama "actors use the elements of drama – the conventions of time, space and presence – to deconstruct the texts they are working on, so that they can eventually be reconstructed as a performance text" (Neelands 1997:31). In *The Dark Theatre*, sequential art offers a comparable semiotic framework.

So for example, through applied theatre techniques, panels in comics can be brought to life as sculpted still images with participants interrogating the gestus of these moments, thought bubbles left empty in the strip can be filled by students through ideas generated by activities such as thought-tracking (see *Dark Theatre* 1, 3-6), or the final panel of a sequential sequence could be left completely blank, allowing for Forum Theatre-style improvisatory activity projecting the narrative's possible outcome (see *Dark Theatre* 1, 9).[34]

However the broader, encoded hermeneutics of *The Dark Theatre* text – the gaps between the panels – often more effectively provoked the imaginations of participants than the actual content of them. As Wolfgang Iser puts it (and Gangi and Taylor acknowledge) "whenever the reader bridges the gap communication begins" (Gangi & Taylor 2000:102). These gaps deliberately disrupt the narrative, frustrating the reader's attempt to arrive at an understanding of what is happening. In a Lyotardian sense they represent a "failure of a master narrative," (Fortier 1997:118) but rather than (as SCYPT might have argued) disempowering the reader, by refracting these gaps through process drama activities and the frame of detective, it is possible for participants to interrogate these gaps and arrive at new understandings. The gaps activate the reader's imagination, raising questions that demand answers and that thus prompt dramatic activity. The CLN enhances this process of

[34] This 'Blanks. My find is full of blanks' sequence demonstrates some of the rolling role-like functionality of *The Dark Theatre*. Participants who filled in these blanks in Robin's memory through drama distilled their ideas into freeze frames, photographed them and sent them to C&T. These representations, submitted from numerous schools, were collaged together by Paul Sutton and Roberto Corona into the flashback sequence on page 11 of *Dark Theatre* 2.

prompting, by drawing readers in to the frame of the detective story as dramatic participants.

By building such practical synergies between comics and applied theatre, C&T embraced from the outset the notion of *The Dark Theatre* as a vertically integrated intellectual property.[35] So as well as the comic and the live, applied theatre experience, during 1997, C&T planned a live promenade performance of the whole four comic book cycle to be staged at the Swan Theatre, Worcester, on which the Canon Theatre was based (this plan was ironically scuppered by one of the theatre's regular funding crises that eventually saw the professional repertory company itself go 'dark' in 2001). Plans exist in 2005 for C&T to complement the existing printed version of the comic with an online, animated version which will be available for participants to use on handheld portable internet-enabled devices such as PlayStation Portables.

The second facet of *The Dark Theatre's* Concept Rules relates to the notion of continuity (a term not the exclusive preserve of comics) and its interrelationship with O'Toole's fictional context. Continuity has been a feature of the superhero genre of American comics since the 1960s, as most commonly practiced by publishers Marvel and DC. These publishers have fashioned a sequential style of storytelling that is heavily indebted to the televisual dramatic form of soap opera, a style of storytelling partly shaped by its intention of 'never reaching a permanent conclusion' (Ang 1996:112). Creators at these publishers shape plots that, whilst episodic, operate within an ongoing fictional construct that embraces whole families of comic books. In this 'continuity' characters such as Spider-Man and the Fantastic Four cross over between publications, develop relationships, accrue personal histories, and forge and adhere to legacies and laws, both natural and man-made. These simultaneous and intertwined plot lines are all shaped by the accumulating custom and practice of the continuity and obeying the internal logic that this fiction demands of itself. However, as Umberto Eco acknowledges, such narratives are constructed within the hierarchies of commercially driven, profit-orientated companies:

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[35] This was a connection that many in the comic book industry had made years previous, with the proclamation of comic book editor (1978-88) Jim Shooter saw that Marvel Comics proclaiming that Marvel "could be bigger than Disney" (Raviv 2002:33) because of the intellectual capital its characters embodied.

> The comic strip is commissioned from above, it operates according to all the mechanisms of hidden persuasion, it presupposes in the consumer an attitude of escape that immediately stimulates the paternalistic aspirations of the producers. And as a rule authors conform: thus the comic strip, in most cases, reflects the implicit pedagogy of a system and acts as a hidden reinforcement of the dominant myths and values (Eco 1994:55).

In *The Dark Theatre*, rather than condoning such motivations of corporate cultural globalisation, C&T attempts to build creative synergies between this form of storytelling and those process drama methodologies that aspire to the creative empowerment of participants. Here we move into the territory of the 3rd orientation of the paradigm: how original media texts can be shaped to enable immersive, process-driven drama experiences for the benefit of participants. *The Dark Theatre* uses the philosophical framework offered by Bathes in *The Death of the Author,* as a system via which participants' contributions to the drama/comic can be validated as equal as those from any other contributor, including any external script writer or illustrator.

It is the Concept Ludic Narrative that here supports the 3rd orientation by heavily investing in O'Toole's notion of the fictional context:

> the selected and focused pattern of fictional or fictionalised human beings, their location and their relationships which are the subject matter of the dramatic narrative (1992:48).

Discussing conventional process dramas, O'Toole identifies a range of contexts (including the fictional context) which condition and shape the immersive drama experience. First comes the real (the percipient's own), then the context of the medium ("the coming together of people" (1992:51) for drama, say in a theatre), next, the context of the setting (the localised environment of this coming together, say in TIE terms, a school) and finally the fictional context ("the selected and focused pattern of fictional or fictionalised human beings, their location and their

relationships which are the subject matter of the dramatic narrative" (1992:55). Equating *The Dark Theatre's* utilisation of the medium of comics with these categories reveals that whilst the first and third of these contexts remain consistent with O'Toole's diagnosis, the context of the medium is more effectively described as a 'context for converged media': a space that embraces the medium of comics and the theatrical operating space in which the drama lives and is collaboratively authored.

In *The Dark Theatre,* the fictional context draws its strength from the overall continuity of the comic and from the town of Factford in particular. It is a heavily drawn fiction: a town complete with its own mayor, newspaper, theatre, maps, schools, history – even sewage works. Of all the Dramatic Properties scrutinized here it is by far the most fictionalised.[36] This heightened fiction was designed to support and enable participants (often working in damp classrooms and drafty school halls) to more easily project themselves into the realms of the drama through this clearly delineated social, cultural and political fabric. In almost Barthesian terms, Scott McCloud describes such fictionalities thus: "the cartoon is a vacuum into which our awareness and identity are pulled, an empty shell that we inhabit which enables us to travel to another realm, we don't just observe the cartoon we become it" (1993:36).

However, with potentially hundreds of children engaging in the drama independently and simultaneously such libertarian aspirations could also be a recipe for continuity disasters: what happens if the narrative is pulled in opposing directions by different participants? Not everyone can be right all the time, surely? So, within the Concept Rules shaped by the model of comic book continuity, *The Dark Theatre* developed four 'laws' for participants to observe (laws enforced by the ever-present Animateur):

The First Law of Continuity stipulates that even though you as a reader of the comic have privileged information and insights into the whole narrative of *The Dark*

[36] Although in actuality, it bears more than a passing resemblance to C&T's home city of Worcester. For example, the ground plan of the Canon Theatre in issue 1 was heavily modelled on the original architect's plans for the City's Swan Theatre.

Theatre, when you enter the drama – say as a journalist at a role-played re-enactment of the press conference scene in issue 1 – you must unlearn information to which your character within the drama would not have access (in this case the journalists would not have witnessed Nathan's death nor would they know what was going to happen next in the chronology of the narrative).

The Second Law of Continuity says that no matter how incongruous contributions to the fictional context appear to be, the contradictions they raise are not only justifiable but actually must be used to deepen the drama. For example, in issue 1, Robin rifles through the personnel filing cabinet in the Canon Theatre. Participants were asked to use techniques like hot seating and roll-on-the-wall to inform the writing of documents contained in these staff files (the cleaner's C.V, the designer's last employer's reference, etc). C&T then, in the spirit of a Rolling Role, collated these documents and could make them available to other schools and participants. Some of these documents contradicted each other: one reference might say the cleaner is warm and charming, another says she has a criminal record. While these might at first seem inconsistent and therefore appear to undermine the drama, the Second Law says that they should actually provoke questions that deepen the drama, for example 'what happened to the cleaner to transform her personality between these two jobs?' Everything is justifiable if you can find the right subtext, the right motivation.

The Law of Actuality says that once published, the text becomes definitive. No marks on the page (textual or illustrative) were made by accident. Everything is there for a reason and consequently needs to be interrogated through drama. Also, participants should not seek clarification or answers to their questions from external sources (such as one of C&T's Animateurs or a teacher) as, in the spirit of Barthes, the text speaks for itself through the reader.

The Law of Speculation states that in keeping with your role as detective, your creative activities and suppositions in relation to the narrative of *The Dark Theatre* can only be speculative. Only publication of future issues of the comic can confirm or refute your conclusions. Implicit in this law is the principle that not all inventions will be justified in the narrative. This is not a principle based on creative pragmatism but rather one designed to enhance dramatic tension. For example, many participants

using issue 1 used the evidence of the first page to conclude that the theatre's cleaner was the prime suspect in the Nathan Page's murder. This seemed to be a rather knee-jerk reaction to the opening pages of the comic and if it were to be proved true would make the story less of a suspense-filled mystery and more of an open-and-shut case. But because these views amounted to only speculation C&T took the decision, in the interest of dramatic tension, to (apparently) kill off the cleaner at the end of issue 2 by dropping her through a trap door in the stage. This action, whilst affirming the spirit of the participant's view that the Cleaner was involved in the crime, also ratcheted up thinking around the theory that she was merely part of a wider conspiracy. So whilst the spirit of *The Dark Theatre* is inherently Barthesian, such authorly orchestrations demonstrate that there is a real author at work, however subsumed in the process-driven methodology they might be. The contribution of the artist as an artist in their own creative right (as discussed in chapter 3) is important on its own terms. This validation of the contribution of the artist is an important thread in all Dramatic Properties.

However, the decision-making process that underpinned such choices was not one solely controlled by C&T. Throughout the two-year duration of the project a group of 14-16 year olds took on the role of Young People's Editorial Group. Their task was to use drama to filter the accumulating submissions and evidence from participating schools and through improvisation and process drama techniques fashion the drama that would form the basis of the next issue of the comic. So even at the point at which C&T could be accused of imposing a single creative person (myself) to perform the "author-functions" (Foucault 1988:202), a collective of young people were actively involved in imposing their own plot interventions, meanings and character developments on behalf of all project participants.

The range of responses to *The Dark Theatre* and its methods of creative engagement were tremendous. Overwhelmingly the project engendered an unusually high level of commitment and imaginative engagement from participants. Take this response from a 14 year-old boy:

> Dear Paul, after reading the first two issues of *The Dark Theatre* and watching the film JFK I noticed similarities between the deaths of

> Nathan Page and John F Kennedy. I think Mayor Reilley is like the CIA because he wanted Nathan killed, Robin and Hannah are like Jim Garrison because they are both trying to uncover the truth and the two cleaning ladies are like the FBI because they destroyed the evidence (the photograph in Poppy's office). Poppy is being used by the Mayor, but I'm not sure how. Mayor Reilley wanted Nathan killed because his unfinished play was going to uncover the truth about Factford and make it a better place. I think what happened in Factford was a coup d'etat where the conspirators must remain innocent ...at any cost. Yours, James White, John Masefield High School, Herefordshire.

And this, from an eight-year-old investigating the parallels between the murder of Nathan Page and the King's murder in *Hamlet:*

> Dear Paul, when we watched *Hamlet* it was very interesting, but I don't know. Why did Hamlet's dad want to know who killed him because he was already dead. At the end, why did Hamlet kill Ophelia's dad, because he was doing no harm. Why did Hamlet's uncle kill the queen? From a great fan of *The Dark Theatre*, Andrew Shaw, class 2, Stanley Road Primary School, Worcester.

After two years of *The Dark Theatre* C&T reflected on these experiences and began to mark out the future trajectories of research. Firstly, the company felt that the activities undertaken added up to more than the sum of the parts. There was, potentially, a significant theoretical and methodological substructure to *The Dark Theatre* that deserved to be extrapolated from the particulars of that project. Secondly, one of the key features of this methodology was how rolling role and (what could be approximated as) *The Dark Theatre's* own idiosyncratic pedagogy of distance learning could be used to shape a networked drama practice. For all its potential, *The Dark Theatre* struggled to make this networked, at-distance mode of collaboration a reality. Many schools felt that the process of documenting *Dark Theatre* activity (35mm photographs, photocopying students' work, expensive VHS video tapes, all of which needed to be packaged and posted to C&T on a regular basis) was too laborious. Consequently the process of collaborative authorship

faltered. What *The Dark Theatre* needed was the internet: a widespread electronic communication system that could standardise and simplify such exchanges, making them routine rather than complex and that could make that notion of *The Dark Theatre* as a networked community a reality. However, at this time the internet had yet to emerge as a popular and pervasive medium. Anticipating the rise of these new media it seemed logical to direct future research activities to the potential of these emerging technologies.

Much of this was about extending and deepening the existing strands of enquiry. But there was one new ambition that, whilst rooted in the notion of collaborative authorship, shifted research away from the highly fictionalised construction of *The Dark Theatre* to more worldly considerations. C&T were aiming to find ways of rooting future work in emerging digital media technologies. If, as Prensky argues, young people view these technologies as implicitly 'their' culture, why not seek to find ways to use these technologies to tell autoethnographic stories about that culture and consequently their lives?

Cambat

Consequently, C&T clarified its ambitions for the next phase of its practice-based research:

1. To build synergies between drama, theatre and digital media, particularly the internet.
2. To experiment with ways of using digital media to encode drama.
3. To create a vertically integrated dramatic experience.
4. To develop a drama that might be described as an example of performance ethnography.
5. To develop a theoretical substructure to this growing body of practice.

These ambitions were taken forward through the development of the second Dramatic Property, *Cambat.*

Cambat explores young people's attitudes to closed-circuit television and the values of the surveillance society. It was first developed from 1999-2001, originally as part of C&T's *+verb* project strand, but quickly took on a creative life of its own. Whilst retaining the core principles of the paradigm in relation to concept, intellectual property and vertical integration, *Cambat* moved the model of the Dramatic Property into new territories. It achieved this development principally by extending the involvement of participants in the authorship process through performance ethnography and through the use of digital media, notably the internet and video streaming.

Cambat was created, directed and written by Paul Sutton. The original stage design and video footage was shot by scenographer Michael Breakey, whilst the website was authored by C&T's then Company Development Manager, Jack Shuttleworth.

Cambat's Concept Ludic Narrative evolved through a two-year programme of drama activity rooted in communities across the rural West Midlands of England, as part of C&T's *+verb* programme. *+verb* (pronounced 'add verb') in many ways qualifies as a Dramatic Property in its own right and is regularly under consideration by C&T for further development.

The process of *+verb* was simple; its objective ambitious. First, to use applied theatre as a method for interrogating the social, cultural and leisure activities participating young people undertook in their daily lives. Secondly, to identify which of these activities have names – signifiers. As these activities were actions, such signifiers would be verbs: skateboarding, drinking, and downloading, for example. Thirdly, to identify which of these identified activities did not have a name – something that was, new, distinctive and original to youth culture at that point in time. Once identified, this anonymous signified activity would be given its own signifier, and thus a new verb would be added to the English language. Finally, C&T would mount a public campaign using theatre and the internet to profile this new word and get into common usage. During the two-year span of the project the company would make tongue-in-cheek claims that the ultimate measure of *+verb's* success would be to see our new word in the Oxford English Dictionary. Of course, what the project was actually about was raising the profile of issues and content that resonated through the daily lives of young people, but was rarely aired amongst the wider public. Whereas *The Dark Theatre* aimed to empower young people as authors of a high-concept fiction, *+verb* sought, in the words of Landry & Pachter, to assert their "creativity as intrinsic to democratic purpose" (2001:32) [37].

For over a year C&T worked with a diverse range of groups of young people, in pursuit of this unnamed quality. Unlike *The Dark Theatre*, these activities were not exclusively scheduled as part of school timetables; often they were out-of-school activities, workshops in community centres, youth theatres and other social contexts. Just as C&T had previously sought to vertically integrate the media that shaped Dramatic Properties, now the contexts for working with young people were being converged. The agenda of meaning-making was shifting away from formal educational institutions towards a more eclectic mix.

A diverse range of applied theatre strategies were deployed to reveal the sought, unsignified activity (Boal's description of an "arsenal" (Boal 1992:48) of techniques

[37] It is this concept and project structure that seems eminently repeatable to C&T. It would be possible to replicate the *+verb* process with other constituent groups in other contexts and develop a very different word (and Dramatic Property) derived from the particularities those communities bring to the programme of work.

feels an appropriate descriptor in this context). These explorations were not purely observational, but rather placed young people at the centre of these discoveries using drama (as Roger Hill puts it) as 'a cultural [rather than a pedagogic] medium which emphasises renewal, democratic practice and a broad sharing of social awareness' (Hill 1985:63). However, the end point of this journey was only finally arrived at when the practice of this research moved beyond pure drama to embrace the tools and media of the then-emerging digital culture. Such technologies were not introduced in a contrived or orchestrated way, but simply as props brought to the melting pot of improvisatory and exploratory activities. The incisive moment of discovery was finally achieved when video cameras, relaying live images via data projectors to screens across the space became integrated into improvisatory experiments. These activities began to provoke discussions about the pervasive role of CCTV in the daily lives of the young people taking part in these drama exercises.

For example, in one session a group of five young people were asked by the Animateur to shape themselves into one, abstract human sculpture. The Animateur then filmed in extreme close-up this sculpture, moving the camera over their still forms, picking out individual features and shapes isolated from the whole. Simultaneously, a second group of five young people watched these relayed images on a nearby screen, but with their view of the full sculpture obscured. Using only this fragmentary video evidence, the second group were then asked to physicalise the first's sculpture in full and accurate detail. The two groups' versions of the same sculpture were then compared. Such activities generated considerable debate about the nature of live and mediated images and consequently how apparently objective, documentary-like CCTV footage is open to subjective appraisal or misinterpretation. Many of these activities prompted participants to tell anecdotal stories about personal injustices (however small) they felt they had suffered at the hands of CCTV cameras and networks.

Most adults regard CCTV as a valuable tool in fighting crime and do not perceive such networks as posing a real threat to their individual privacy. But, as Theatre Director John McGrath points out, it is not cameras that sort the criminals from the innocent; it is their human operators who filter those 'captured' on CCTV. McGrath describes this as 'surveillance's 'ideology of crime'' (2004:47). However, what

became clear through this work with young people was that for them, street corners or patches of waste ground are often the nearest thing they have to collective, private spaces. Further, the technology that informs this ideology of crime is anything but objective in its choices, often criminalizing them by their mere presence in the camera's gaze. Consequently, in rebellion, some young people were actually taking actions to challenge these invasions, staging spontaneous, defiant performative acts in front of the cameras, deliberately designed to provoke the surveiling authorities (but of course often only compounding the negativity of the ideology that stereotyped them in the first place).

From this dramatic exploration and ethnographic research the new word emerged: Cambat. Cambat is a conflation of 'camera' and 'combat,' and means, within the framework of the surveillance society, 'to take action that inverts the power relationship between the watched and the watcher', or as the strap line for the developing campaign put it: "turning the CCTV cameras back on those who do the watching." [38] From this new word the Dramatic Property *Cambat* emerged.

In the spirit of the 1st and 3rd orientations *Cambat* was originally shaped as both a participatory Theatre-in-Education project and as an immersive web-based drama experience, building vertically integrated synergies between these two variations of the central concept. In the development of the paradigm of the Dramatic Property this was a crucial moment: through *Cambat* C&T was seeking to create a central dramatic experience that was as viable online as it was in live performance. So not only was this to be C&T's first foray into the digital domain, but, whilst *The Dark Theatre* had been conceived as a comic book that stimulated drama activity, *Cambat's* two forms – the theatrical and the virtual – were to be constructed simultaneously. Neither was intended to have creative precedence or authority over the other.

[38] In one memorable incident whilst filming the video footage for the *Cambat* website, camera operator Michael Breakey was in a lift in one of Worcester's multi-storey car parks. He noticed a small CCTV camera in the roof of the lift and trained his camera on it. After a momentary pause an invisible loudspeaker burst into life with the defensive warning "don't point your camera at my camera!"

The Concept Ludic Narrative of *Cambat* centres on events at a fictionalised private CCTV surveillance company, ADV Security. A lone security guard watches banks of monitors and soliloquises about his life, responsibilities and the values of the society he is employed to watch. To relieve the boredom he plays tricks on the people he is paid to watch: staging humiliating acts for the benefit of his cameras. Eventually one such victim takes revenge. She (although her gender is not made clear) steals the camera that humiliates her. Subsequently she trains the camera on all manner of subjects, forcing the guard to watch subjects and content of her choosing. He is transfixed: he cannot give chase into the real world without losing a fix on the camera's shifting location: he has to keep watching the monitors. Finally, the thief closes in for the video kill: training the camera on the guard and his private life so he experiences the humiliation that she has. It is the moment of cambat.

As a Theatre-in-Education programme, this plot outline adequately describes the performance action, as represented and enacted onstage by a single performer (and a stage manager/facilitator), surrounded by a set of CCTV monitors and screens, interacting with pre-filmed sequences. However, it does not fully describe the ludic dimension of this TIE experience. After each filmed sequence the on-stage dramatic action was paused and the Actor/Animateur and Stage Manager/Animateur would step out of role and lead participatory activities which involved both the interrogation and re-imagination of these video sequences as live drama, revealing the lived experiences of the on-screen characters in a way not possible through their screened representations alone.[39]

The Theatre-in-Education programme version of *Cambat* toured for three months to schools and community venues in the West Midlands (in many cases its audience were the same young people that had contributed to the piece's research and development). However, this was only half of the drama. *+verb* had promised an internet campaign to popularise the new word and promote its usage. In shaping this website – www.adv-security.co.uk – C&T set several fresh objectives for itself.

[39] For further information on these activities please refer to Appendix 3, which is the full script for *Cambat* Property, both in staged and virtual versions. Alternatively refer to the support notes on the *Cambat* CD-ROM.

Firstly, that the site would not be just a filmed version of the Theatre-in-Education programme. The company was anxious to avoid what John McGrath describes as 'the failure of most theatrical use of video' (2004:3). In its fusion of video (live and mediated), performance and web-based technologies, *Cambat* demonstrated many of the qualities Karla Ptacek describes as hallmarks of converged media performance: 'where several media forms fuse or abut to create a new medium in which the previously autonomous media are relegated to component parts of the whole' (2003:183). To relegate the web version of the project to archival footage of a live performance would have undermined this cross-media aesthetic. Secondly, in keeping with the aspirations of the 3rd orientation, the website would replicate in an appropriate form the immersive and participatory qualities of the TIE programme. Thirdly, that in these early days of the popularisation of the internet (for example most schools' access to the net was not by broadband connections but by 56K dial-up modems, if these were even available) we would not shape a project that would only be accessible to a minority of users who had access to the latest technology. In accepting this challenge we agreed that any technological limitations that the internet imposed on the project (such as bandwidth restrictions) would be used as productive constraints. Finally, the website would reflect in every possible way the stage version of *Cambat* and the values of the young people who had helped shape it. Consequently, the online version of *Cambat* in many ways more resembles one of Susanne Lacey and Leslie Labowitz's Media Performances (Lacy & Labowitz 1985:139) than classic TIE.

Cambat online disguises itself behind the fictional context embedded in its CLN. Rather than creating a *Cambat* website, C&T chose to create a website for the fictional CCTV Company at the heart of the drama, ADV Security. The intention was simple. If any local council or business interested in installing closed-circuit television system typed 'CCTV' into a web search engine such as Google, up would pop ADV Security in their search results, looking like the genuine thing. If they followed this link, with its enticing marketing sound bites promising 'cut price solutions' to security problems, these potential customers (the 'enemy' as identified by young people in our research) would be drawn unwillingly into the fiction of ADV Security and consequently perhaps have their perceptions and attitudes shifted. By contrast, if you were a group of potential participants in the drama of *Cambat* you

would approach the fictional context encoded at www.adv-security.co.uk from C&T's website: www.candt.org. From here, following the links to *Cambat* would clearly signpost a participant's route into the drama, flagging up that the ADV Security site was a fiction, representing an immersive realm through which you entered the drama.

This strand of Concept Rule-making (working through the 3rd orientation) was derived from the internet's capacity to develop new realities and identities through virtuality and thus to blur the boundaries between life and the web. For applied theatre practitioners steeped in classic process drama methodologies this may be problematic. Whilst Shirley Tuckle notes (in her study of Multi-user Domains, MUDs) that often internet-based immersive experiences can 'feel more real than my real life' (1996:116), in process drama such synchronicity is traditionally perceived as counter-productive for learning. As Gavin Bolton puts it, good drama teaching 'requires not engagement, but detachment' (1984:56). Consequently immersion, as Tuckle describes it, could, in process drama terms, confuse distinctions between functions such as role, frame-distance and context. However, for *Cambat*, these distinctions are clearly delineated depending (as Lacy and Labowitz observe) from which audience category you approach the drama from:

> What is their [the audience's] attitude on the subject and how would you like to see them respond to your event? (1985:141)

For *Cambat* there were two audiences and so two potential sets of responses. If the audience in question is a local government officer or a business person, they will approach the drama via www.adv-security.co.uk directly and will thus be drawn unwittingly into an almost agitprop, satirical dramatic attack on the values of the surveillance society. However, if the audience are young people about to take part in a drama lesson or youth theatre workshop they will approach the drama via www.candt.org and will be equipped with the creative and pedagogic resources necessary to successfully engage with the praxis implied by the Concept Ludic Narrative. It is an example of what the Critical Art Ensemble describes as Tactical Media:

> a critical usage and theorisation of media practices that draw on all forms of old and new, both lucid and sophisticated media, for achieving a variety of specific non-commercial goals and pushing all kinds of potentially subversive political issues (2001:5)

Once into the website, participants are free to navigate their way through the range of web pages. These flesh out the corporate structure and background to the company whilst the 'look and feel' of the site reflects the semiotic values of the original stage design, vertically integrating the branding of ADV Security across the selected media. Eventually, worldly digital natives will find the link (marked confidential) that allows them to 'hack into' the apparently secret files available only to ADV Security's Board of Directors. This frames participants in terms of their role in the emerging drama, but they are not overtly framed by an external teacher or Animateur. Their very actions, prompted by the latent interactivity of the website, define their role: they become computer hackers (this of course was an ironic choice of role as it made them voyeurs, just like the character at the heart of the drama. However such an inherent contradiction enabled participants to problematise the complexities of the surveillance society during their participation in the drama).

The structure of the site then draws them towards a range of apparently confidential materials: CCTV footage and sound file recordings of the Security Guard in his control room. These files enable participants to recreate the events of the play in an online environment without straining the plausibility of the fictional context (nor participants' capacity to maintain their suspension of disbelief in this fiction). This plausibility is enhanced by the corporate-like design of the website itself and without having to resort to video streaming stagey, filmed footage of a stage play. The footage we see onscreen is the identical footage used in the TIE programme. The sound recordings are facsimiles of the stage soliloquies. The conceit of a security guard being bugged and recorded in his control room is plausible given his employment. The linear, chronological organisation of the website only allows for forward progression through the sequence of video and sound clips thus propelling users through the narrative of the drama. However, the use of embedded Real Player

streaming[40] technologies means that, just as in TIE or Forum Theatre (or indeed in the world of closed-circuit surveillance), it is possible to pause or replay these recordings to suit the needs and enquiries of participants.

These filmed sequences are deliberately of a poor visual quality, just as most CCTV footage is. Such cameras usually shoot heavily pixelated, naturally lit (therefore often filmicly poor quality, unless shot using infra red cameras) or time lapse sequences, so as to save on expensive video tapes. These qualities, intrinsic to the form, benefited the *Cambat* website in two ways. Firstly, it meant that when streamed via Real Player technologies over the internet (even when viewed over a slow bandwidth connection) any distortions in imagery would be in keeping with the media form under investigation. The limitations of the technology enhanced the aesthetics of the experience. Secondly, these low resolution images did not expose the limits of C&T's media production resources, avoiding the danger Lacy and Labowitz identify: 'Don't fall into the trap of creating media gimmickry...[this] has less impact, particularly when compared to sophisticated and high-impact commercial images' (1985:141).

In many ways adopting these constraints as conventions echoes many of the rules of the Dogme 95 film school's *Vow of Chastity* discussed in Chapter 3: 'shooting must be done on location... the sound must never be produced apart from the images...the camera must be hand-held...the camera must be hand-held...temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden' (Vinterberg 2002).

Consequently the intention became not to make video sequences that were films, but to make what Peter Brook might describe as Rough Theatre (1968:73) with a CCTV camera. In the filmed sequences, when the CCTV camera is uprooted and is on the run, the camera itself becomes an actor. In rehearsal it became apparent that by holding the camera in the moment of performance, its movement, pace and perspective would inevitably encode the actions of the person holding it. When

[40] Streaming has become an all-pervasive internet technology, but in 2000 it was relatively new and under-developed, used by only a handful of websites. Its coding means that users do not need to download in full video or audio clips before playing them (often a time consuming and expensive activity for schools using 56K connections), but 'streams' and plays the data direct to a computer almost simultaneously. The downside of this process is that the images are often distorted , they are not permanently stored on the user's computer.

played back through the website, participants can read these sophisticated signs and make critical judgements as to the mood temperament and intentions of the person originally holding it. Therefore, for much of *Cambat* the camera is not a film-making tool but an electronic prop, mediating performative meanings between the actor holding it in the moment of performance and the audience, as they seek to decode the signs being transmitted to them by a series of chaotic moving images. These apparently complex Concept Rules (in keeping with the 2nd orientation of encoding dramatic meanings) were rarely complex for young people steeped in the vocabulary of modern dramatising media. They were an easily readable sign system that made *Cambat* a text worthy of interrogation because, like *The Dark Theatre,* it implies an 'endless play of interpretation' (Barthes 1979:73) which participants find inviting.

In keeping with the ludic quality of the CLN and the TIE programme, and to deepen further the participants' understanding of these signs through participatory applied theatre techniques, each of these CCTV sequences was also designed to be interrogated through appropriate drama activities. The intention here was to humanise the two-dimensional characters on screen (or at least two-dimensional as the Security Guard perceived them) and thus shed light on their motivations and dilemmas. Those who enter the site through www.candt.org will be aware that guidance on how to facilitate these interrogatory activities is available via a hidden html link in the top right corner of any given web page (a small grey box). If you approach the site directly from www.adv-security.co.uk you would be oblivious to the presence of this link.

There were only two points where the TIE programme and website differed in their process of dramatisation. The opening sequence of CCTV footage felt radically different online. Isolated from the presence of the live stage performer this sequence of images felt all the more prosaic. This was of course true of all the scenes when viewed online, but here it felt the most barren, particularly as here there is virtually no on-screen activity (as the Guard himself describes them: 'stationary moving pictures'). Secondly, the very end of the stage performance had to be adapted for the web. In the stage version, when the Guard realises he has been filmed in the toilet (projected onto the large screen downstage and thus seen by the whole audience) he

rushed back on stage and rants his final speech directly to the audience, training the CCTV camera directly at them so they can see themselves projected on to the on-stage screens and monitors. On the web, this mixing of media was obviously not possible. Instead the company opted for a direct to camera delivery of the full monologue.

With *Cambat* the Dramatic Property became a paradigm for C&T to practice. It moved the practice into the digital domain whilst building on the hallmarks and motifs of the genre developed through *The Dark Theatre.* However, in one sense it was a step backward. Whereas *The Dark Theatre* demonstrated behaviours in keeping with Heathcote's Rolling Role model, *Cambat* (though qualifying as an immersive participatory drama experience in keeping with the paradigm's 3rd orientation) is purely a downloadable, consumable dramatic experience. Whilst the drama of the TIE programme and the website were clearly rooted in young people's experiences of one aspect of the dramatised society (and the process of their development involved young people at every stage), it offered them no direct channel through which they could author this drama for themselves. It was about ethnography not autoethnography. The third phase of research, centring on *the livingnewspaper.com,* sought to refocus this ambition.

The livingnewspaper.com

In moving to this third phase, C&T fashioned research ambitions that consolidated the theoretical and practical framework developed for the paradigm through *The Dark Theatre* and *Cambat*.

1. To extend the developed synergies between drama, theatre and digital media, particularly the internet.
2. Develop a process drama through a number of vertically integrated digital texts, particularly revisiting facets of the Rolling Role model.
3. To develop a method (both practical and technical) for participants to encode autoethnographic performance texts through digital media.
4. To theorize this practice.

The Dramatic Property that was shaped to these ambitions was *the livingnewspaper.com.*

Whilst Augusto Boal's Newspaper Theatre has popularised techniques for interrogating the hegemony of the news media (Boal 1998:234-246), Living Newspapers have a more substantial theatrical legacy. Derek Paget defines the form as:

> a manifestation of dialectical montage theatre…a collective enterprise by a large group of newspaper worker/researchers and a second group of theatre workers…Meyerholdian/Piscatorian technological formalism was highly influential….the use of projected scenery and of film…written, edited, staged and acted by people who struggle for a living (1990:51-54)

In this spirit, *the livingnewspaper.com* reinvents this classic form of documentary drama for the internet age. Its aim is to develop a global network of children, young people and community groups who, through drama, digital media and the internet, can collaborate through applied theatre to interrogate the news that matters to them and dramatise it online. Since 2002 *the livingnewspaper.com* has facilitated a vast

range of schools, youth and community groups to research, devise, perform and document documentary dramas on a diverse range of news issues and social themes both in the UK and internationally. In a Birmingham High School a group of 14 year olds have explored racial tensions in their local community; a youth theatre in Worcestershire has exploded myths about GCSE examination 'grade inflation'; in Herefordshire a branch of the mental health charity MIND used the website to lobby their head office in London for funding for a permanent drop-in centre; in Malawi, Africa young women used the Living Newspaper's processes to inform sexual health education projects; whilst in Worcester, England and Brisbane, Australia plans are afoot to create a collaborative online docudrama contrasting how both countries manage that most valuable natural resource: water.

In this final example we see how Denzin's belief in "autoethnographic theatre [as] a safe, sacred aesthetic place, a space where texts, performers, performances, and audiences come together to participate in shared, reflexive performances" (Denzin 2003:37) need not be solely defined by geographic notions of community. Helen Nicholson identifies the power of applied drama to counter the "spread of homogeneous transnational corporations (2005:11). Here, the globalising potential of the internet itself can be put to such use, with *the livingnewspaper.com* transforming the phenomenon of glocalization ("a complex interaction of the global and local characterised by cultural borrowing" (Steger 2003:75)) into a process drama technique, enabling geographically dispersed groups of participants to mark out the particulars of their localised experiences and then contextualise these within a universal dramatic framework. In the spirit of the Rolling Role, participants can research, dramatise and document materials (images, audio and video) and publish it to the central website for other participants to use as learning materials for their own drama work. As Boal puts it, referencing Paulo Friere: "I like especially when he writes that you cannot teach if you don't learn anything from the person to whom you teach. To teach is a learning process. It is not only about throwing things at people it's about getting things back and learning" (Boal 2002:22). It is in such circumstances that *the livingnewspaper.com* operates at the apex of its potential.

Documentary Drama has always been part of the fabric of C&T. All the founder members of the company were students of Dr Derek Paget, a leading researcher in

the field of Documentary Drama, and subsequently a member of C&T's Board of Directors. Consequently, C&T from its earliest Theatre-in-Education origins embraced the processes and methodologies that underscored issue-based TIE practices, typified by such programmes as Leeds TIE's 1976 *A Place to Live* ("about a local housing problem"(Reddington 1983:25)) and Duke's TIE's *Travellers* (exploring "minority groups in society, prejudice and legal discrimination" (Monvig 1980:146)).

In 1995 the then chair of C&T's Board of Directors, Theatre Producer Jane Hytch, suggested the company develop a strand of more product-orientated theatre-making to balance the essentially process-driven *Dark Theatre.* Hytch, producer of numerous Community Plays, including Worcester Arts Workshop's *Woodbine Willie* (by Patrick Masefield), suggested the company consider staging a 'community play for young people'.

Whilst the community play model offered many synergies with C&T's interest in ethnographic performance, this particular form, with its preoccupation with historical subject matter (Jellicoe 1987:125) seemed inappropriate for young audiences whose lives lay ahead of them, not behind them. Also, the community play movement's fidelity to (what Anne Jellicoe describes as) the playwright's ability to provide "artistic truth" (1987:127) and their suspicion with devising as a process of authorship ("it is still possible to end up with a success in community terms, but not in artistic terms" (1987:128)) seemed counter to the spirit of *The Dark Theatre,* then under development.

Consequently, the company turned for inspiration to the documentary drama form of the Living Newspaper. Living Newspapers offered the company a form for the creation of populist educational theatre that would engage young audiences with topical news content. Over the next two years the company staged seven Living Newspapers culminating in *Hump Shunted,* a play that explored Britain's relationship with continental Europe over the fifty years since the end of the Second World War.

Hump Shunted was a large project, with a cast of eighty 8-20-year-olds and a professional production team of twelve. The play itself mixed the documentary

disciplines and anti-naturalistic conventions of the original Living Newspaper genre with more contemporary docudrama techniques like Peter Cheeseman's Verbatim Theatre (a phrase coined by Derek Paget (Paget 1987) and a form much imitated in the early twenty-first century by, for example, David Hare (*Stuff Happens*, 2004) and the Tricycle Theatre, London's so-called tribunal plays (Richard Norton-Taylor's *The Colour of Justice,* 1999) and Alan Rosenthal's concept of subject distance in film or TV docudrama (1995:203). By drawing on more contemporary docudrama models, C&T could easily be accused of diluting the original Living Newspaper form, but using methodologies and techniques like verbatim theatre enabled the company to encode the ethnographic contributions and "cultural relativities" (Paget 1998:5) of the young cast in a way that, in the spirit of Heathcote, particularised the universal (Heathcote 1984:35) content under consideration. C&T also put its money where its ethnographic mouth was, employing on a full-Equity trade union contract a seventeen-year-old member of its youth theatre as a joint writer and director of the piece.[41]

These values also fed through to the acting style of the production. The intention here was to exploit the inexperience of the young performers to create a performance style that meant the piece not only echoed their lived experiences but also, in the spirit of Meyerhold, exploited "the essential artifice of theatre…the actor as actor" (Baugh 2005:65). For example, the piece included karaoke-style re-workings of pop songs with new satirical lyrics. These songs were performed with about as much quality as any drunken club performer, something that the largely young audiences found hilariously bad, cheering their valiant peers on. However, adult audiences members with a more professionalised sense of what a theatrical event should (in their eyes) be, just saw these performances as awful.

These Living Newspapers also enabled the company to begin to explore the potential of media technology in performance, slide projection and live video feeds playing an important part in each production. In the case of *Hump Shunted,* these technologies not only allowed the company to exploit the full scenographic potential of the 800 seat, disused cinema in which the play was staged, but also enabled C&T to begin to

[41] Appendix 4 of this thesis is an MP3 recording of an interview with Phil Porter, the young person employed on the Living Newspaper, reflecting on his involvement and role in the project.

develop its screen-based media vocabulary. Just as Denzin critiques the process by which the human eye "was displaced as the final authority on reality and its recording" (Denzin 1995:25) by the camera lens, so C&T's Living Newspapers sought to critique the camera's capacity to deceive through the often misplaced authority ascribed to so-called objective news journalism.

The paradigm of the Dramatic Property benefited from these experiences. For example, this early use of media technologies acclimatised the company to the potential of these media whilst using techniques like verbatim theatre with young people helped the company define practical methods for creating ethnographically derived performances. *Cambat,* for example, can be seen as benefiting from the company's accumulated experience in these areas. Then, in 2001 the company took the conscious decision to translate these practices directly into the paradigm of the Dramatic Property by re-inventing its Living Newspaper activities as a digital drama experience.

In addition to all the reasons why C&T was first drawn to Living Newspapers there were other particular aspects that made them as a theatrical form an enticing prospect for development as a Dramatic Property. For example, Living Newspaper's were theatrical documentaries, created from a range of non-performative documentary texts collated by journalists (graphs, statistics, verbatim documentary interviews, photojournalism, etc). This echoed the Dramatic Property's 2nd orientation: the encoding and decoding of performative texts through a range of dramatising digital media. Also, the prevalence in contemporary culture of 24-hour rolling TV news, tabloid exposés and reality TV demonstrated, for better or worse, many facets of Williams' dramatised society. The Living Newspaper form offered routes for exploring this territory.

More intriguingly, the 2nd and 3rd orientations seemed to mirror what Paget describes by turns as the 'fact' and 'fiction,' 'either/or', 'dramadoc/docudrama' binary opposition inherent in the Living Newspaper form (Paget 1998:5). This seemed to offer constructive tensions for C&T. The already firmly established techniques used in the crafting of documentary dramas seemed ripe for adaptation and accommodation as Dramatic Property Concept Rules. However, just as Living

Newspapers dramatise facts, might it be possible to dramatically fictionalise the whole Living Newspaper form as a Concept Ludic Narrative? The play-within-a-play conceit is well known in theatre. Could C&T shape *the livingnewspaper.com* as effectively a theatre company-within-a-theatre company?

The livingnewspaper.com is made up of several complementary, vertically integrated materials. These are the livingnewspaper CD-ROM and two websites: www.thelivingnewspaper.net and www.thelivingnewspaper.info. Paul Sutton created, directed and scripted all these dimensions of the project. The Living Newspaper CD-ROM was programmed by Iain Claridge. The build of the two websites was contracted out to London-based new media agency The Other Media (www.othermedia.com) who used their commercial web-based Content Management System Other Objects to drive the website functionality, to C&T's architecture and specifications.

Each website performs a different complementary role in the drama and each context and audience they are applied to demands a different configuration of some or all of these materials. To effect an orderly description of these differences it is best to describe *the livingnewspaper.com's* Concept Ludic Narrative and Concept Rules in turn, beginning with its CLN.

The livingnewspaper.com is a global covert network of young people, committed to addressing misrepresentations of children in the world's news media. The livingnewspaper.com takes its name from the 1920s theatre form of the Living Newspaper, which inspired its teenage founders through its mix of performance and documentary underpinned by a sense of social justice. Consequently, The livingnewspaper.com not only models itself on the theatrical practices of the original Living Newspapers, but also on the federated nature of the original US project, which embraced local and regional variations in form and content:

> The Living Newspaper form, for which the FTP [Federal Theatre Project] is justly famous, is an example of playwright collaboration and company adaptation to local conditions, docudrama writing by

central research and editorial committees with the idea that alterations be made from place to place (Sporn 1995:45).

However, in the age of the internet the livingnewspaper.com has reinvented the notion of what federated theatre activity might be, operating as a series of independent 'cells' in schools, youth theatres and communities across the globe, using digital media and websites as mechanisms for the global exchange of documentary drama materials. A CD-ROM introduces new recruits and cells to this covert network, setting out their manifesto, creative 'weapons' and how drama can achieve their objectives of redressing the imbalance in the world's news media.[42] Also on the website are biographies of six young people – all with online pseudonyms – who are leading this secret organisation. We are promised that we will meet them when we go online.

This Concept Ludic Narrative exists in close synchrony with the 3rd orientation, drawing participants into a participatory fiction. Whilst the CD-ROM facilitates understanding of the DP's Concept Rules through its 'Techniques' and 'Making Entries' menus this is not its central function. Most significantly it adopts similar behaviours to those found in videogames, requiring efferent action on behalf of the participants, engaging them in the emerging Concept Ludic Narrative and drawing them into the emerging drama.

This CD-ROM also introduces participants to the two Living Newspaper websites and coaches them in how to use them to document their drama. www.thelivingnewspaper.net is the hub of this covert network providing resources, creative tools and mechanisms such as message boards for debating breaking news stories and content with other 'cells' around the world. Here users can also receive secret messages in real time, which issue them with instructions and coach them through drama activities, provoking wider debate on the news stories under consideration. These messages appear as pop-up windows on screen as if issued in real time from the organisers of the network. The .net website also publishes finished docudrama work for other users to see and discuss on the Front Page.

[42] For further elaboration see both the CD-Rom documentation of the practice-as-research dimension of this thesis and the livingnewspaper CD-ROM itself.

www.thelivingnewspaper.info is a second website that profiles selected content from the Front Page for anyone on the internet to view.[43]

These Living Newspaper websites define the DP's Concept Rules. The content management system which organises and shapes users' access to uploaded materials effectively defines how participants can mediate their live, performed drama into formats appropriate to the online environment. The Living Newspaper templates in the 'Make an Entry' section are the most extreme example of these rules, placing rigid dramatic constraints on users' creative practices. Many of these constraints are determined by technological considerations, such as available bandwidth. However, at most points C&T has sought to turn these supposed limitations to the advantage of the drama, using them (as O'Toole puts it) to "provide clarity of focus in the moment" (1992:27), for example, by limiting the length of video clips so as to encourage participants to crystallise ideas and shape their drama accordingly. The CD-ROM offers practical advice and instruction as to the versatility of these Living Newspaper Templates and how best to use them.

The Camera Voice template is perhaps the most distinctive of these tools. It was adapted from an original Federal Theatre Project technique used as part of the Chicago version of the Living Newspaper *Precedent:*

> it interpolated commentary and photographs at key points of the drama (Sporn 1995:155).

The Camera Voice Template replicates these constraints online. It allows participants to distil their dramatic ideas into a sequence of photographed still images and a voice-over commentary and synchronise these through web-based tools. They can even supplement their own work with documentary photographs culled from the internet, or dramatic images shaped and uploaded to the library by other participating 'cells' perhaps collaborating on the same issue or news story.

[43] Demonstrations of the functionality of these websites can similarly be found on the accompanying CD-ROM.

The Fly-on-the-Wall technique described for the Video Template (in the Making Entries section) is a further example of this constructive use of constraint. It encourages participants not to be drawn into aping sophisticated film-making techniques, but place the camera amongst the action, exploiting what Gunter Berghaus calls the "visceral appeal" (2005:210) and spontaneity of the live event – its essential dramatic quality.[44]

These Concept Rules and templates represent a significant advance for the paradigm; particularly in terms of the capabilities it gives to participants' to enable them to encode their own dramatic meanings as part of the paradigm's 2nd orientation. Participants in *the livingnewspaper.com* are more fully in control of their means of dramatic and digital production than in either *The Dark Theatre* or *Cambat*. The website provides them with the tools to develop their own dramatic materials, maximising their latent skills as (Prensky's) Digital Natives.

This separation of the CLN/2nd Orientation and the Concept Rules/3rd Orientation means that it is possible for participants to use *the livingnewspaper.com* in one of two ways. Firstly by contextualising their work within the fictional framework of the CLN and thus building their commitment to the task and creating a sense of direction and motivation within the dramatic frame. Or, as Ian Yeoman, Artistic Director of Theatr Powy's puts it in classic Theatre-in-Education terms: "always within role, always within the fiction, always building belief" (2005:49). Alternatively, participants can step outside the CLN (mainly by not using the CD-ROM to invoke the CLN) and just use the websites and their tools and templates alone. However on these occasions an Animateur is very much needed to facilitate activities for participants.

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[44] For example, during 2005 C&T used *the livingnewspaper.com* to create a drama project marking the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. War-time evacuees documented their childhood experiences and archived them on the livingnewspaper.net. Children then used these materials as a stimulus for a range of drama activities, many of which were encoded and published on the website for the original evacuees to see. An example of this was a simple exercise regarding what it must have been like to spend a night in a cramped air-raid shelter. The participants then huddled under their classroom tables. C&T's Animateur then passed a DV camera to the children, who in turn awkwardly pointed the camera at themselves and 'thought tracked' their feelings at being stuck in those cramped conditions. The resulting footage lacked any sense of being a well made film, (just as the *Cambat* CCTV footage did) but it successfully encoded the quality of the drama as experienced: awkward, pensive, faltering, dangerous, tetchy, fragile and human.

However when the CLN and the Concept Rules are mixed together a potential ethical dilemma[45] arises that would no doubt disturb Yeoman's requirement that such drama always be 'within the fiction' (Here we return to the earlier reference to the fact/fiction binary force in documentary drama and what I previously described as the dramatic fictionalisation of the Living Newspaper form as a Concept Ludic Narrative). *The livingnewspaper.com's* CLN is a fiction – a covert network of young people made up of fictional characters. However, as the accompanying practice-as-research CD-ROM illustrates, this CLN is projected to participants as a reality. Advice to Animateurs and teachers who facilitate the project suggests that nothing in the manner of their introduction should imply that what is taking place is pretence. Animateurs and teachers are actively encouraged to the let the CD-ROM cast its own dramatic frame for participants, just as a videogame or film might. After all, the videogame *Splinter Cell* (Clancy 2002) does not require players to under go an induction process led by a third party who's responsibility is to distance users from the impending action (as might happen in a conventional process drama). Ian Yeoman, like others, may well find this problematic. A process drama is not a computer game. There is a difference, and teachers do have responsibilities in protecting students from the often raw glare of life and drama. After all one of the great strengths of drama is, as Tag McEntaggart puts it, "imagining the real" (2004:12), not experiencing fiction as if it were reality. The argument is a coherent and plausible one: C&T could be guilty of shaping a dramatic dishonesty.

But there is a converse reading of this. *The livingnewspaper.com* is not a con: it is a real network of young people contracted into the tasks of exploring topical news stories through drama. The 'cells' that make up the network do exist. They are full of real children engaged in real (that is documentary) drama. There is no fiction here. True, the six characters on the CD-ROM are invented, but invented identities are nothing new to young people who inhabit the internet. P David Marshall argues that online, individual identities are not defined by pre-determined understandings of who people are but "by how well you express your sentiments and argue your points" (2004:56). It is arguable that *the livingnewspaper.com* merely exploits through a dramatic form this contemporary mode of association. Their actions and

[45] Nicola Shaughnessy has documented this 'dilemma' in her article in *Research in Drama Education,* (2005:206) which includes sections of an interview with myself.

their instructions are symptomatic of the drama, not of their personalities. Also as identified in the research ambitions, *the livingnewspaper.com* demonstrates many of the hallmarks of a Rolling Role (a key influence on the 3rd orientation). Heathcote herself in her own description of this model instructs that "teachers never use the drama word and certainly don't introduce it as a drama project" (200:38). I would contest that rather than subverting good process drama methodologies *the livingnewspaper.com* CLN stays true to the letter and spirit of Heathcote's intentions.

In many ways *the livingnewspaper.com* has more in common with Heathcote's fourth model, the Commission. Here Heathcote seeks to actively blur the boundary between participation in drama and the real world, just as the CLN in *the livingnewspaper.com* does:

> A commissions school would make a seamless link between the two worlds of work and active participation in learning together (2000:48).

Consequently, whilst this most recent of Dramatic Properties adheres to the conventions of this evolving paradigm, maybe its particular Concept Ludic Narrative, so vital a component of the model, is more closely allied to the reality that underpins documentary than it is to the fiction that makes it a drama.

But ultimately I would suggest the strongest justification for this ambiguity is the fabric of the very media culture that has given rise to this paradigm in the first place. In the music industry *Gorillaz* are a highly successful band of cartoon musicians. Nowhere on the compact disc sleeve does it say that they are not real – a construct of musician Damon Albarn and comic book artist Dave Gibbons. Because there is no need to. Young people are natives of this culture. It makes sense making little sense. As David Edgar notes in his attack on censorship and defence of documentary drama we live in an age when:

> a male comic actor invents the character of a chat show host starring in a dramatised chat show in which the guests are other actors…two major British daytime reality TV shows have to confess that they've hired guests from entertainment agencies…a popular novelist (and life peer)

> writes a play about a trial in which he plays the defendant. Some months later he himself is tried in a real court and found guilty…these developments have laid both fictional and factual expression open to being judged on terms appropriate to the other, thus providing new ammunition to those who want to suppress both. And all of this is happening not in a period of hope and confidence…but in times of uncertainty and fear, in which art is less likely to be praised for making things new than censured for making them worse (Edgar 2005:4).

It is for reasons like these that the paradigm of the Dramatic Property aspires to be a further asset in the already sophisticated armoury of applied theatre. As Richard Courtney puts it: the medium is the missile (1988:181).

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Appendices

Appendices 1, 2 and 4 take the form of MP3 recording of interviews with artists and practitioners. They can be found on CD-ROMs with this thesis.

Appendix 3:

Cambat

By Paul Sutton

Cast:

The Security Guard

Cambat also requires two animateurs to manage the onstage media technology and to facilitate participatory activities. The actor playing the Security Guard can double one of these facilitative roles.

In this text 'R' refers to Rachel White, who was Stage Manager and Animateur. 'T' refers to Tom Knight who doubled the Security Guard and second Animateur. Tom stepped out of role at appropriate moments to lead activities as himself.

In its original staging, secenography was by Michael Breakey and the production was directed by Paul Sutton.

Note:

This script is from the original production of *Cambat* as used by the company on tour. It is a record of the working document used by the company in schools.

Outside of the Guard's monologues 'T' and 'R's 'speeches' are not verbatim text – rather indicators of the activities that needed to be led by the appropriate Animateur at these points. They obviously do not record the dynamic contributions young people made to these performances. The numbers on the right hand side of pages indicate rough timings for these sections.

Although originally designed for 14-16 years olds, the piece actually played to children as young as 10. For these audiences the 'on the bog' scene was reshot in the Guard's living room.

Some monologues in this text are deliberately repeated, to aid stage and technical management during performances.

Cambat

R: Liase with teacher to bring in pupils and seat them.

1. On the job

A Security Guard sits at his control point monitoring. He looks out upon his world and on his fermenting coffee, weighing up the two. A Technician sits to hand, apparently oblivious.

Guard: What's all this business about Cafe Latte? Its just coffee with milk in it innit? What's the difference between Cafe Latte and Cappuccino? Cappuccino's got frothy milk on it but so's a Latte. Far as I can tell. Maybe they don't put a sprinkling of chocolate on the top of Cafe Latte. I don't think they do. But then who wants that? You wouldn't kind of rename something just because It didn't have. Maybe you would if you didn't want to have to pay to put chocolate on top of people's cappuccino but you didn't want them to think they were being done out of anything so you'd kind of develop in the psyche of coffee buyers this notion that there was a thing called Cafe Latte which was similar to cappuccino but without the coffee without the chocolate.

To be honest I find both a bit worrying. The foam insulates the coffee underneath and so inevitably you end up burning yourself and the only other alternative is to scoop the froth of with a spoon. Which is hardly a civilised practice.

So I prefer filter. Medium roast. This one: felt it was a bit thin. And weak. Lacking in body. It wasn't the weakest you could possibly have, but it wasn't strong. Really. Well, no, wasn't. Really. Strong. Really.

I love my home. I really love it.

Coffee. Its one of those continental things. Its one of those. You know. Generally. Generally speaking.

The point in the day when I'm most. Alright not so much when I'm most because that would be hard to say exactly, when I most feel the need for a cup of coffee, indeed yes, some day I don't, but when I do it will be when I've come into work and despite the fact I'm very glad to be here, (not only cos its just round the corner from me lovely house (I love it I do)), and I haven't quite woken up yet and it just takes that coffee just to perk you up and get you going. So that's definitely. Yes. And after, and after, and after lunch and maybe again towards the end of (*yawns*).

Espresso is spelt ee ess. Espresso. Not ee ex. There's no such thing as expresso. However, if you ask any one round here for an espresso

they'd wonder what you were talking about. When I Was in France I ordered an espresso in French, in a French campsite bar and they laughed at me, laughed out loud at me, and I was like 'what, what is the joke what's so funny', I actually said that 'what's so funny'. I think I said it in French. And there was no joke. They were just astounded.

Watching's a skill. Listening's a skill but you get taught that. At school they were always saying 'listen'. Not watching though. You have to pick that up yourself. There's not a lot of skill in this job but that's one of them and if you don't have it you won't pick it up and things probably won't work out as they have done for me as I'm good at it.

I am watching. With me arms folded. But this job is about poise. Being prepared. Screens aren't a film. Screens aren't even screens. Their monitors. Monitors monitor. And I'm watching them. And them. A bird's eye view of the supermarket. Look at that jumper.

The police do a fine job. Where would we be without law and order? Lawless and full of disorder. But they can't do everything. Senseless to expect them too. So some of us have to take up the slack of responsibility. ADV: Advanced Digital Video & Surveillance. That sort of sums it up. Says it all. Look after our own in our own town. Those who pay in get the benefits of the system. Just like those Stakeholder Pensions Gordon's always on about. I'm the stakeholder police. Not taking the law off those who do the job the best, just watching the things our friends say they want watching. Security. It makes me proud.

R: Welcome. 5
Introduction to C&T. (T joins R)
Here as part of a project to create a new word.
Here to define this new word – which is about young peoples lives.
The word is cambat.
What do you think it means?
Today we're going to use drama to find out what this new word means.
It's a verb – so its defined by our actions.

T: Sets up conventions of day. 5
Working in/out of drama. We will therefore change roles.

R: sets up looking at set:

To find out what word means we need to find out about this place. 10
Examine it in pairs and ask questions about the people and organisation that made it/uses it do you have?

Do this both T and R.

R: Discuss these together, possibly choose three key ones.
5

Watch monologue again with these questions in mind.
5

T: does **On the Job** again

Guard: What's all this business about Cafe Latte? Its just coffee with milk in it innit? What's the difference between Cafe Latte and Cappuccino? Cappuccino's got frothy milk on it but so's a Latte. Far as I can tell. Maybe they don't put a sprinkling of chocolate on the top of Cafe Latte. I don't think they do. But then who want's that? You wouldn't kind of rename something just because It didn't have. Maybe you would if you didn't want to have to pay to put chocolate on top of people's cappuccino but you didn't want them to think they were being done out of anything so you'd kind of develop in the psyche of coffee buyers this notion that there was a thing called Cafe Latte which was similar to cappuccino but without the coffee without the chocolate.

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R: leads discussion about questions. T stays in tableaux. 5

Discussion shifts from general to about Security Guard. Lets find out more about him. And watch what happens on this day.

2. Pranks

Guard: After a while you're eyes hurt. It's the pixels. And the fact nothing happens. Filling out stationery about stationary moving pictures does your head in.

It doesn't mean a thing to me. I can't. I can't. What on earth is it all about?

When things happen I laugh. Have a laugh. When I see things. Like someone falling down. Or tripping up. Or people falling out. But as well there's my favourite. One camera. Looking down at nothing. Just flatness all over. Someone paid for us to put that there. We watch it for them. All the time. More Medium Roast *(Gets a coffee)*.

So to amuse myself I have devised a petty jape. There on the pavement a 50 pence piece afixiated, glued to it. The pavement. And I. Just watch. *(Nothing happens).* Well, sometimes people try to pick it up. Make a quick buck. So to speak. 50p. And they look stupid. And I laugh. To myself. Or even out loud. And then I go back to work, having had me fix. Keeps me sane. Keeps me hat on.

Video sequence culminating with camera being stolen

R: facilities reconstruction: 15

What's going on?
What's happened?
What's been nicked?
Lets remake it together and see.

Run it

Why did the last person react the way she did? Lets look at it again to see if we can understand her position more clearly.

Guard: So to amuse myself I have devised a petty jape. There on the pavement a 50 pence piece afixiated, glued to it. The pavement. And I. Just watch. *(Nothing happens).* Well, sometimes people try to pick it up. Make a quick buck. So to speak. 50p. And they look stupid. And I laugh. To myself. Or even out loud. And then I go back to work, having had me fix. Keeps me sane. Keeps me hat on.

Video sequence culminating with camera being stolen

3. Anarchy

Guard: *(consuming coffee and anger in equal proportions)* She's nicked it! Nicked it! Nicked it! Look! There! Look! Look! Look I said! There! There she is! She's there and she's! She's there! With mine! With my camera – nicked! It!

Gone! Gone off with it! Nicked it! Going, but now its gone! There! There it goes! Going! She's nicked my camera!

Where is she? Where's this? Where is it? I'm losing it. Smug. Smug! My bearings. Where's she's going with it? What's it doing? Who are they?

Come on come on come on. Get a grip. Get a grip now. Do your job (she's nicked my favourite camera!). Watch what's going on. Watch it. Yes, watch the birdy. Follow things and you can catch her still. Follow things, follow through and phone the police. Get her!

Who are they?

R: What on earth happened there?

T: Split into groups of 6/7 and ask them to recreate 5/6 freeze frames showing the whole picture of what happened. With each freeze frame one person says a sentence to sum up what is happening in that frame. 15

Show these. 5

R: Now we want to concentrate on the person who stole the camera and what happens now she's reclaimed it. (Why do you think she has?)

4. Graffiti

Guard: It's gone off. And she's gone off. With it.

The lawless. The criminal class. Protection from. That's what this job is all about. But I bet she says she's not lawless. Just misunderstood. Criminals are always just misunderstood. As if that's an excuse. What's there to misunderstand? Life's not ever easy, I mean look at me. But we all have to work hard to get on. That's how I got my lovely, lovely, house. Hard work and toil and fixed rate endowment with ISA at 6.75% APR with cashback. But no matter what your troubles are there's always some one out their ready to listen. I mean, we're all taught to listen. Its in the National Curriculum, listening.

Stealing's no answer. Its not even a cry, or a try for help. Its just plain wrong. She should try to make herself heard.

What has she done now? That. Vandalism. I bet she thinks that's funny. But I see this all the time, all the time, and I know, I know its just mindless, mindless criminal violence from mindless yobs with nothing to say, 24 hours a day, and nothing to contribute. Nothing. Vandals.

R: Break into 2 groups, work out what she was writing and why.

T: Briefly, why? Now in smaller groups (4s) choose one slogan as a starting point for exploring her background. Improvise.
15

Show these. 5

R: So what is\she trying to communicate to him?
Let's see if he gets the message(s).*

Guard: It's gone off. And she's gone off. With it.

The lawless. The criminal class. Protection from. That's what this job is all about. But I bet she says she's not lawless. Just misunderstood. Criminals are always just misunderstood. As if that's an excuse. What's there to misunderstand? Life's not ever easy, I mean look at me. But we all have to work hard to get on. That's how I got my lovely, lovely, house. Hard work and toil and fixed rate endowment with ISA at 6.75% APR with cashback. But no matter what your troubles are there's always some one out their ready to listen. I mean, we're all taught to listen. Its in the National Curriculum, listening.

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So lets make it nothing. Right here I can make that back into the nothingness it deserves to be. Make it a has been. *(He erases it.)* The damage undone.

Not so clever now.

5. Stolen Car

Guard: So, where is she now? Where ever the camera is, she is. The problem is, its only a poor little camera. You only get one view. The one she wants me to see. So we'll see what we can do about things. I have many cameras. All over town. So now I'll turn things, and track her, track her like a frightened rabbit caught in the glare of a bright thing probably headlight, or something. Yes.

There now, what's going on? A car. Who's he? She's taking him! She's stolen a car!

So: up above: C15.
There.
The bypass.

What about the camera inside? See, it tells me nothing. Just him, poor bloke.

So: track them!
Got them: G431 JHl

And next.
And next.
And next.

Back inside: useless!

And go!
And go!
And go!

And inside? Just human wreckage! I'll get that camera back.

So what, what is the L plate doing there?

R: More than one point of view, now not just our stolen camera. 5
However, its only one persons point of view the Secuity Guard.
So now lets re-construct the sequence from other people's points of view?
How many people?

T: Re-run **Driving Lesson** with group providing 'soundtrack' and taking out monologue.
Discuss if its true that the camera never lies? 15

R: Now lets shift the perspective and listen to the Security Guard for a while.
His point of view.

6. At home

Guard: In times of crisis the human spirit need to take refuge. I'm such a human, having a crisis, seeking refuge, spiritually.

I love living in my house. I love living there. Yes, I really do. Partly because it's a nice house.

The vegetables. In the garden of my house. They are they are quite a remarkable success. Quite incredible. Potatoes in three foot square of clay. And we got loads, loads of lovely little new potatoes. Organic. I know exactly what's been on them. Rhubarb, peas all along one of the fences and asparagus growing up from behind one of the bushes.

Nice house. I'm not hugely. I'm tolerant. Yes I think I am. I hope so. I really like my room. Nice and sunny. Even in the winter. I had a bedroom on the ground floor for most of me life. So I like having me own room. Umm.

There she is. There now. Off again. All I need is road sign or a landmark. Get me bearings. Where? Where to now? She's leading

me up the garden path. Look at this now. Look at it. A tip. Literally. Takes my camera, takes it away, takes it home to this, this graveyard. Horrible. Takes scum to make scum. Bet there's no washing done here. Nor no washing up. If they have health inspectors for cafes and pubs why not for houses for the likes of this?

(Begins to recognise it as his house)

My bear! How did she get my bear? It was at home when I came here, I kissed – left it as I went away.

(Dawns on him)

This is my tip! My home! She's overstepped it now! She's done it, done it now! This is it! This is my life on film! What gives the right to watch me? Watch my life my bear? We have rights. My bear: it has rights too. You just can't film people without them knowing.

I bet she's laughing now. Laughing at my house. No laughing at me. She doesn't even know me, she hasn't even seen me, met me, but that won't stop her laughing. Coffee. She's screwed up. She'd have to be. To do this to me. She's done me a damage.

Get in pairs. One has camera the other speaks her thoughts. *	10
Choose two/3 to show.	5
She is cambating. What is she doing? It is justifiable? Ethical debate.	5

Guard: There she is. There now. Off again. All I need is road sign or a landmark. Get me bearings. Where? Where to now? She's leading me up the garden path. Look at this now. Look at it. A tip. Literally. Takes my camera, takes it away, takes it home to this, this graveyard. Horrible. Takes scum to make scum. Bet there's no washing done here. Nor no washing up. If they have health inspectors for cafes and pubs why not for houses for the likes of this?

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7. On the bog

Guard: I mean I could be anyone. Some one frail. She doesn't know. She's just doing this without knowing, without really knowing. I mean that could have been embarrassing. If someone else, someone normal had seen it.

Suddenly I feel what one might call queasy. I think I need some time alone. Some solitude. Back in a bit.

(Goes to toilet and is filmed secretly by his own stolen camera)

People deserve to be watched. Watched by me. To be honest. They do. I mean if people haven't done anything wrong what are they hiding? Why do they draw their curtains? Why do they lock their doors? Neighbourhood watch is a good idea. We should all watch our neighbours. Least those of us who understand what's going on. And we do. I see the world, here, all day everyday, and I know what it is. I know it all. I see the crime, I see the sordid side of life so I understand everything. People think they know people, but they don't. I know you only really know people when you strip away their voices, their motives, their reasons, their families, their thoughts, their personalities – when you just see them as their actions. *(He pauses, disturbed)* She, where ever she is, has no right to invade my life, to film my home, film my bear. Because the difference is, unlike her, I am not to be laughed at, there is nothing about me that is laughable. My actions are not funny.

(He goes to the toilet and finds the camera)

R: During last toilet break collates key phrases she would say to Security Guard

Guard: *memorises them and fuses them into a unique stylised cathartic monologue which distil all the learning areas into one key dramatic moment.*

R: What is the word? What does it mean? 10

Break.

Define your own cambative actions and improvise them.

Show them

Note:

* signifies moment when phrases for final cathartic speech can be identified.