

Children's theatre in the UK: representing cultural diversity on stage through the practices of interculturalism, multiculturalism and internationalism

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Children's Theatre in the UK:
Representing Cultural Diversity on Stage Through the Practices
of Interculturalism, Multiculturalism and Internationalism

Karian Schuitema

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requirements of the University of Westminster
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Abstract

The UK is a diverse society. It has had a colonial past and is now part of an interconnected global world. Past and present immigration have continuously shaped and re-shaped the ethnical, racial and cultural made up of its people. Children's theatre can be understood as a theatrical dialogue between the adult practitioner and the child as an audience member that takes place at a specific time and place, while set in a wider social historical context. As such, it is important to understand how this diversity, found within the society, is represented on stage and how it informs this theatrical communication between adult and child. This thesis will therefore focus on the related practices of interculturalism, multiculturalism and internationalism, to discuss the importance but also the problems associated with representing cultural diversity. It will specifically focus on interculturalism which, in short, attempts to stage the interaction between multiple cultural influences. Understanding children's theatre as a dialogue, this practice is particularly interesting as the cultural interaction between the representation on stage and the cultural background of the young audience members should also be considered. The central argument of this thesis is that intercultural productions can acknowledge and contribute to the cultural diversity found in the UK and offer children and young people from a range of different backgrounds, cultural representation and an opportunity to feel included in what is presented on stage. This in turn counters the desire to construct national identities as homogeneous, authentic and superior, excluding the cultural 'other' not just from the theatrical experience but denying access and participation in the 'nation's culture'. The thesis will discuss the problems associated with interculturalism, as staging the

‘other’ culture might risk stereotypical and exotic representations as well as cultural appropriation and exploitation to underline creative processes. It will also take into account the increasingly negative perception of the terms ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘globalisation’ that generally inhibits the attempts of representing cultural diversity on stage. Overall, this research highlights the difficulties of cultural representation on the stage, but also focuses on the reasons and benefits of creating theatrical productions that more accurately represents the UK’s ‘globalised’ and ‘diverse’ society.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Karian Schuitema

12 April 2012

Introduction

Children's theatre is the theatrical dialogue between the adult practitioner and the child as an audience member, which takes place in a specific time and place and is set within a wider context. The term 'children's theatre' is preferred, as opposed to the term 'theatre for the young' which is often used in the UK, because it does not 'hide' the fact that this thesis discusses a theatrical phenomenon completely reliant on the cultural construction of the child (Bedard, 2009: 25) and the construction of a group of individuals as 'an audience'. A definition of children's theatre needs to acknowledge the difficulties of the relation between the 'child' in the audience and the 'adult' creating and performing for this 'child' as well as the temporal nature of performance in which meaning is established by an active audience which interprets what is seen on stage. Therefore I will use Moses Goldberg (1974: 5), Alan England (1990: 3), Tony Jackson (1993: 7) and Ton Panken's (1998: 11) definitions, and make the case that the term children's theatre indicates a theatrical dialogue, whereby a performance is created and presented by a professional adult (or adults) with the intentions to engage with the child aged between 0-13 years as an audience member. I would also argue, that children's theatre exists in a specific time and space established between the adult theatre practitioner and the child audience, because the performance exists through an active communication. Or as Manon van de Water writes, "Performances are part of a semiotic process between the performers, the performed, and the audience" (2009: 19).

As such it is a dialogue that in the UK is informed by various contrasting objectives, both in the past and present, and the negotiation of the social, political and

economic environment. On the one hand the field of children's theatre includes various companies providing theatre just for children, all of which enrich the field with their own visions and approaches towards entertainment and art for the young.¹ At the same time, because many of these companies want to create quality 'artistic' performances for all children and not just those that are taken to the theatre by their parents, there is a need to attract funding from the various Art Councils or other sources, as well as encourage schools to take children to the theatre or invite companies to perform in the school (hall).² In turn this forces these companies to relate to the various agendas, objectives and guidelines of these organisations (including the National Curriculum as set by the government), a necessity that indirectly influences the field. Although the UK has a very strong tradition in terms of theatre for the young and political, social and educational values (as will be discussed in relation to Theatre in Education), since the 1980s many companies have tried to move away from this type of theatre and towards stressing the artistic 'benefits' of theatre for children. However, the TiE tradition/legacy is still very much present and theatre is often not just of high artistic value but is socially and politically conscious, aiming to achieve more than just entertaining the young audience.

Arguably, the tensions between artistic, political, commercial, entertainment and educational values and motivation have been present in the field of children's theatre since the early attempts to create and perform for the child as an audience. As

¹ An estimate can be abstracted from the London Drama registration list (received 14th February 2008), which shows 141 small-scale touring companies, five larger scale touring companies which present at larger receiving theatres, two building-based companies that create work exclusively for children, and 12 building-based companies that do not solely, but regularly produce plays for young audiences.

² A complete list of regularly funded organisations (with funding running from 2008/9 till 2010/11) which includes companies creating theatre for children, can be obtained from the Arts Council website at www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/regularfunding.php. At the same time other archives and collections such as the Theatre Museum and the London Drama's collection at the Central School of Speech and Drama, provide information on the history and current situation of funding for theatres creating theatre for children.

will be discussed in the second chapter of this thesis which focuses on the history of entertainment for the child in the UK, this might explain why the performance of *Peter Pan* in 1904 is by some claimed to be the first play in this genre (see Panken, 1998: 57; Swortzell, 1989: xxv; Schonmann, 2006: 21) while others argue it has been written for the adults' nostalgia and sentimental value, rather than for a specific child audience.³

The difficulty in defining the field due to its complexity and various motivations, might also explain why, in contrast to the rapidly growing academic interest in theorising children's literature, children's theatre is only just being recognised by academic institutions as an interesting field of study. In European countries such as Germany, The Netherlands and Belgium, there is an academic interest that dates back to the late 1990s.⁴ More recently, publications such as *Theatre as a Medium for Children and Young People: Images and Observations* (2006) by Shifra Schonmann, the special issue of *Youth Theatre Journal* (2009) edited by Manon van de Water in relation to the International Theatre for Young Audiences Research Network (ITYARN) which is connected to the ASSITEJ⁵ movement and *Next Generation: In Theatre for Children and Young People: The ASSITEJ Book*

³ A strong supporter of this argument would be Jacqueline Rose, who in her seminal work *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The impossibility of children's fiction*, uses J. M. Barrie's work to examine the myth of childhood innocence. In her argument she focuses particularly on sexual abuse and the disconcerting relationship between adult and child using the story of *Peter Pan* as an example of the failing of children's literature. As she writes: "It shows innocence not as a property of childhood but as a portion of adult desire." (Rose, 1993: xii) Rose's work can be considered a fundamental and key text when considering anything in the realm of children's literature and also in this thesis on children's theatre Rose's argument will take an essential position.

⁴ These publications are for example from Belgium: Steenberghe, Els Van (Ed.) *Groot Toneel* (Antwerpen: Bebuquin, 2003); Germany: Behr, Michael. *Kinder im Theater: Pädagogisches Kinder- und Jugendtheater in Deutschland* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1985) And from The Netherlands: Heteren, Lucia and Annemarie van Wenzel, *Jeugdtheater, Kinderen en Hun Binnenwereld* (Groningen: Uitgeverij Passage, 2002); Cahiers, *Jeugdtheater Geen Kinderspel* (Amsterdam: Nederlands Theater Instituut, 1991); Panken, Ton, *Geschiedenis van het Jeugdtheater* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 1998)

⁵ The International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ) was established in 1965. It describes itself an international network of theatre for children and young people and links its members through national centres in more than 70 countries (ASSITEJ website available at: <http://www.assitej.org/>).

2006/2007 edited by Wolfgang Schneider and Tony Mack, suggest that there is indeed a growing interest in this field. Matthew Reason's *The Young Audience* (2010) suggests that this field is also beginning to gain interest in the UK.

Before these recent publications what had been written on children's theatre in the UK included practical handbooks concerning the creation of theatre for the child, such as David Wood's *Theatre for Children*, or descriptions of different companies and theatres working in the field, such as *Theatre for Children and Young People in the UK: 50 Years of Professional Theatre in the UK* edited by Stuart Bennett. *Learning through theatre: new perspectives on theatre in education* (1993) edited by Tony Jackson has some critical discussion of the TiE tradition in the UK. Alan England's work *Theatre for the Young* comes closest to a critical and academic analysis of the field, although being published in 1990 means it has a somewhat diluted relevance as it misses out on the last twenty years which have shown so much artistic development.

As there is still relatively little literature directly related to children's theatre in the UK, this thesis aims to bring a new critical discussion to children's theatre and as such, considering the vastness of the topic, particular focus will concentrate on practices of children's theatre through related notions of interculturalism, multiculturalism and internationalism. The choice of this specific area is grounded in contemporary observations of children's theatre in the UK, where cultural and ethnic diversity are represented in various ways. The theatrical form is always to some extent constructed and therefore it can be understood that these cultural representations are never accidental or 'natural'. However, using terms such as interculturalism or multiculturalism are generally avoided by those creating theatre for children and thus are hard to find in websites, promotional material or any other

literature generated by theatre companies. From various interviews with directors and writers of children's theatre it even becomes apparent that many are not familiar with the term interculturalism or hold vague interpretations of such a practice.

At the same time, the position of the child within society is a very topical subject and, especially concerning notions of multi-cultural society, there exists an ongoing debate. Included in the Race Relations [Amendment] Act of 2000 is a desire to educate and introduce children to a society which comprises and respects a multitude of different cultures and ethnicities (Race Relations [Amendment] Act, 2000). The encouragement to do so is found, certainly within the area of art, by making Arts Council funding accessible for projects that champion a message of respect in terms of racial and cultural diversity (Arts Council Website, 2007) and as a more recent report titled *Achieving Great Art for Everyone* asserted: "the art itself must be enriched by the contribution of the whole of England's vibrant and changing society" (Arts Council England, 2010: 3). In the field of children's theatre, which relies heavily on funding due to its lack of commercial sustainability, this is certainly an encouragement to create and stage performances that relate to a variety of 'different' cultures.

It appears that the attempt to introduce children to aspects of different cultures could create an awareness and acceptance of cultural diversity and therefore prevent racism and discrimination. More importantly it is the responsibility of theatre practitioners to relate to the cultural diversity found within the national borders of the UK. Indeed, as a majority of children now live in cities where migration and immigration (stimulated by availability of international travel as well as the UK's colonial past and an international workforce created by global trade) the ethnic and cultural make-up of society has significantly changed (Madge, 2001: 20-24). At the

same time society is globally connected through ‘new’ forms of media (internet), communication (mobile phones, Blogging, Skype), travel (budget airlines) and trade (purchasing products/food from all over the world is now the norm). As such the shared culture as represented by the children in the UK has become ‘hybrid,’ heterogenic and importantly, dynamic due to the interactions, negotiations and adaptations that occur when these various cultures meet at schools, playgrounds and cultural activities including theatre.

However, the representation of cultural diversity within theatrical performances is not straightforward. Questions are raised such as: Does the nature of theatre allow open and accurate cultural representation? Can theatre as a cultural exchange negotiate Said’s theoretical framework of Orientalism (see Said, 1978), in which the East (or Orient) is selected, appropriated and represented by the West (or Occident), especially in relation to the exploitative capitalist market structure that can be found in the West? Do cultural interactions contribute to the processes associated with globalisation, which are deemed to homogenise and standardise cultural difference and particularity? And in the light of recent criticism of multiculturalism, is the celebration of cultural diversity detrimental to societal cohesion or can this celebration be read as simplistic, brushing over internal struggles and oppressions of cultural, ethnic and religious groups in the UK? Is the cultural engagement in children’s theatre simply there to attract funding? Indeed, theatre practitioners find their work scrutinised in terms of its position and role as a western piece of art, particularly in the light of post-colonial theory and global studies.

Thinkers such as Rustom Bharucha highlight the danger of Western intercultural productions that are potentially “involved in the draining of source cultures through arbitrary, non-negotiated, and essentially one-sided modes of

transportation determined by the globalizing mechanism and complicities of the market and the state.” (Bharucha, 1997: 32) This statement by Bharucha highlights how cultural representation on the stage cannot be disconnected from the wider global market structures. Placing this in the context of interculturalism and children’s theatre illustrates a fine line between an honest desire to prepare a generation to live in a culturally diverse society, and a need for commercial sustainability in the market place. However it is important to explore this position further and to understand that Bharucha and many other critics considering practices such as interculturalism and internationalism do this in relation to the adult stage and not for a child audience. Therefore, it is important to explore the differences between theatre made for children and theatre created for an adult audience, and how these differences affect attitudes towards practices such as interculturalism, multiculturalism and internationalism.

Disney’s Diversity and the Difficulties of the Cultural Exchange

The work of Disney, an entertainment company responsible for producing the musical *The Lion King* (1999) which will be discussed in chapter three, can perhaps be seen as the ultimate example of seeking and using ‘exotic’ and ‘other’ cultures and cultural elements for commercial purposes, and therefore is seen to represent everything wrong in intercultural or international practices. Patrice Pavis, who speaks about the ‘Disneyland culture’, describes how it offers “samples of all products, provided that they are sufficiently standardized, easily accessible to, and consumable by, the majority” (Pavis, 1996: 13). At the same it should not be overlooked that Disney’s products are in first instance aimed at a child audience, or indeed at a ‘parent market.’ Without doubt this might ignite those fervent Disney critics who will instantly, and

perhaps rightly, point out that making money through children by appealing to their parents while implying some sort of contribution to the culturally diverse society, highlights the unethical way this company makes money.

Critics like Jack Zipes reject any suggestion that Disney's work encourages a multi-cultural society. Rather he recognises the presence of an idea related to colonialism, as audiences of different nationalities are presented with American values and models of behaviour which are deemed desirable and which the audience should follow (Zipes, 2006: 207). Zipes explains Disney's ultimate generalisation: "What is good for Disney is good for the world, and what is good in a Disney Fairy tale is good in the rest of the world" (Ibid). Arguably this 'Disneyfication' of the world, could be an attitude recognisable in most of the larger export companies of the United States, for example Coca-Cola, McDonalds and Starbucks. Even though these companies are often taken to be leaders in so-called 'Americanisation,' many critics in the field of globalisation heavily contest this term. Indeed, the feasibility of such a process, and a direct link with colonialism, would be a simplification.

Disney's critics cannot escape the fact that the child that enjoys stories such as *The Jungle Book* (1967), *Aladdin* (1992), *The Lion King* (1994), *Pocahontas* (1995), and *Mulan* (1998), *The Princess and The Frog* (2009) has a completely different political and social awareness. In other words, the child's role within a historical context or in regard to post-colonial discourse is (or should be) different from those of the adult. Therefore the encounter between the child and the different cultures portrayed in these films (it could be argued that these cultures are far removed from reality) works on a completely different level. Disney films could work as an introduction to a different culture from the child's own environment and a tentative suggestion that 'other' cultures are also valuable and important as well as beautiful.

This can be asserted when it is established that Disney's films are primarily aimed at the generalised western child with parents who have the spending power to provide their children with products of entertainment value. Indeed, Douglas Brode illustrates in *Multiculturalism and the Mouse: Race and Sex in Disney Entertainment*, that Disney can also be considered as bringing racial and cultural tolerance and equality to mainstream popular culture and a mass audience (subjecting every culture and every ethnicity to the same 'Disney Aesthetic'), in a time when this was unconceivable in America as well as the rest of the world (2005: 2-3).

Indeed, even in more recent times, Disney is the first mainstream children's entertainment to feature an African American princess.⁶ *The Princess and The Frog*, partly inspired by the Grimm Brothers' fairy tale *The Frog Prince*, is set in and around New Orleans during the 'Roaring Twenties' and features various African American actors, uses Voodoo instead of the traditional 'magic' part of many fairy tales, and the music, composed by Randy Newman, is inspired by the Jazz tradition of this region.⁷ Although adults would rather see their children aspiring to more emancipated role models than those represented by the Disney princess; looking at how young girls in the UK, America as well as many other Western countries are consistently surrounded by 'white' princesses such as Cinderella, Belle and Snow White on a wide range of merchandise, including lunch boxes, clothing and bedding; it seems a good idea to have as part of these characters that young girls 'worship' and aspire to, an African American princess named Tina or Jasmine the 'Eastern' character from the movie *Alladin*. As such, Disney can be recognised as responding to an absence of positive representation of ethnic and cultural diversity for children who

⁶ See Richard Watson, 'A short history of race in animation: Disney's new cartoon *The Princess and the Frog* has an African-American heroine, but it's taken a long time to get to this point' *The Guardian* (January 2010) Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2010/jan/21/race-disney-animation-brief>

⁷ See 'The Princess and the Frog' from Disney Wiki. Available at: http://disney.wikia.com/wiki/The_Princess_and_the_Frog

might not have access to other cultural activities that can offer these experiences. Not all children are the offspring of thinkers such as Pavis and Bharucha who place these films in the context of postcolonial discourse and offer the child alternative visions of the world that differs from Disney's repackaging of western enlightenment values through different global (cultural) contexts.

Undoubtedly Disney's representation of different cultures is more fantastic than realistic. Most importantly, the cartoon element with talking animals, magic and happy endings, removes them from reality. The cultural elements only find themselves in the small details such as in the music, dress, architecture or the characters' relation to nature (for example, the Native American Pocahontas tries to teach the white settler John Smith to appreciate the 'wonders of the earth'). The characters themselves have undergone slight but effective transformations so that they refer to racial difference while remaining within the western idea of beauty. Keeping all these references to cultural difference so small and presenting them in a fantasy story with western values, is in many ways Disney's crime as well as its fortune. It cannot be denied that Disney transforms culture into a product that it standardizes to appeal to as many consumers as possible, as Pavis has suggested. Nevertheless this 'Disney Aesthetic' can provide a positive aspect, as these films *are* able to reach a broader child audience than material that has a much stronger and less compromising message of cultural and ethnic diversity.

The example of Disney illustrates the complexity of the conflicting points that affect this debate. On the one hand groups such as Unicef (think of their famous image of children around the earth holding hands)⁸ promote difference while at the same time affirming commonality. However such discourses generate a fear of this

⁸ See for example the image 'Children Around the World' available from the Unicef website at www.shopcardsandgifts.unicefuse.org.

form of global idealism, arguing that it amounts to cultural homogenisation and standardisation based upon some sort of western cultural hegemony. At the same time it turns attention to a debate much more immediate to the theatrical form itself which touches upon cultural representation. As already suggested, Disney chooses to keep the references to cultural differences to a minimum, which results in the films retaining some form of familiarity for its child audience. A cartoon allows the creators to have an even stronger position in the manipulation of the images, with bright and warm colours and cleanliness in terms of the environment but also in the characters, (no rubbish on the streets, but also no sweat or other bodily fluids) that contribute to a safe environment, removed from reality.

Children's theatre as an interactive dialogue

In contrast, the theatrical performance will always have a certain reality, interaction and immediateness to its representation. Characters are not perfect; they do not conform to the image of Disney as the combination of waistline, chest volume and perfect symmetry of the face are not found in real life. The actor's body is not perfect and on stage they might even sweat or sneeze. Similarly, the environment cannot be controlled and manipulated as is done in films. The environment is also very much shaped by uncontrollable elements and accidental occurrences coming from the actors, stage scenery or props. Especially when considering the budgets of most theatre companies, the resources available mean that productions need to rely on the child's suspension of disbelief and their willingness to use their imagination. Indeed, that leads on to the second uncontrollable aspect of the theatrical performance: the

child audience. A movie can to some extent distance itself from this audience but in the theatre the adult practitioner comes literally face to face with the child.

The adult practitioner has no guarantees that the child is willing to use their imagination, especially considering they might not have chosen to come to the theatre in the first place. Arguably this dynamic relation between audience and the performers on stage is very similar when it concerns theatre for the adult; the adult audience is not homogenous in its interpretation and interaction in relation to what happens on stage. The adult's theatrical experience is informed by the kind of day they have had, what else they have on their mind, where they are sitting in the auditorium and next to whom. The difference is that children are less familiar with theatrical convention and more likely to ignore the theatrical 'rules' of being quiet, attentive and sitting still. They might argue with the child sitting next to them, be more interested with the lightning rig than what happens on stage, answer the actors' rhetorical questions or call out general remarks, change seats or simply invade the stage. Of course, the level of interaction and the extent to which the child is unaware of the theatrical conventions depends on aspects such as age, upbringing and the authority of the adults who accompany the child during their theatrical visit. The theatrical experience for the child is highly individual and the performance for the child is, because of this active participation, always unique. The responses to this active participation are various: some companies encourage children to sit still and observe the show from the auditorium, other companies such as Oily Cart, Dragon Breath and Quicksilver (which will be discussed in this thesis) give the children a very active role within the performance, allowing them to interact from their seats, or explore the stage and some of the scenery after the performance, or even participate on stage as part of the performance.

Space and Place

In addition to this relation between adult practitioner and child audience is the dimension of space and place. The different ways of allowing the children to interact change the way the performative space is used, challenging the boundaries between audience and performers that are expected by traditional theatre conventions. Moreover, space is an essential part of the theatrical experience; for example, for children it is often important next to whom they sit, but also where they sit during the performance is of great importance. Beyond this, young children can experience theatre spaces as ‘scary’ and ‘unsafe,’ especially if they are unfamiliar with going to the theatre and are faced with the darkness of the auditorium (see Schonmann, 2006: 90). As this ‘fear’ of the theatre space is fundamental in the child’s interaction with what they see on stage, it is difficult to establish where the theatrical experience begins; is it before the play commences at the point of entering the auditorium or theatre building or even the journey to the theatre, in the tram to Polka Theatre in Wimbledon or seeing the HMS Belfast (warship museum) when walking past the Thames to go to Unicorn theatre; if these experiences are important for the way the child interacts with what happens on stage and informs the theatrical experience as a whole, should they also be included when considering theatre as a dialogue in which the perception of the child plays such an important role?

The TiE movement took the relation between children’s theatre and space/place in another direction. As will be discussed in chapter two, with the desire to also perform for working class audiences and not just those that were brought to the theatre, the movement performed in school halls and youth clubs and considered

theatre buildings middle class institutions. Moreover, TiE companies such as Belgrade TiE, Leeds TiE and Pit Prop in Wigan, were exemplary in seeking areas that were predominantly working class and often industrial communities. Moving from the theatre space to the local environment is all-important within the theatrical dialogue; the next leap is the nation and even beyond, as in the international and global cultural interactions that can be found on stage in the UK. As illustrated previously, the UK is an increasingly diverse society, influenced by many cultures that can be found within its nation borders and can be recognised to be present due to the afore-mentioned processes of global interconnectedness. This interaction of the local and the global and its presence within the theatrical dialogue is vitally important in this thesis.

The particular interest in this thesis is to establish an awareness of how the theatrical experience of the child can engage with the cultural diversity of these various places and spaces that form the context of the theatrical dialogue. I will argue that the intercultural dialogue has the potential to establish “sites of negotiation” that evoke “the possibility of interaction across a multiplicity of cultural positionings, avoiding binary codings” (Knowles, 2010: 4). Nevertheless, performances that engage with cultural diversity require a judicious and sensitive approach. This is not only to prevent children from having a negative experience in encountering cultural difference in the theatre but also to ensure that the attraction of other cultures should not be used in search of its exoticism or in light of the perceived adventures and excitement they could offer (Mercer, 1990). In this way, Grady and Zarrilli formulate the essential question:

How do you develop a strategy of presentation and representation which engages an audience and/or students in “difference” without stereotyping,

essentializing, romanticizing the “other”, and keeping one’s audience aware of contestation as a social reality? (Grady and Zarrilly, 1994: 168)

To begin to formulate an answer to the above question it is important to create an understanding of the child audience in the UK. At the same time there is also a need to recognise the possibilities and the limitations of theatrical performances which incorporate and try to represent cultural diversity for this particular group. However it will also be very important to examine what theatre practitioners such as Grady and Zarrilly want to achieve with performances that engage an audience in “differences.” At the same time it will be important to understand how these aims and desires of practitioners meet British cultural policy, or educational objectives as expressed through the application of the curriculum, thinking for example of the recently introduced subject of Citizenship. In turn, it is important to see how these objectives and policies relate to wider theories such as post-colonialism or the idea of globalisation.

Ultimately, it is important to value the terms and practices of interculturalism, multiculturalism and internationalism and to understand the importance of these within the field of children’s theatre in the UK, both in the present as well as in the past. This understanding will, to some extent, encapsulate attitudes to children and childhood within contemporary society, as well as those to art and theatre. Hopefully this thesis will promote serious debate within the field of children’s theatre in the UK, and highlight the complex, at times conflicted field as worthy of continuing academic research.

The focus of this thesis on the representation of the cultural diverse society in theatre for children and intercultural, multicultural and international performative strategies,

is based on the observations of contemporary work staged for children as well as the social political climate over the course of writing this thesis (October 2007-November 2012). When I first addressed the topic of children's theatre as part of my BA dissertation in English literature in 2006, I noticed that many performances did in some way refer to other cultures than those associated with the traditional British culture. Some of these cultural influences were incorporated through the presence of a writer, director or performer from a particular cultural origin, others were due to a tradition of performing stories set in 'foreign' and 'oriental' countries as is frequently found in the pantomime tradition. For example, performances such as *Aladdin* or *Dick Whittington and His Cat*, which use 'oriental' influences in staging, costumes, music and farcical accents, draw on performance traditions and cultural stereotypes that present the 'mythical' cultural settings of these stories. These types of cultural representations were found in contrast to a more genuine desire to represent the child's diverse society on stage and to draw from the various cultural traditions that could be found to have a presence in the daily lives of children. Coming from the Netherlands, this latter desire was particularly noticeable for me because I was accustomed to more negative attitudes towards a multicultural 'global' society and as such I was surprised by the enthusiasm in which cultural diversity was embraced on the British stage.

In the Netherlands the failings of multicultural society was used successfully to gain popular opinion and votes by the politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002.⁹ His main ideology was focused on immigration, particularly from Muslim countries. He

⁹ Pim Fortuyn authored several publications including *De Islamisering van Onze Cultuur* (1997) which can be translated as the Islamification of our culture. For more sources on Pim Fortuyn see: Katrin Schmidt, *Populism and Euroscepticism in the Netherlands: Pim Fortuyn and the Dutch Nee-Campaign against the European Constitutional Treaty* (Santa Cruz: Grin, 2008) Published Bachelor Thesis; 'Obituary: Pim Fortuyn' (6 May, 2002) Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1971462.stm>.

described Islam as a “backwards culture” which was incompatible with certain Dutch traditions and liberal social values such as religious freedom, freedom of speech and sexual freedom.¹⁰ The government’s perceived attitude towards immigrants, in which their cultural heritage was respected, rather than an active encouragement of cultural integration, was blamed for creating a generation of an *allochtone* youth¹¹ that could not function in the Dutch society and thus resorted to criminality. The political left were generally blamed for being elitist and unwilling to listen to the growing discontent among ‘common’ people. Arguably the left eventually started to accept this accusation and with a fundamental Dutch principle being free speech, it was deemed important that the fears towards immigrants and *allochtonen* should be heard and addressed. This was strengthened by the murders of Pim Fortuyn in 2002 by a left wing activist and later one of his friends, the controversial movie director Theo van Gogh who was killed by a Muslim extremist in retaliation against his movie which criticised the Islamic attitude to the female body. As a result, discussing the fear towards *allochtonen* and the supposed loss of core Dutch values and traditions, as well as a rise in general racist ideas, became normalised and entrenched within the popular media.

The politician Geert Wilders continued the work of Pim Fortuyn but arguably with an even stronger articulated dislike of Islamic cultures, famously comparing the Quran with Mein Kampf, proposing a tax on Islamic headwear for women (he offensively titled a ‘head-rag-tax’) and creating the short film *Fitna* which aimed to illustrate the links between the Quran and terrorism. In 2004 he formed his own political party, the Party for Freedom, which after years of growth became the third

¹⁰ ‘Pim Fortuyn: Man of paradox’ from Pimfortuyn.com, Alles over de man die Nederland wakker schudde (May 2002) Available at: <http://www.pimfortuyn.com/asp/default.asp?t=show&id=1825>

¹¹ In the Netherlands the population is divided by an *autochtone* group, which is seen as the real Dutch, and an *allochtone* group that has ‘other’ cultural roots going back as far as third and even fourth generation.

largest party in the 2010 general elections thus enabling Wilders to have considerable political influence by being a ‘supporting party’ of the coalition.¹² Wilders political strategy was mainly based on fuelling fear towards Muslim immigrants and their ‘Islamification’ of Dutch culture.¹³ In terms of Dutch theatre, Wilders not only established a difficult creative environment for work that represents cultural diversity, he also continuously attacked subsidised theatre (and art in general) believing that the common citizen should not be forced to fund an elitist ‘hobby’ (Kleijn, 2012: 6).

In light of this growing Dutch negative attitude towards cultural diversity, the seemingly positive attitude of British theatre makers was a pleasant surprise for me. However, I was made aware of another aspect of staging cultural diversity a year later, during my MA in Text and Performance. Here at King’s College, professor Alan Read showed a video of his interview with the critic Rustom Bharucha which focused on the criticism of intercultural performances. Bharucha’s description of these performances as cultural exploitation and a continuation of Orientalism as first described by Said, highlighted an additional complexity of staging cultural diversity. In light of his criticism, I revisited children’s theatre and wrote my dissertation on intercultural staging methods in performances for children. In this work, of which this thesis is a continuation, I addressed my own enthusiasm for the representation of cultural diversity in theatre for children in relation to the various complex issues associated with staging the cultural ‘other’. During this short piece of writing I began

¹² Because after the 2010 elections no coalition could be formed which would have an absolute majority, the Party for Freedom pledged to politically support the coalition. Wilders was eventually responsible for the downfall of this coalition by withdrawing his support, a move that cost him parliamentary seats in the most recent national election in September 2012. This is not to suggest that his ideology has lost much support and arguably his party’s loss is partly due to one of his party members leaving just before the elections, making his party appear unstable. Currently his party has fifteen seats in the Dutch parliament, which makes the party still the third largest, although this position is shared with the socialist party SP. (see ‘De huidige Tweede Kamer’ available at: <http://www.parlement.com/9291000/modulesf/g5pbi6v2>)

¹³ See for example Geert Wilders most recent publication *Marked for Death: Islam’s War Against the West and Me* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2012)

to realise that fundamental questions needed further exploration and that the topic of representing cultural diversity was particularly suitable for a PhD research project.

Although this thesis recognises the complexity of the topic and will illustrate the various difficulties the representation of cultural diversity has to overcome, it will become clear that my initial enthusiasm for intercultural production has become part of my core argument which recognises that the child's current diverse society has to be represented on stage. In the first chapter, my personal political stance is relevant to my preference for the intercultural production as this type of practice recognises cultures as interactive and fluent, rather than fixed and homogeneous. Therefore the intercultural production can stage a cultural dialogue that creates a new 'mix' or hybrid form. In a multicultural production it is presumed that cultures can be performed without this interaction, as authentic or pure forms. However, this assumption does not take into account the diversity and hybridity of the child audience in the UK and how subsequently this audience 'mixes' the cultural practice seen on stage in their interpretation. Moreover a cultural mix or hybridity is more representative of this diverse audience which experience the cultural mix of society on a daily basis. In chapter two, the development of children's theatre supports the idea that children's theatre as a movement has always adapted to the social political environment of the child. As such, staging the child's culturally and ethically diverse society can be considered an integral part of the movement's development and positive progression. In chapter three, the debate is positioned in light of the forces of globalisation and although I recognise the detrimental effects of the global market on cultures around the world, I also discuss how intercultural productions can allow an interactions between the child's local and global environments and as such represent the reality of a child's diverse society. The final chapter of this thesis will start with a

quotation by Brian McMaster who observes that “we live in one of the most diverse societies the world has ever seen, yet this is not reflected in the culture we produce, or in who is producing it” (2008: 11). I agree with McMaster that “culture can only be excellent when it is relevant, and thus nothing can be excellent without reflecting the society which produces and experiences it” (ibid). Indeed, theatrical productions for children should not deny that the shared common culture of the UK is diverse, hybrid and heterogeneous.

To return to my observation of the attitudes towards cultural diversity in the Netherlands, I would argue that the desire to protect traditional Dutch culture against its *allochtone* population and their perceived potential to disrupt cultural authenticity and homogeneity has only further detached and disenfranchised part of its youth and thus part of its future. Indeed, I believe that cultural conservatism or protectionism does not protect a nation’s heritage but in contrast creates cultural artificiality which children are meant to adopt and belong to, rather than actively participate and create. Any culture, in other words, is always a continuous work in progress. As I discuss throughout my thesis, the negative attitude towards cultural diversity and the multicultural society is also recognisable within the UK. It is impossible to establish whether the situation in the Netherlands where the populist party of Geert Wilders has a presence in parliament, could be a direction in which the UK is heading. In the UK, extremist right wing groups such as the EDL have a presence through their marches and through various ‘forums’ on popular and social media, and political parties such as the BNP have (have had) a presence in local and European government, however they do not have the political influence and power attained by Wilders. However, the negative attitude towards multicultural society is not solely found in these extremes, and the current Prime Minister David Cameron has also spoken about the failing of

multiculturalism, arguing that the UK needs a stronger national identity.¹⁴ Criticism notwithstanding, his speech highlights the continuing and timely importance of overlapping debates relating to culture, diversity and society, after years of immigration and globalisation.

Moreover it is not only the political and ideological right's anxieties of preserving a true British cultural identity that creates difficulties for the representation of cultural diversity on stage. As mentioned, critics such as Rustom Bharucha also attack theatrical productions that represent cultural diversity because they are seen to exploit authentic source cultures involving the mechanisms of globalisation and Orientalism. Other critics and theatre practitioners share this negative perception of globalisation, something that is arguably limiting the discussions of the changing society of the child. Also the fear that a multicultural society limits and attacks values such as freedom of speech and sexual equality is present in the UK. Indeed the idea of political correctness as a restriction of artistic freedom will be discussed in this thesis, as they are contemporary considerations within the world of children's theatre. Overall my aim is to provide a careful consideration of theatrical practices that represent cultural diversity on stage and to explore their problems, criticism and limitations, to ultimately argue that the precarious issues should not be avoided but addressed and negotiated in order to create work that is significant in the child's contemporary society.

The thesis begins with a discussion of the methodology and some of the terms. As such it will examine some related research and some illustrative examples of recent

¹⁴ See 'State multiculturalism has failed, says David Cameron' (5 February 2011) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12371994>

productions. The second chapter will look at the history of children's theatre in the UK in order to contextualise the various debates. As I have already suggested, children's theatre entails a dialogue between the adult as a practitioner and the 'child' as the audience set within a specific context; therefore this second chapter aims to 'map' the changing dynamics of the theatrical communication between adult and child and consider the economic, social and political environments of this exchange. After examining earlier children's theatre in the UK, I will consider the Theatre in Education (TiE) movement and the emphasis on political and ideological strategies before looking at the development of contemporary practice in the UK that can be recognised as actively moving away from the TiE tradition. At the same time, I will suggest that many of the ideological values and the relation between theatre and education that the TiE movement established are continued by current practitioners. I will argue that it is possible to recognise three different motivations in children's theatre: commercial, educational and artistic, but that while these motivations and movements seem separate and each recognise different 'histories' as informing their practices, these motivations and practices are inherently connected as they have to engage with the same problems that underlie theatrical communication. Indeed, to some extent all these movements have to negotiate the conditions that are specific to the child audience, such as the cultural construction of the 'child'; the fact that the 'child' is not independent and autonomous in terms of choosing, attending and facilitating their theatre visit; and that the relation between adult practitioner and child audience is always inherently problematic.

The third chapter will continue to examine the issues and difficulties of representing an increasingly diverse and globalised society where the child encounters cultural difference on a daily basis. Using the definition proposed by Ric Knowles in

his publication *Theatre and Interculturalism* (2010), the chapter will look at how the intercultural production can stage a theatrical dialogue with the child audience that moves beyond the binary oppositions of the local and the global, East (or the Orient) and West (or the Occident) and traditional and contemporary modes of representation.

Following this, chapter four will continue the debate on the importance of the representations of cultural diversity. However, instead of focusing on how the child interpenetrates the theatrical experience and is able to deconstruct and interact with what is presented on stage as part of the intercultural dialogue, this chapter puts emphasis on the adult's responsibility to ensure that cultural expression for the child reflects on the diverse and hybrid culture of the UK. Jen Harvie's work on adult theatre, *Staging The UK* (2005), demonstrates how theatre constructs and performs national identities and thus is exemplary of how Benedict Anderson sees the nation as constructed by cultural activities (16). Although Harvie's work is very helpful in illustrating how performing a nation's collective memory produces identities both individual and those of communities (Ibid: 41), it will be suggested that this is different for children who do not produce (or even choose) the cultural activities they attend. It is also difficult to rely on the child's 'correct' interpretation of what is presented on stage, as contextual knowledge can be absent or undeveloped, which makes it more difficult to use theatre as a cultural activity to validate identities that have been (historically) "marginalised or oppressed" (Ibid). Moreover, using literature on educational policies and targets, as represented in the National Curriculum and subjects such as Citizenship, History and Religious studies, I will demonstrate that although recent British governments have appeared to encourage a respect for cultural diversity and to propose a national identity that is inclusive, such messages are also underpinned by a desire to propose a cultural identity that is superior to others present

in the UK as well as to suppress the problems that arise when cultures collide or hybridise.

As a conclusion, chapter five will discuss the play *Cosmos* (2009) that has been created through a unique process that centralises the child both in the creation of the play and in the performance itself. The play will provide an example of the contemporary practice of intercultural theatre for the child that is culturally inclusive and ensures that the theatrical dialogue, as entailed by children's theatre, is as interactive and dynamic as possible.

Chapter 1

Approaching the Study of Children's Theatre

In the study of children's theatre it is essential that the research is in close contact with the practicality of production and performance, and the many examples of work by various companies. Alan England in his work *Theatre for the Young*, partly uses the method of 'considered reviewing' established by John Russell Brown, to overcome the fleeting nature of the theatrical performance and the subsequent problems this brings to research (England, 1990: 3). Following the argument of the approach of theatre semiotics, England writes:

The theatrical event unfolds in time and space and works in terms not only of words but of gesture and sign...It is also an encounter between performers and audience and it is the interaction of these that determines its meaning. (Ibid: 3)

England does not choose to completely follow Brown's approach, which requires a particular performance to be viewed multiple times to compare and relate every detail of the performance as well as following the career of actors and directors and analysing the critics own personal views, in order to draw any conclusion about a theatrical experience (Brown *quoted by* England, 1990: 3-4). Instead England uses the approach in a limited but more attainable way, placing his own personal experiences (central to his understanding of theatrical performances) next to his observations of staging effects, interviews with directors, actors and writers (England, 1990: 4).

There is a practical reason for England to employ this research method. Whereas many plays performed for adults are heavily documented and even published

in book form, play texts of performances for children are more rare and difficult to obtain, perhaps due to a lack of commercial interest. The probability that children, or in fact their parents, go out to buy these texts to read before or after a performance is quite low. However, in the interests of understanding the relation between text and performance, I will refer to play texts where possible and relevant. At the same time, personal accounts of practitioners, such as Stuart Bennett (London Drama), Carey English (Quicksilver) Peter Wynne-Willson (playwright) and David Wood (playwright) are important in terms of this thesis, as their opinions and experiences are representative of those working within children's theatre.

Although the obvious benefit of watching a live performance is that it allows an insight into audience reception, video archive recordings of past productions and workshops have also been essential in this research. In these observations the general audience reception cannot always be interpreted, however they will show the various performative strategies employed. They also function as a record of the 'performance text', as used for example by Keir Elam in his work on theatre semiotics, to separate the written or dramatic text to this theatrical text that exists within performance (Elam, 1980: 3). For example, the performance *Coram Boy* (2006) discussed in this introduction, *My Name is Savitri* (2002) and *The Voyage* (2007) discussed in chapter four and *Cosmos* used in the conclusion, are performances observed through archive recording. Because the recording of *My Name is Savitri* also included part of the post-show workshop, it was especially useful in illustrating how the particular group of children that was filmed for the video dealt with the specific issues raised in the play. The recording of *Cosmos* (2009) also registered a part of the creative process that involved university students and included some responses from the young audience which illustrated what was their favourite part of the performance.

To return to England, his use of performance reviews and not just analysis of the play text, enable him to include staging methods employed by the companies to make a successful production for a young audience as well as some of the audience responses. The active and interactive nature of this audience, especially when considering productions for very young children, has a much greater impact on a performance than is the case with an adult audience. It is more likely that a performance is interrupted or that the actors need to react to external occurrences, think for example of children crying, booing and interacting with the characters on stage (Wood, 1997: 16-20). Even the invasion of the performance space by an audience member to simply join in and/or explore props and stage scenery is not uncommon. Therefore in children's theatre the audience cannot be omitted in a thorough examination of the subject.

However, it is essential to be aware that researching children is a highly delicate undertaking because there is a danger that the child is approached as a 'captive object' that has no power in relation to the participation within a research project (Robinson and Kellett, 2004: 91). Moreover children do often not have direct access to the research outcomes, which disengages them even further in terms of their participation. The danger is that instead of recognising the child as an active participant in the theatrical dialogue, the studies of this active spectatorship reduces the interaction by considering the child as simply a subject to be studied. The research of Matthew Reason challenges this relation between child as passive subject and the adult as active inquirer by encouraging children to be "self-reflective audience members" (2010: 172). By allowing them to draw their theatrical experience, the child continues to be the active audience and, indeed, by interpreting and expanding on what is seen on stage in their drawings, children are able to establish a sense of

ownership over this cultural participation, as well as the research into the theatrical experience. This method of understanding the child's interpretations of what is presented on stage would have been very useful to this thesis, however considering the constraints and limited resources, it became clear that incorporating this kind of audience research was not possible. Although some audience research was carried out by means of attending workshops and after-show discussion, observed audience responses are included here on a general basis, usually in relation to the audience 'en masse' (except when the child has already been the focus of a secondary study such as in *Cosmos* and *My Name is Savitri*, or plays an active role within the creative process as in *Once Upon A Tiger* discussed in chapter 3) and if there is a particular response from the child within the audience that changes the dynamics of the whole performance and thus cannot be excluded.

As well as Reason's research into audience reception, that of Jeanne Klein (1994) and Shifra Schonmann (2006) is also important. These studies illustrate how the child's relation and interpretation to theatre that is created for them is highly personal and individual and at times difficult to predict.¹ Moreover, audience research can also illustrate the 'gap' between how children perceive their theatre and what adults would like to achieve in creating a theatrical experience for the child. Indeed, Schonmann writes about the difference between children's and adult's perspective in her chapter 'Criticism, Ways to Evaluate a Theatrical Performance' (2006: 119). To express the "enormous gap between the children and the adult's judgements" (Ibid: 130) she uses the Children's Theatre Festival in Haifa and Northern Israel, where a

¹ In research into the child's experience of theatre a fundamental principle is that there will always be a part of this experience that is inaccessible to an outsider (see Sheila Greene and Malcolm Hill, 'Researching Children's Experience: methods and Methodological Issues' in *Researching Children's Experiences* (ed.) Sheila Greene and Diane Hogan, 2005). As experience is about interpretation, the exchange through which the researcher will attempt to understand the original experience is underlined by subjective interpretation (Ibid 5-6). Additional difficulties arise when the child is "unable to report on their conscious encounters with the world" (Ibid: 5)

selected group of intelligent, curious and attentive children with ages ranging from six to thirteen were invited to choose their favourite plays of the festival (Ibid: 127). For this purpose, questionnaires were created and great effort was spent to ensure that the children understood the questions and their answers were not made indiscriminately (Ibid). However the whole initiative came under reconsideration as the play that was chosen by the children as best play was considered by the adults on a panel of well-respected theatre critics, as one of the worst plays of the festival (Ibid: 128). Schonmann concludes that this finding is evidence that “children sometimes do not know the difference between a “good” and a “poor” performance, and their reactions to the entire production sometimes lack any artistic or aesthetic justification” (Ibid: 120). From the collected questionnaires filled in by the children regarding the play, Schonmann infers that the children appreciate attributes that are considered to define kitsch (Ibid: 129).

Schonmann’s study highlights that what the child desires to see on stage and what adults want to present on stage for them can be quite opposed. Indeed, the various accounts of theatre directors, performers, critics and theorists relating to their motives, aims, desires and objectives suggest that in the theatrical dialogue between child and adult, it is arguably the adult that engages in this dialogue with far more expectations. Cas Baas, one of the founders of Puck, an important and groundbreaking company in the Netherlands that started to create artistic work for the child as early as 1949, challenges the popular assumption of the child audience as a difficult audience,² by illustrating that it is actually not much effort to entertain and

² During the research of this PhD, the fact that the child is a more ‘difficult’ audience was repeatedly affirmed by practitioners. For example practitioner David Wood writes about the fact that the child will be more honest in their dislike of what is happening on stage, and if bored will not continue to sit still and clap politely at the end of the play as is expected in theatre for adults (1997: 19). Also critics and practitioners regularly refer to Stanislavsky’s reply in relation to the difference between theatre for the

capture the attention of the child (van Muyden, 1970: 193). As Baas argues, all you need is two people in two funny suits chasing each other as ‘madmen’ and you are guaranteed laughs, screams and excitement all afternoon (Ibid). Similarly, you can entertain the child audience with familiar figures from fairy tales and classic tales. Although there are certainly productions that follow these formats (especially in commercial theatre); generally, just like Cas Baas, mere entertainment is not what practitioners envisage to achieve with their performances. For them there is more to the theatrical dialogue than simply pleasing the child; for example introducing children to art, teaching them to appreciate theatre, stimulating their creativity, inspiring them and allowing theatre to be a meaningful expression of their experience of the world. Children’s theatre is just as much about these adult objectives and motivations as it is about the perception of this theatre on the part of the child.

What can be said here, in terms of methodological strategies, is that this important relationship requires a more balanced approach than simply analysing performances and including views of actors, directors and writers obtained through interviews. It also implies that there is a need for the application of strategies and theories put forward by the area of children’s literature. In addition to this and more specifically to investigate the practices of interculturalism, multiculturalism and internationalism, it is useful to also draw a comparison between the use of these terms within the area of theatre for children and that for adults. By drawing on the theories that are used to examine the practices and phenomena indicated by the terms interculturalism, multiculturalism and internationalism, and putting these in relation to children’s theatre, it will become possible to examine whether these terms or practices differ when used within a performance or a discussion for this particular type of

adults and for children, where he states that “the only important difference is that, for children, theatre should be better” (McCaslin, 1978 quoted in Schonmann, 2006: 9).

theatre. The best example of this is post-colonial theory, which is often used in the discussion of intercultural theatre, but also theories of identity, education, difference, globalisation, race and racism will be important in the consideration of the subject, as the secondary literature on children's theatre and the practice of interculturalism, multiculturalism and internationalism is limited to the article by Sharon A. Grady and Phillip B. Zarrilli '...It Was Like a Play in a Play in a Play! Tales from South Asia in an Intercultural Production' (1994). In contrast, the other literature that is used to support the arguments of this thesis is wide-ranging and interdisciplinary.

Children's Theatre as Children's Literature

While critics argue that Barrie's *Peter Pan* in 1904 could be recognised as the first play that belongs to the realm of children's theatre, the start of children's literature is by some located at the beginning of the eighteenth century (Rudd, 2005: 15). Others like Grenby would argue that children's literature extends further back in time, even though he recognises that "children's literature began to be presented and recognised as a distinct part of print culture in Britain and America only in the decade or so on either side of 1700" (Grenby, 2008: 4) and that texts for children have been produced since Roman times and even before that era (Grenby, 2008: 2). In comparison, this rather short history of children's theatre could perhaps explain the lack of critical attention children's theatre receives relative to adult theatre. Children's literature is a popular field of critical research and publication; conferences and journals are also rapidly increasing in numbers. Although children's theatre as a research area has seen some developments in recent years, compared to the field of children's literature it is still considerably minor. Whereas in practice there is much material to be found for

children on the stage in the UK, this is not reflected in the frequency of publications concerning children's theatre on a more theoretical level. Curious too, is the way that both children's theatre and children's literature have not been theoretically or at least academically connected, even though the two have many overlaps and similarities. This separation is not as distinct when considering English literature in general; the plays of Shakespeare provide a good example. The two disciplines could overlap when considering the large amount of children's books adapted for the stage, but also in the way parents and teachers read out loud for young children, a practice which in many respects could be also understood in terms of performance.

Another very important similarity between the field of children theatre and literature could be located in the manner in which these two disciplines have established themselves and continue to exist. In both cases, the nature of the relationship between the book or the play and their respective intended audience is intrinsically complicated. Firstly, this is because the child has no spending power and instead it is the parent, guardian, teacher or associated adult who buys the book or pays for the ticket and takes the child to see a performance. This fact has far-reaching consequences, and it does not only influence marketing issues but also to a certain extent shapes the content of a book or performance and ultimately the way it is received by the child. For example, the reason that children's theatre is often associated with educational practices can be traced to the idea that when children's theatre is more than just entertainment or an art form it is more likely to be worth the money. When a school decides to take a class to the theatre it is not the children who decide which production to see, as it is the teacher or head teacher who makes this choice, perhaps guided by a curriculum. Also, when a play is particularly bad or upsetting the student may not have the freedom to leave the auditorium. Similarly, a

parent may decide that a book given the Whitbread Children's Book Award is a much better choice than a 'less well-received' book chosen by their son or daughter.

This introduces another complication in that a third party exists within the proposed relationship between book (or play) and the child, namely the critic (Hunt, 2005: 15). However what position the critic occupies and the necessity of her existence could be debated. It could be argued that the critic maintains some quality control, as analysing and examining what is produced and how this is received, the critic can point out where works are failing, for example being politically incorrect, reaffirming gender stereotypes or simply being commercial schemes without any literary or artistic quality. At the same time, this idea that the adults' opinion and valuation is needed is by some perceived as insulting to the young. This is one of the ways in which the child loses her voice and how children's literature is dispossessed.

Dispossessing the child in relation to its own literature is one of the core arguments within Jacqueline Rose's work *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*. Although she uses the example J. M. Barrie's play *Peter Pan*, Rose transfers the argument to the wider practice of children's literature to analyse the ultimately 'impossible' relationship between adult and child (Rose, 1993: 1). It is this relationship which ultimately makes children's fiction a flawed concept, as even though books are written and published for the child, in reality it is the child which comes second, after the adult who as author, maker and giver occupies the primary position (Ibid: 1-2). In reference to *Peter Pan* Rose argues that it is an example of how the story tries to encapsulate the child and childhood innocence, however Barrie's work "does not speak *to* the child," nor, according to Rose, has it ever done so in the past (Ibid: 1). Instead this mythical innocence is there to feed the adult's desire (Ibid: xii). She writes: "Peter Pan is a front-a cover not as concealer but

as vehicle- for what is most unsettling and uncertain about the relationship between adult and child.” (Ibid)

Shifra Schonmann, in her work *Theatre as a Medium for Children and Young People*, also looks at this relationship between adult and child in the context of children’s literature and subsequently at theatre for the child. Using the work of Jenkins, editor of *The Children’s Culture Reader*, Schonmann looks at how the child is placed outside the political sphere and needs to be protected from the adult’s harsh realities (Jenkins quoted in Schonmann, 2006: 21). However, Jenkins and Schonmann observe that the child is not only directly affected by political choices, but “every major political battle of the twentieth century has been fought on the backs of children.” (Ibid) Schonmann continues recognising “the way that we, as adults, want to protect our children and yet we use them as “human shields”, in Jenkins’ words, against criticism.” (Ibid)

David Rudd places the debate in context of Foucault’s notions of power and ‘genealogical’ approach’. In his essay ‘Theorising and Theories; How Does Children’s Literature Exist?’ he tries to “steer a course between biological essentialism and a cultural determinism, arguing that the child is necessarily both constructed and constructive, and that this hybrid border country is worthy of exploration” (Rudd, 2005: 25). Drawing comparisons between how Foucault rejected ‘simple social constructionism’ and recognised that madness existed before the development of psychiatry, Rudd argues that before the establishment of children’s literature, the ‘texts’ that did address children were simply not “considered a separate cultural entity until the eighteenth century”(Ibid: 20). When children’s literature was established and consequentially became institutionalised, it started to filter out and ignore that which was deemed to not fit in. In Rudd’s words:

Thus ‘folklore, nursery rhyme and nonsense’, as Rose (1984: 139) notes, became sideline as mere ‘rhythm and play’, for fear of their disruptive potential (interestingly, these literary forms are also those linked more closely to the body and to performance...) (Ibid)

This quote could be read as a very possible answer to the question set earlier, and could shed light on why children’s theatre is distanced by the realm of children’s literature. Because theatre is a combination of text and performance and therefore challenges the conventions of children’s literature, neither theatrical productions nor play texts are considered, thus children’s theatre is dismissed in its entirety. As Michael Benton observes in his essay on reader-response criticism, among texts for children, it is the play that receives no critical interest at all (Benton, 2005: 90).

In arguing that there is such a definable practice as interculturalism or internationalism in contemporary children’s theatre in the UK, I recognise that this has been largely unacknowledged by either theatre or children’s literature critics and would suggest that this is because it falls on the border between the interests of the two different disciplines. While interculturalism is a significant and debated term in theatre and performance studies, especially regarding work made for adults, critics seldom use the term in discussions of children’s literature. This is in part because it is linked primarily, as we shall see, to issues of how a play text is performed in the theatre, rather than being just about the story or content of the play text. One way however, in which interculturalism can be situated within more familiar debates within children’s literature is through linking it to the idea of multiculturalism.

Terminology

Establishing the terminology in this thesis is essential, however at the same time, an over-emphasis on the terms and definitions, might be detrimental to the discussion of the subject. While the main terms can be identified as: children's theatre, interculturalism, multiculturalism and internationalism, these terms can nevertheless bring a whole array of different related terms, which can be antonymous or synonymous to the original meaning. For example, when explaining the term children's theatre as professional theatre for a child audience, it is useful to specify the child within this audience where possible or at least always be aware that factors such as age, gender and upbringing make each young individual within this audience different from the other. It becomes even more complicated with terms such as Interculturalism. When Patrice Pavis introduces it in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, he gives quite an extensive list of related terms such as: intracultural, transcultural, ultracultural, precultural, postcultural and metacultural (Pavis, 1996: 4-8). He then continues to name other practices in the theatre which are similar but at the same time more divergent from the previous terms listed, such as: Multicultural, Cultural collage, Syncretic theatre, Post-colonial theatre and the "Theatre of the Fourth World" (Ibid: 8-10).

The specificity that this collection of terms has to offer might be useful when considering any of these practices in relation to theatre for adults. The practice of interculturalism and internationalism is well established and discussed by critics and theorists. However as this thesis is applying these concepts to the field of theatre for the child, it is important to re-establish the main terms and re-qualify their meaning.

All three terms explore a slightly different ground or starting point, from which they might interlink or show similarities. Briefly summarised, it can be understood that intercultural performances mix practices and elements of different cultures and thus create a new form of representation. In multicultural performances on the other hand, different cultural references do not have to be that apparent through the form of the performance itself but can be located in the context, for example a cast can be multicultural, a director might be from a particular background, or a play might be created for a specific audience with a different cultural background. At the same time a production can be multicultural not necessarily in its form or practice, but through ideology or political orientation which can be evident in the story. Internationalism could be described as a practice that allows theatrical productions to be performed in different countries or in case of an international theatre festival, alongside each other.

With a child audience which is likely to be a much more active and interactive than the adult audience, these terms are often very much more interlinked with each other. Often it is found that productions that start from individual practices or objectives result in performances that can be described with more than one term. However, before this is addressed it would be useful to examine the other main term of this thesis, that of children's theatre itself. In contrast to interculturalism, multiculturalism and internationalism, children's theatre could mistakenly be taken as quite straightforward. On the contrary 'children's theatre' is often mistaken as to imply theatre made by children. It is also not clear if children's theatre also includes puppetry, musicals, pantomime, (meaning both the traditional British entertainment

form as well as that of the ‘mute’ or ‘mime performers’³) dance, circus, and theatre with very didactical aims (for example Theatre in Education). The immediate answer would be that none of these forms could be completely excluded because the contemporary practice of children’s theatre is interdisciplinary, moreover when examining the history of this area as I will do in chapter two, it becomes clear how these various disciplines interlink.

Children’s Theatre

The term children’s theatre is defined by Moses Goldberg as “a formal theatrical experience in which a play is presented for an audience of children” (Goldberg, 1974: 5). This means that it excludes theatre made by children, for the reason that this could be seen as a different practice that does not necessarily focus on performance but on enabling and motivating the child to use dramatic art as a free “expression of the child’s creative imagination” (Ibid: 4). Although theatre for children and theatre made by children have many similarities and mutual goals, these two different phenomena work on different levels, affecting the child in different ways. Goldberg’s definition is very succinct, but where he mentions “a play being *presented* for an audience,” he to some extent excludes the creative process that precedes the moment a play is

³ Pantomime in the UK should not to be confused with the mute performer with white face (characteristically pretending to be trapped a invisible box) that in the rest of Europe is associated with the word. However it is argued that the two different interpretations of pantomime both share their roots in Greek mimes of which fragments written by Epicharmus are found as early as 540-450 BC (Lathan, 2004:12). This style of mime continued to be popular in Roman times and as Peter Lathan points out, what is now understood to be pantomime in the UK, “can be traced back to the Romans’ *Fabulae Atellanae*, which were rather crude and earthy improvised farces.” (Ibid) The Italian *Commedia dell’Arte*, which especially flourished in the sixteenth century, is believed to be the direct ancestor, however it was the *Comédie Française* that really made pantomime popular in the UK (Taylor, 2007: 12). John O’Brien explains in his work *Harlequin Britain, Pantomime and Entertainment, 1690-1760*, that ultimately that what was so much loved in the UK was a completely mixed style of entertainment. As he writes: “This mode of performance which fused Continental *Commedia dell’Arte* characters, classical mythology, dance, opera, acrobatics, and farce... would come to be considered a characteristically British form” (O’Brien, 2004: xiii).

presented on stage. The process of writing, adapting, designing and direction is a very important element of children's theatre as this is where the nature of the audience is first considered. When a company decides to stage Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for an audience aged between 8 and 10, they will from the onset create something that will work for this audience and thus every decision they will make will be taken accordingly. This could include adapting the language, designing the set to interest young people, creating appealing music and acting more clearly or quickly to avoid the audience becoming bored.

Evidently an audience purely consisting of children is hard to find. Although in principle not impossible, most parents accompany their children to the theatre because guidance and protection of the young is recognised as important. Also when children go to the theatre as part of a school trip, the guidance of appropriate adults is legally necessary. This is not only often desired by those on stage, who occasionally fear school groups as they can be very disruptive to a performance and disrespectful of their art (Gila Almagor *quoted in* Schonmann, 2006: 162), but leaving a group of actors completely alone with young people can be deemed by some as irresponsible, as an adult should always be there to ensure the content of a play is not 'dangerous' for young minds. As with literature for the young, where an adult has to be present to read the book to the child who cannot read, this presence will always create a dual readership or in the theatre, a mixed audience.

This presence of the adult further complicates the creation of an explicit definition of the term children's theatre. However, by taking the creative process as where the specificity of the audience is used to create and form a production, essential in children's theatre, this problem is to some extent mitigated. In other words, when children's theatre is understood as placing the nature of the young audience central in

the entire creative process of a theatrical performance and ultimately the moment of performance itself, it will distance itself from other performances such as the pantomime or musicals as these are created to appeal to a family audience. With pantomime particularly there are certainly elements that are very enjoyable for children, however a large part of what is said and shown on stage is incomprehensible for children, for example sexual innuendos. Musical and pantomime performances are however closely related to the history of children's theatre, and both these forms of entertainment will be discussed.

There are theatre companies that take an audience orientated approach very seriously, and aim to make performances that are completely child-orientated. Alan England, for example, who speaks from his experience as a children's theatre director writes about the adult presence: "...I am sure that a director should not play for them behind the youngster's backs" (England, 1990: 153). This, as mentioned before in relation to pantomime, is a very important aspect of children's theatre. However the adult presence both in the audience as in the creative process cannot be completely neglected. When the adult is writing or creating theatre for the child, it is likely that there is a desire or a need to relate to the child's experience of the world, because this is what makes a performance relevant and accessible for the child. However, to create an impression of the experience of the child in the twenty-first century, adults have limited means. They can presume or guess at what it is like to be a child, observe and talk to children, or use their own experiences and place them in a current context. Of course, the problem of adults looking back at their childhood is that they often idealise this time.

Indeed, childhood is in itself a wholly culturally constructed state. Following the basic logic of age categories and setting the cut off point at the age of eighteen, it

should be straightforward to recognise that ‘the child’ is under this age and ‘the adult’ above, as it is in many laws and government regulations. In the UK at eighteen a person is allowed to vote, buy alcohol and cigarettes and parents stop receiving child benefits. Nevertheless there are also laws and regulations that seem to imply some ‘coming of age’ before this cut-off point, as for example, a person is no longer obliged to partake in education past the age of sixteen, she can live independently and she has the right to receive the minimum wage. The link between reaching adult status and gaining power is obvious here; both at 16 and 18 a person receives ‘rights’ to self-autonomy and independence.⁴ There are ways in which the child is separated into different categories and sub-groups within the first eighteen ‘immature’ years. To avoid placing the older ‘minor’ in the same category as the child, instead of teenager, the terms ‘young person’ or ‘young adult’ are generally preferred. The infant is also divided into babies, toddlers and pre-school children at the early stages of childhood. In addition to these age categories many other elements are used to recognise distinctions within the concept of the ‘child.’ For example children are referred to as inner-city kids or private school children and the child’s ethnic or cultural background are also significant.

As such the child or childhood cannot be considered as a collective, homogeneous unity of universal value, a fact that seems to suggest that a research project such as that presented in this thesis is flawed because it draws on a concept that is unstable and ambiguous. However, as the phenomenon of children’s theatre draws so strongly on the cultural construction of childhood, it is essential to develop

⁴ Remarkably, the law does make a great exception when the child becomes a criminal. In England the child is no longer ruled a ‘child’ at just ten years old and will have to appear in the criminal courts if his or her deeds are deemed severe enough. Ironically, when the child could ‘benefit’ from his or her power status in the sense of diminished responsibility for their actions, the child is in the eyes of the law old enough to be judged as an adult, irrespective of the physical and mental development or other factors which in similar situations deem the child to be too immature to make serious decisions and to be in charge of their own life.

an understanding of how this construction is developed culturally and socially. As Allison James, Alan Prout and Chris Jenks write in their seminal work *Theorizing Childhood*:

Childhood is understood as a social construction. As such it provides an interpretive frame for contextualising the early years of human life. Childhood, as distinct from biological immaturity, is neither a natural nor universal feature of human groups but appears as a specific structural and cultural component of many societies. (1998: 8)

As such the authors argue correctly that the ‘child’ “can never be entirely divorced from other variables such as class, gender, or ethnicity” (Ibid). Indeed, the consideration of a child as an individual audience member rather than part of a homogenous and universal group is important, but the concept of childhood can still provide an ‘interpretive frame’ for this research, especially in relation to an individual experience that most often takes place within a group (as in ‘an audience’). It is important that this research can recognise both the individual ‘child’ and the cultural and social construction of ‘childhood’ to inform the theatrical dialogue with the adult practitioner.

Childhood, as a cultural construction, is often described in relation to the Romantic discourse (for example Locke, Rousseau and William Blake) as a stage of innocence in which the child is different, special and needs to be protected (Cassidy, 2009: 61). This does not mean that childhood, from the child’s point of view, conforms to this idealised adult version. Critics such as Jacqueline Rose are strongly against what she terms ‘the myth’ of childhood innocence which, she argues, is all about what the adult desires and does not exist as an actual childhood property (Rose, 1993: xii). Recognising that children live in the same world as adults, it could be

assumed that they face the same number of problems and difficulties as grown-ups (Panken, 1998: 11). There is no reason to believe that they do not know about the darker side of life and issues such as war and death, and additionally, they also have problems like bullying, friendship anxieties and (un)popularity among peers. For an adult playwright it might be difficult to understand how it is to be a child in the twenty-first century, living in a capitalist society that is about consumer choice and maximising profit. This generation gap between the creator of children's theatre and the child audience is the reason that Ton Panken argues that children's theatre could also be described as a dramatic communication between child and adult (Panken, 1998: 11). In this definition, there is recognition that the adult will always approach the child from his own perspective and experience, but it also includes the possibility of the child's input and a respect for the child's experiences and personal world, without assuming that these are disconnected from the adult's society.

With help from both Goldberg and Panken's definitions, but also from Tony Jackson's definition In *Learning Through Theatre: New Perspectives on Theatre in Education* (1993:7)⁵ this thesis will take the term children's theatre to indicate a theatrical dialogue for an audience of children, where a performance is created and presented by a professional adult or group of adults (albeit with the inspiration, and at times, creative input from the child), with the intention to engage with the child aged between 0-13 years as an audience member. Within these principles a performance can use multiple disciplines or practices, like puppetry, dance, music, circus or mime, as long as these elements are incorporated within a dramatic framework. Alan England states in the beginning of his work that he will not attempt to include

⁵ For Jackson, children's theatre refers to self-contained plays for younger audience up until 12-13 (work considered as 'young people's theatre' is from the age of 14 upwards). See also Polka Theatre which states directly under their website address that it is a children's theatre company that stages work for audiences 0-13. This age range is consistently repeated throughout their literature (see <http://www.polkatheatre.com/editorial/about-us>).

performances with puppetry and dance as he might do injustice to these forms through limited discussion (England, 1990: 1). This thesis also recognises that these forms are practices in their own right and each merits critical and academic research,⁶ but considering that current productions for children often use elements of puppetry, dance and live music, it would be impossible to completely dismiss or neglect these elements within a performance. Within a performance that could be described as intercultural or multicultural, it is often precisely these elements that add cultural references, for example in African music, Indian dance or Javanese shadow puppetry.

Interculturalism, Multiculturalism and Internationalism

The terms interculturalism, multiculturalism and internationalism will be explored with reference to the following plays and productions: *Handa's Surprise* (2007), a production by the Little Angel Theatre, adapted from the book by Eileen Browne and directed by Marleen Vermeulen; *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1998) by Salman Rushdie, an adaptation by Tim Supple and David Tushingham, performed at the National Theatre; *The Nightingale* (2005), a production by Yellow Earth Theatre, adapted and directed by David K.S Tse after the fairy tale of Hans Christian

⁶ Eileen Blumenthal writes in her work *Puppetry and Puppets, An Illustrated World Survey*, that only in the nineteenth century puppetry in the UK became more associated with children instead of appealing to a mixed ages audience (Blumenthal, 2005:20). For this she gives two reasons: Firstly with the romantic movement came the idea of children being “a special group with unique imagination and needs,” and puppets in particular were seen as the ideal entertainment for this group (Ibid). Secondly Blumenthal explains that realism within theatre had a great impact on the way puppetry was considered (Ibid). Especially in comparison with actor-based work, puppetry was regarded as incapable of representing reality and satisfying the need for “objective data”, and thus only deemed fit for children. (Ibid). However, as is evident in Blumenthal’s work, puppeteers have not solely created work for young audiences but have instead continued to use puppets as an expressive art form. Current work for adults can now be found in, for example, the Puppet Barge in London, but it is also incorporated in major productions such as *War Horse* (by National Theatre). Possibly for the reason of puppetry not being solely associated with child entertainment there is currently a large network of research into this art form and the Central School of Speech and Drama has both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees solely on this topic.

Andersen; The National Theatre's production of *Coram Boy* (2005), adapted by Helen Edmundson from a novel by Jamila Gavin, and finally, *Perô*, a performance originally created by the Dutch company Speeltheater in 1994 and staged in the autumn of 2008 at the Unicorn Theatre in London.

Starting with interculturalism, I intend to give a brief outline of the issues surrounding the term interculturalism and explain its practice within the theatre. In discussing an intercultural performance the focus will be on cultural references and elements, often taken from non-British theatrical traditions in aspects such as dance, movement, staging décor, costumes and music, or in using non-English linguistic elements, as well as the play text's story itself. This is because theories of interculturalism arose in the main with regard to how a text can be performed, rather than what the text itself is. It is legitimate to speak of 'intercultural Shakespeare' for instance, although such values lie in what can be done with the text in performance rather than the play texts themselves.⁷ The audience and their reaction to and perception of what is staged is also essential to the overall performance and I will also argue that the cultural background of the child plays an important role. In the report by the Commission for Race Equality called 'The Duty to Promote Race Equality: A Guide for Schools', there is an example of using intercultural theatre aimed at a child audience to convey a message against racism and discrimination. The report highlights an initiative of a school with only a few pupils from ethnic minorities that invited a black musician to "encourage understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity" (Commission for Racial Equality, 2002). The musician did this through

⁷ Examples of discussions of intercultural theatre are: Dionne, Craig and Parmita Kapadia (Ed.) *Native Shakespeares, Indigenous Appropriations on a Global Stage* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008); Massai, Sonia (Ed.) *World-Wide Shakespeares, Local Appropriations in Film and Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Tatlow, Anthony. *Shakespeare, Brecht, and the Intercultural Sign* (Durham: Duke University Press: 2001)

stories and songs from different parts of the world to “encourage them to think about local and family connections beyond Britain.” (Ibid)

It would be inaccurate to assume that the intercultural form of theatre is a recent phenomenon that has only developed in light of the current debate about multicultural society. A fascination with things ‘exotic’ or ‘oriental’ has long featured in forms of child entertainment, take the recurring stories of *Aladdin* and *The Arabian Nights* adopted within the traditional ‘British’ pantomime performances, for example. Another example of early intercultural theatre is provided by a company called SARUM Theatre for Children, which toured the Wiltshire valleys in 1961 to bring rural school classes *The Astonishing Adventures of Pang*, a “Chinese play set in the traditional manner” (British Children’s Theatre Association, 1962).

Concerns around correct cultural representation, especially in relation to post-colonial theory, have brought new considerations to intercultural theatrical productions for the child. Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins, in their introduction to *Women’s Intercultural Performance*, argue that in western societies theatre can be defined as a practice that removes culture from its flow and isolates certain aspects to reintroduce it for commercial interests (Holledge and Tomkins, 2000: 4). They write:

Just as theatre acts as a mechanism for making culture intelligible in the west, each culture has a mechanism for making *another* culture intelligible. This intelligibility is frequently achieved by consuming the ‘other’ as an attempt to understand it, own it, and/or control it. (Ibid)

By owning the ‘other’ and by practising some sort of control over it, the fear of the ‘other’ might be contained and its power restricted.

Interculturalism as a description is avoided by many theatre practitioners and preferred are other terms like multicultural theatre or internationalism. The negative

connotation of the word could derive from the American educational movement in the nineteen forties where, firmly embedded in modernity, the human subject was denied a complex and plural identity and a respect for individual differences (Oneck, 1990: 147) In Britain the reason for the aversion is harder to identify, but possibly the current migration policies of the government where the focus lies upon the integration of the outsider into the 'host' culture, (Casciani, 2008) has created a negative resonance for the term interculturalism. Interculturalism might wrongly be accused of having the same objectives as integration policies, namely to reduce cultural diversity by setting 'British' culture as model and expecting others to assimilate to 'British' values. The term multiculturalism, in contrast, seems to embody a more open and diverse approach towards cultures within society. However as Diane Powell and Fiona Sze write in the introduction to a work of collected essays on the subject of interculturalism:

Interculturalism [...] recognizes that in a society of mixed ethnicities, cultures act in multiple directions. [...] Multiculturalism tends to preserve a cultural heritage, while interculturalism acknowledges and enables cultures to have currency, to be exchanged to circulate, to be modified and evolve. (Powell and Sze, 2004)

John Martin describes Interculturalism in *The Intercultural Performance Handbook* as a new form of expression that materialised through a cultural exchange. (Martin, 2003:1) He writes:

This exchange is not multiculturalism, the simultaneous existence of several cultures side by side, nor cross-culturalism where people from one cultural background learn a form from another culture and practise it.

Interculturalism is an area of interaction where new forms are created”
(Ibid).

The problem with Martin’s description arises when he compares the term interculturalism with cross-culturalism and multiculturalism. On the one hand, he tries to pin down the meaning of interculturalism by effectively excluding these two other practices. On the other hand, he is essentially illustrating how close the different terms are to one another and, as a result, raises the question to what extent these practices interlink. Indeed, Martin points out that in cross-culturalism, people from one cultural background learn a form from another culture and practise it (Ibid): a learning process also essential for interculturalism. However, the description of cross-culturalism is problematic as it assumes that elements of a different culture can be extracted and learned without any influence and interference from the learner’s own culture.

The same argument could be employed when looking at the difference between intercultural and multicultural performances. Therefore, again using the description of John Martin, who argues that multiculturalism is the simultaneous existence of several cultures side by side (Ibid), a question could be formulated that asks whether the difference between a multicultural and intercultural performance lies in the fact that an intercultural performance has a mixed influence of different cultures that come together, and a multicultural performance represents ‘influence-free’ single cultures existing within a multicultural society? However, as previously suggested, it appears questionable as to whether cultures have such distinct and solid borders that make them impermeable to other influences.

Looking at the first example, the performance of *Handa’s Surprise* at The Little Angel Theatre, with this question in mind, it is hard to establish whether the production can be classed as an intercultural or a multicultural performance. On the

one hand, it appeared to be a multicultural performance because the story of *Handa* is set in Kenya and the set design, puppets, costumes, actors, movement and music all forge the origin of the story as locatable in Kenya. The story is very easy to follow. *Handa* is taking fruit to surprise her friend in the next village but along the way animals manage to take the fruit, only leaving some tangerines that are eventually shared by the whole audience. The cast consists of only two performers who become the animals with their various attributes. In addition, there are puppets which are disguised and incorporated in the set that has been made to resemble an African courtyard by the use of colours and natural materials.



Illustration 1.1 and 1.2 - *Handa's Surprise*. The illustration left is exemplary of how the actors used puppets, as well as masks and other props, to bring the animals in the story to life. The image on the right is an example of the various puppets used in the production. The animal puppets were made out of wood or other natural materials. (Photos: Little Angel Theatre)

Even the way the audience is seated around the actors on the stage and not on the seats in the auditorium probably confirms an idea most people hold about African theatre practices as being focused around a communal event within a village. The fact that the songs are in Swahili but the story is told in English is already enough to make this performance intercultural. If the play had been performed entirely in Swahili it would obviously not be understood by most, if not all, of the audience, and it appears

to be impossible to simply omit the audience and its cultural background from any performance.

Two of the young audience members demonstrated how the cultural background is important to the audience reception during the performance of *Handa's Surprise*. When the audience was told to take off their shoes and find a seat on the stage, one little boy refused to listen and took a seat in the auditorium where, as he explained, he sat the last time he came to the theatre. His mother desperately tried to change his mind, and the boy broke into tears whilst telling his mother he was scared to enter the stage and sit with the others. Moments later another boy was taken out of the theatre in tears. This boy did initially obey the instructions, however sitting so close to the actors and the action somehow unsettled him and gave him the urge to leave. When he was taken back into the auditorium he sat with his mother in the back of the theatre. Here, possibly feeling much more comfortable with the distance between him and the on-stage action, he watched the end of the play. Both examples show that what is presented to the children might not meet their expectations of what they believe theatre should entail, as they take the standard British theatre tradition as their perception of what theatre should be.

This aspect of audience reception could also take part in the cultural exchange. The coming-together of two cultures, the two boys and the culture of the play, made the performance intercultural in the sense that the experience is a mix and an interaction of culturally-bound forms and expectations. If multicultural theatre, from Martin's point of view, really exists in contemporary Britain, then this example raises the important question of whether such a theatre can or should exist only at the level of the content of the play? The story could have been told wholly within British theatre performance traditions, but if so would that really be multicultural from a

theatrical perspective? Alternatively does a multicultural theatre exist in terms of its use of performative elements, thereby staging the interaction and contact of different theatrical traditions, in this case that of Kenya and Britain? The implication is that multicultural theatre can be strongly intercultural at the level of performance-text as it is, to some extent, disconnected from the theatrical traditions that British theatre already possesses.



Illustration 1.3 - *Handa's Surprise*. The tangerine tree has an important role in the story and takes a prominent place in the performance space. The play ends with the children in the audience being given a tangerine to eat together with the cast and puppets. (Photo: Little Angel Theatre)

There are critics who argue that interculturalism itself is part of the British theatrical tradition or at least a western theatre practice. As Mark Fortier writes: “Interculturalism is often practised by western artists and it is sometimes criticized as a form of one-sided western appropriation of non-western art forms.” (Fortier, 2002: 228) However, thinkers such as Erika Fischer-Lichte point out that intercultural performances are not limited to just western countries but have a worldwide appeal. (Fischer-Lichte, 1990: 12-13) Fischer-Lichte gives examples of intercultural productions not only in Europe but also in India, China, Japan and Africa. In addition,

Rustom Bharucha, who is arguably the most fervent critic of Western intercultural productions, argues that cultural exchange in the forms of theatrical practices can also be an important form of communication between two different cultures. Here he points out that his term ‘intracultural’ theatre (which is by Bharucha’s descriptions an intercultural practice in all but its name) also includes “the exchanges within, between and across regions in the larger framework of a nation,” and it is often forgotten that within these boundaries “other cultures” could also be found (Bharucha, 1997: 31). Bharucha considers these practices of intraculturalism in his own native country of India. However, as will be argued in this thesis, the cultural exchanges *within* the framework of the nation is why in the UK, in relation to past and present immigration, intercultural (or intracultural) theatre is important.

This theme of difference and cultural negotiation existing within the nation, rather than just in between nations, relates powerfully to the second play that I would like to discuss, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, staged at The National Theatre and adapted from the children’s story written by Salman Rushdie. The original novel is a classic example of a children’s story that seems intended to be read at different levels by child and adult reader. For the adult, it is a story about the relationship between a writer’s freedom to write and to create fictions and how that conflicts with the demands of worldly politics, while for the younger child it is mostly a story about the pleasures of creating stories (Sen, 1995). As Kullman argues, it is influenced as much by *Alice In Wonderland* and *The Wizard of Oz* as by Indian folktales and the originally oral stories of the *Arabian Nights* and therefore integrates its twin traditions in intercultural fashion. (Kullman, 1996)

It is geographically set in India, however the performance challenges western cultural representation by deliberately showing India as a vibrant mixture of different

cultures and not a romanticised and a-historic version preserved in a vacuum free from politics and modernity. In this respect, the performance uses theatrical strategies analogous to Rushdie's in his own *Midnight's Children* to challenge Orientalised and 'Kiplingesque' views of India as unchanging, exotic and traditional. The story is a very obvious claim for the freedom of speech, at least for an adult spectator, and by setting it during an election, the characters find themselves in times of democratic change while also dealing with problems such as pollution and divorce. The mystic land, to which Haroun needs to travel to return his father's gift of the gap, also continues themes of hybridity and the subversion of what is conventional by playing with traditional stories. For example, in one story there is a terribly ugly princess that needs to be saved from the hands of evil, and in another the brave soldier turns out to be a girl. The elements and moments of non-sense humour and the presence of the mechanical, such as the Hoopoe in form of a machine performed on stage by an actor in a steel construction to give him wings, are also important contributors in creating cultural representation free from the stereotypical.

The influence of the *Arabian Nights* is very clear in the costume of the water genie and the source of stories being a sea with one thousand and one different currents, however the criticisms of Orientalist depictions by the West are much more subtle. When Haroun sleeps with his father in the house of the electoral candidate for whom Haroun's father has to speak, he finds himself in a hideous kitsch peacock surrounded by copies of fake *Arabian Nights* with no pages. In between these Haroun finds a different book in a language that he does not recognise and with 'different' illustrations. It could be argued that this 'unreadable' book symbolises a real cultural history inbetween books that represent an essentialised and romanticised view of the 'other' culture, a product of western culture.

However the cultural history in this play is not something static and singular, but a fluid and changing mix of different currents that come together to create new tales. This is supported by the use of costumes, music and a cast from different ethnic backgrounds, which means that the play is not just about one single cultural representation, but is a lively mix of cultural elements. Interculturalism is the fabric of the performance and is as relevant to a multi-cultural view of Britain as it is to India, in both cases challenging narrowly parochial and nationalist views of these cultures as possessing only a single identity. The music is a particularly good example of hybridised traditions, with traditional Indian chanting, opera music, the Beatles, and rhythmical drumming often performed by the cast themselves.

The Nightingale, created by the Yellow Earth Company, does try to recreate what we might term the ‘traditional’ image of China, at least in one sense. Yellow Earth as a company have developed their theatrical style as combining traditions of East and West while at the same time they “explore and celebrate cultural heritage and contemporary experience” (‘Yellow Earth Theatre’ website).⁸ The traditions of Chinese theatre inform the sets, costumes, movement, dance and music to aid the fairytale’s story of the Chinese emperor who captures the nightingale and keeps her in a golden cage to console him for the loss of his wife and child. This play is interesting in terms of the intercultural debate as it is an Asian theatre company based in London that adapts a western creation of an ‘Oriental’ story. It could be argued that here the company reclaims the story written by Hans Christian Andersen in 1843 and in a sense returns it to a more authentic version of its ‘original’ Chinese content, through utilising Chinese performance traditions. The company itself explains on its website that the story offered a unique opportunity for UK and Hong Kong Asian artists to

⁸ ‘Yellow Earth Theatre’ website is available at: <http://www.yellowearth.org/about>

collaborate (Yellow Earth Theatre, 2005). The play further explores ideas around cultural heritage by contrasting the Chinese traditional song of the nightingale to the karaoke singing robot, which becomes the object of the emperor's fancy, as the mechanical music box does in the original story. This is to say that intercultural hybridity is also found by deliberately relating elements from traditional and contemporary Asian culture, thus sidestepping the danger of creating an unchanging and Orientalist view of Chinese culture by means of problematizing what is considered to be authentically Chinese.

The National Theatre's production of *Coram Boy*, adapted by Helen Edmundson from Jamila Gavin's prize-winning novel from 2000, could be argued to be a multicultural play instead of an intercultural performance, insofar as the story itself seems predominant over any issues of different cultures in performance. The play is set in the eighteenth century, and provides a very bleak view of childhood in this era of the lucrative transatlantic slave trade and other forms of child-trafficking, although as Gavin suggests this also makes it strikingly relevant to much of today's world (Gavin, 2000). Aimed at an audience of twelve plus, the play does not avoid the darker issues of the original novel and the production is very graphic, especially during scenes where babies are being buried alive or dug up, or another that shows the a skeleton being pulled out of the ground. Aside from recreating the images of British culture in the eighteenth century, using accurate costumes and through moving moments of period music sang by a choir on stage (most notably a full-scale recital of Handel's *Messiah*), the performance has limited representations from, or references to other cultures. But it does confront the issue of slavery and what may happen to orphan children directly as in this case both African and white British children almost suffer the common fate of attempted enslavement.

Jamila Gavin, herself from an Anglo-Indian background, wrote her novel in part to contribute to multicultural and anti-racist children's literature. Through the character Toby, who has been saved from a slave ship as a baby, she illustrates the issues of slavery and the slave trade and puts the forgotten black children back into British history (Gavin, 2000). In this sense it functions multi-culturally by reminding us of not only of the often elided African presence in eighteenth-century England, but also in focusing on a friendship and adventure between two boys, one white and one black, that transgresses historical racial boundaries. For this reason it could be argued that the play avoids the use of explicit intercultural references because such references to cultures outside Britain could be interpreted as implying that Toby does not belong to the culture of the land he (and his descendants) live in. Such a separation between Toby and the rest of the white cast would possibly achieve the opposite of Gavin's intention. However, even without the presence of cultural reference or theatrical traditions besides those of eighteenth-century Britain, it could still be argued that the presence of Toby's character does inevitably create a multicultural cast.

This example illustrates the complexity of multicultural theatre in its political and social aims and motivations. Interestingly, it could be understood that the terms multiculturalism and interculturalism have reversed their meaning and implications. The practice of interculturalism shows openness and through the presentation of different cultures, the existence of these references and the way they are allowed to mix with western theatre traditions and young audiences, productions of intercultural nature have allowed cultural diversity to be staged. In the play examined here, the practice of multiculturalism has omitted the cultural references, in order to not single out characters from different backgrounds or ethnicities. Through doing this, the characters that are created come from a multicultural background, but because their

cultural background is omitted, it is implied that they have been integrated into society and embrace a new 'British' identity. Looking for example at *Coram Boy*, where Toby is saved from the evil hands of Otis Gardiner in the end of the play, the young boy abandons his dreams of finding his mother (who presumably has been sold into the slave trade) and instead embraces his new adoptive family. This could be understood as Toby finding and accepting his place in 'British' society.

The third and final term, Internationalism, proclaims to a certain extent to exist between these other two. Using *nation* instead of *culture*, it appears that the term and practice can free itself from the political implications that surround multiculturalism and interculturalism. The Arts Council, which actively encourages artists to work on international projects and offers financial incentives, does not really provide a definite definition on their website. Instead the description remains rather vague as it explains that: "Internationalism is a state of mind, intrinsic to modern life. Internationalism does not depend on travel but requires respect, curiosity and humility" (Arts Council website). The website continues slightly more specifically; "We will support artists from this country to work abroad, international artists to work here, artists from here and abroad to work with each other" (Ibid). This is in the eyes of Pavis too simplistic (Pavis, 1996: 5). The nature of theatre productions which fit within this idea of internationalism need to have a certain accessibility. They need to be able to be understood outside the cultural context of the country where they are created and, probably most importantly, the language of the play needs to be understood by an international audience.

Pavis points out that the motivation of international production should not be purely economic, as plays that can access the international market have ultimately more opportunity to make a profit (Ibid). The Arts Council explains that

internationalism can develop “international knowledge and capacity, and to help internationalise England culturally at a wider and deeper level” (Arts Council website). This idea brings internationalism much closer to interculturalism and multiculturalism. In the short history of children’s theatre, companies from different nationalities creating children’s theatre have been coming together, to discuss and show different work practices and methods. The International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ) was been established in 1965. It describes itself an international network of theatre for children and young people and links its members through national centres in more than 70 countries (ASSITEJ website). ASSITEJ does not describe its own work as intercultural, but it could be considered to be just that, recognising not the conferences or the discussion itself, but the influences evident within theatre practices that follow such an international meeting.

The play *Perô or the Mysteries of the Night* is originally from The Netherlands and was created in 1994 by a company called Speeltheater. After touring extensively in The Netherlands and Belgium, it was revived in 2006/2007 for the company’s 30th anniversary, and was performed in the Zagreb, Austria, the US and in the autumn of 2008 at the Unicorn Theatre in London (Speeltheatre website). Clearly operating on the international field, the play can also be understood to have elements of interculturalism. The performance can be understood to be international because it has sought to create a play that can easily be staged in other countries. It achieves this by not only relying on the performance of actors but also telling the love story between Perô the baker and his neighbour Colombina using puppetry. By doing this, the play does not rely too much on the children understanding the dialogue as they can see what happens. Possibly for the same reason the story is very simple: Perô and Colombina are in love with each other, however as Perô works during the night and

Colombina during the day as a washing woman, the shy baker never gets a chance to make a move. When a colourful painter arrives in town, he runs off with Colombina leaving Perô heart broken. After spending a year with the painter Colombina misses her Perô, his white flour and her own white linen, and returns to live happily ever after.



Illustration 1.4 - *Perô*. This image shows Perô, the baker, and his neighbour Colombina. The black, white and grey colours were later contrasted with the colourful painter who steals Colombina's heart. However, Colombina starts to miss the baker with his white flour and eventually returns to her old village. (Photo: Dirk Buwalda)

The music, which is provided live on stage by two musicians representing night and day, is important to help the children understand the story. The music is not just used to simply indicate when things are sad or happy, it also decides the tempo of the play and supports actions, and for example, a cymbal is a useful instrument to indicate a character is shocked or falls down. At the same time the play does use words, and it could be said that through this it becomes also an intercultural production. Even though the play is Dutch, the story of Perô and Colombina is set in

Italy. The main narrative and the songs of Day and Night are in English, though with a very strong Dutch accent, the limited dialogue between Perô, Colombina and the colourful painter is in Italian, or more correctly, Italian-sounding words (for example spaghetti). Music that is typically associated with Italy is also used to exemplify the setting of the story: this could also be recognised to be an intercultural aspect of the performance.

Interculturalism is often understood to operate between western cultures and cultures from areas further removed or understood to be radically different, thus broadly speaking cultures originating in regions of Africa, South-America, the Middle East or Asia. Even though cultural difference between Italy and the UK, or the UK and the Netherlands, is not as large as the difference between these and, for example, Japanese culture, cultural difference can also be found within Europe. As mentioned earlier, cultural variety also exists within the borders of a nation. This is not only important to interculturalism, it is also what makes internationalism a difficult concept, and even though it is often preferred instead of terms like interculturalism and multiculturalism, it is not able to exist outside social and political contexts. There are dangers within internationalism, such as creating national stereotypes (Pavis, 1996: 5) or presenting a nation without any consideration of the different cultures existing within it and thus proclaiming a very singular idea of national identity.

In conclusion, I would argue that there is a strong contemporary practice of multicultural, intercultural and international children's theatre in Britain, which shows a wide range of different responses to the question of what a multicultural, international and intercultural theatre could, or should, be. However, I have also argued that despite these different responses, children's theatre will, to some extent, always be an intercultural communication as the child audience is culturally diverse

and as such, what is presented on stage will be the resultant variety of possible interactions between cultures that inform the theatrical dialogue in the UK. This does not mean multicultural and international intentions are overruled or made null and void. What it does mean is that these intentions are in practice, or in their performative dialogue, underlined by an intercultural exchange because of the frame of reference of the young audience.

This was seen in the discussion of *Handa's Surprise* where the audience responses were seen to interact with the Kenyan origins of the play. Although *Pero* could be understood as an universal play, in the sense that it could be performed anywhere in the world, changes in for example the language of the play, were necessary to make it accessible for these audiences around the world. Also *Coram's Boy*, which refrained from using any sort of references regarding the cultural roots of the slave boy to highlight his part in British cultural heritage rather his 'difference' in relation to the other characters, still interacts with a cultural diverse audience which interprets the classical music by Handel from their own frame of reference. Where the terms multicultural and international possibly want to steer clear from this interaction, to preserve cultural specificity or claim there is a universal value present in theatre, ultimately there is an exchange on the level of the audience.

As I have previously argued, the reason for cultural interaction are the necessarily porous and shifting borders between cultures and the fact that cultures and cultural identities are not homogenous and fixed but plural, hybrid and in continuous negotiation and renegotiation. Indeed, this highlights my political stance outlined in the introduction of this PhD. My preference for the intercultural production is that it brings this notion of cultural plurality and interaction to the fore and it acknowledges the role of the audience and their cultural diversity. Rather than seeking to protect a

cultural heritage, intercultural production can find ways to reflect on a cultural heritage and explore how this heritage continues and grows in multiple directions and in an increasingly diverse world. Rather than denying cultural difference by seeking universal values, the intercultural production can use the differences found in its audience, as well as the UK as a whole, to enrich the theatrical experience and make it more relevant to the diverse audience.



Illustration 1.5 - The company used a combination of puppetry, silent performance and narrative songs of two musicians (seated on either side of the performance stage) to tell the story. (Photo: Dirk Buwalda)

Chapter 2

The History of Children's Theatre in the UK:

Mapping the Changing Dynamics of the Theatrical

Communication Between Adult and Child

This chapter will focus on the history of children's theatre in the UK. It will explore issues integral to the development of children's theatre in the UK such as financial sustainability, politics, ideology, censorship as well as general developments in theatre and other forms of entertainment in the UK. At the same time the chapter will address the fundamental principles that underline the children's theatre movement such as the (ever-changing) cultural construction of the child, the dependence of the child audience on the adult parent, carer, teacher and those with funding to facilitate their theatrical experience and the relationship between adult practitioner and child audience. I will argue that all these issues are interlinked and, in turn, interlink the three movements of theatre for the young in the UK under different motivations: commercial, educational and artistic. Ultimately this chapter will aim to contextualise the continuing debate about interculturalism, internationalism and multiculturalism that have become integral practices in a movement that has at its heart the need to justify the benefits for the child audience- an audience that is shaped and re-defined in line with societal developments.

I believe it is possible to locate three different (but overlapping) movements of theatre for the young in the UK that operate through seemingly different motives,

aims and styles, with each recognising a different history and origin. Firstly, there is theatre that aims to be a creative or an artistic experience for the child. The current funding body in the UK – the Arts Council¹ – has given rise to many companies which create performances that intend to facilitate the child with theatre that equals the artistic quality of theatre for adults. As such there are no explicit educational messages in the performance (the artistic value is educational itself, see Reason, 2010) nor is there a desire to make a financial profit. This movement of children's theatre mainly recognises its history to be associated with Carl Jenner who established a touring company for children, the Mobile Theatre in 1947, and later the Unicorn in 1967, which became the first theatre venue for children in the UK. Jenner reacted against what she perceived to be the limited quality of children's theatre and set out to create "truthful" theatre "as authentic as any adult theatre" (Bennett, 2005: 13).

Secondly, there is theatre that has a primarily educational goal. Such theatre features performances with themes connected to social issues (bullying, discrimination and even global warming), or to the national curriculum (History, English and Citizenship), and are often presented in schools with accompanying workshops or after-show discussions. The best example of this type of theatre is the 'Theatre in Education movement' (TiE), which was especially popular in the 1970's (Harman, 2009: 11), and is currently continued by companies such as Big Brum and Gazebo. This theatre movement associated its origin and roots with figures such as

¹ Paul Harman (2009) writes in *A Guide to UK Theatre for Young Audiences* that in 1945 the UK government accepted that the arts need support from the state. To this end a funding structure was developed where funding was distributed not directly from the Government but by independent Arts Councils (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland). Harman estimates that of the total £100 million distributed to theatre in 2008, £6 million is for professional theatre companies (around 150 in total) creating work for young audiences (Ibid: 12-13).

Peter Slade,² Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal³ (see Bennett, 2005; England, 1990; Jackson, 1993).

Thirdly there is theatre which is commercially sustainable by either box-office sales, merchandise or sponsorship deals. This type of theatre mainly seeks mainstream popularity and large audiences, and for this reason ‘shows’ usually key into existing markets which include an array of similar ‘merchandise’. *The Gruffalo* (2001), for example, by Tall Stories, is adapted from a children’s picture book and has a whole series of toys, cups and plates, clothes and games.⁴ Likewise, many literary adaptations can be found within this ‘commercial’ branch of theatre for the child, arguably because of its appeal to parents, who have read a particular book to their children and feel reassured that they will spend their money on a familiar story (Harman, 2009: 4). Performances for the child that take place during the Christmas period are also commercially successful as they rely on a tradition in which families visit the theatre in the festive season, resulting in a huge increase in demand for shows suitable for young members of the family. Christmas performances are however different from pantomime productions (which also take place during the Christmas season) as they primarily address the children in the audience whereas in pantomime, the adults are very much addressed with ‘double entendres’ and innuendoes throughout the show. Pantomime is a type of theatrical performance specific to the

² Peter Slade is best known for pioneering dramatherapy. Before turning away from theatre and choosing ‘personal play’ over ‘projected play’, he founded a company in East Anglia in 1930-1 and in London and the Home Counties in 1935 (England, 1990: 18). Work by Peter Slade includes: *Child play: its importance for human development* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1995); *Child drama* (London: University of London Press, 1955); *Experience of Spontaneity* (London: Longmans, 1968)

³ Augusto Boal’s (1931-) seminal publication *Theatre of the Oppressed* was only published in the UK in 1979 by which time the TiE movement and its practice was already well established. In 1982 the Greenwich Young People’s Theatre began to apply his ‘Theatre of the Oppressed techniques’ especially finding the suggested relationship between audience and actor useful in working with young people (see Chris Vine’s chapter on ‘TiE and the Theatre of the Oppressed’, 1993). For more titles on Augusto Boal see: Frances Babbage, Augusto Boal (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004); Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz (eds) *Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism* (London: Routledge, 1994)

⁴ See The Gruffalo Shop: <http://www.gruffaloshop.com/>

UK and features ‘traditional’ set of story lines, conventions, jokes and audience interactions.

There is a common assumption in the UK that pantomime is part of the children’s theatre movement even though researchers and practitioners working in the field never approach pantomime as part of theatre for the young (see Taylor, 2007: 13). The various reasons for this assumption are understandable. Many adults, for example, visit these shows for their children and not necessarily for their own pleasure. Although early pantomime was regularly performed around Christmas, it was also performed all year round and the Christmas slot was not considered traditional (Pickering, 1993: 40). It was not until the repeal of the Licensing Act in 1843 and the promotion of the pantomime as a traditional element of Christmas by the Victorians that trips to the theatre became considered as “ritual part” of the festive season (Ibid). At the same time, the Victorians were beginning to construct Christmas as a family celebration with extra emphasis on the child, thus the pantomime has come to be perceived as children’s entertainment. This confusion surrounding the pantomime performance is an example of the overlapping boundaries of entertainment for the child. Child and adult entertainment, and the different movements within children’s theatre, are not easily defined and divided. Indeed, where I have distinguished the three types of theatre above, I will now argue that it is difficult for them to be considered completely separate and in isolation from each other.

For example, theatre aiming to provide the young audience with a creative or art experience will always be searching for funding and needs to draw both parents and schools to their performances. This motivates theatre practitioners to search for ‘benefits’ in theatre for the child (Reason, 2010: 14). This is also reflected in current

research into theatre for the young. For example, a recent project by Unicorn Theatre aims to understand the ways in which primary school children ‘benefit’ most from their theatre visit.⁵ The aims of this project illustrate how the arts experience movement cannot completely steer away from an educational agenda (see Reason, 2010: 13). There are also educational productions that ‘teach’ creativity and art appreciation through accompanying (drama) workshops and lesson packs but do not have further educational or social messages. This development is popular in European countries such as the Netherlands and rests on the principle that creativity and aesthetic appreciation needs to be encouraged and developed.⁶

At the same time there is theatre that is commercially sustainable, but also aims to provide the child with a quality artistic experience, such as *The Crash of the Elysium* (2011), a *Doctor Who* themed children’s show by renowned company Punchdrunk. While this performance keys in to the popular *Doctor Who* BBC television series and its huge line of merchandise, Punchdrunk has aimed to apply its groundbreaking theatre styles to this production while also aiming to keep the performance exclusively for children by not allowing adults to attend without being accompanied by a child.

These overlapping and interchanging interests and forms exist because the different movements within children’s theatre in the UK ultimately face the same

⁵ The Unicorn Theatre Research Fellowship was funded by the Sir John Cass Foundation and ran in collaboration with Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance with the goal “to measure the benefits of a theatre visit on primary school children” and “investigate the impact, benefits and increased potential for learning when children are prepared for a theatre visit” (Taken from the job advertisement, 2010)

⁶ *Kunsteducatie* (art education) in the Netherlands is based on the principle that stimulating the creativity of children and teaching them to enjoy and validate the arts ultimately stimulates learning and prepares the child to engage with art in later life (see Kunsteducatie.net available at: <http://www.kunsteducatie.net/informatie/kunstgebouw.html>). Although these attempts seem to help children’s theatre practitioners attract audiences, for many it is perceived as a limitation and constricting that performances need to be placed in an educational context and be accompanied with teaching packs and workshops (see Silvia Andringa, ‘Bemoei je d’r niet mee! Verontrusting en ergeis over de onuitbare opmars van de kunsteducatie’ in *Uitgelicht* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij IT & FB, 2002)

problems: Children cannot facilitate their own theatre visit both in terms of buying tickets and travelling to the theatre (see Reason, 2010: 17). The child's attendance depends on the willingness of the adult or carer to come to the theatre, or schools seeing educational benefits to justify paying for a theatre visit or inviting a company to perform during school hours. This means that theatre made for the child also needs to appeal to the adult, so they are encouraged to bring their children to see a performance. If appealing to adults is deemed undesirable, this form of theatre cannot be a successful financial endeavour and instead needs to rely on the ideological motivation of the adult. In other words, many practitioners working within the field of children's theatre do so because they have ideological reasons such as educating and empowering children through theatre or they are motivated by the belief that children deserve theatre as much as adults and that theatre as an art form stimulates the development of the child on an emotional or creative level. As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, these ideological motivations also relate to the cultural construction of childhood. This construction often rests on the idea of the innocence of the child which was in the UK mainly established by the early Romantic movement, themselves influenced by the European Romanticism of writers and thinkers such as Goethe and Rousseau. This idea of the innocence of the child has since been deeply embedded in society (Cunningham, 1995: 73). Importantly too, Romantic 'innocence' is not simply lack of experience of the world but a different state of being, characterised by imagination and creativity. As one critic summarises:

The stage of innocence, possessed by each of us in childhood or in fantasy, is the proof that we possess the powerful, creative, and divine imagination. Experience is, on the other hand, the analytic state of mind that finds the limits of the world that our fallen perception gives us. (Paananen, 1996: 72)

Because the child is considered innocent and wholly separate from the experienced adult, the need as well as the desire to address children directly with their own type of theatre is established. Moreover, the idea about the child and childhood as a stage of innocence influences what is perceived as 'suitable theatre' for the child, and as such children's theatre is limited, censored and judged according to this cultural construction. This censorship, in turn, runs the risk of theatre for the young being considered 'second class', 'just for children' and limited as a form of artistic expression and social commentary (See Bedard, 2009: 25-26).

However, as will become apparent, it is the separation of what is suitable for children and ultimately what is no longer suitable (or interesting) as adult theatre that forms the foundation, including the current creation of, children's theatre. The TiE movement illustrates that changes in society also change what kind of theatre is created for children and what is expected of young audiences. Indeed their ideological and political theatre is exemplary of how societal concerns, such as oppression, the environment and, importantly racism and the multicultural society find their way on to the stage and radicalise the work for what was once the 'innocent' child. However, this active spectatorship and political work changes once again with pressure from society as the rise of Thatcherism and the crisis in the political left as well as within the movement push children's theatre in a new direction. The emergence of theatre with artistic visions can be understood as a break from TiE's educational focus and often poor (artistic) quality. However, it can be argued that the most recent direction in children's theatre continues many principles of the TiE movement; one of these is the representation of a culturally diverse society, a practice that is now seen again to appeal to funding bodies, parents and the ideological principles of practitioners.

The Early Period of Children's Theatre in the UK: Punch and Judy and *Peter Pan*

In the UK, the early history of children's theatre is debated. Although some academics and practitioners working in the field argue J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, first performed in the Duke of York's theatre on the 27th of December 1904, is the first play to be part of the children's theatre movement (see Panken, 1998: 57; Swortzell, 1990: xxv; Wood, 1997: 9), others dismiss this early period because very little other work for children was created, with *Peter Pan* being considered an anomaly rather than the start of a new theatre movement (see England, 1990: 17; Bennett, 2005: 12; Goldberg, 1974: 59). At the same time it is argued that *Peter Pan* was not really written for a child audience (see Bennett, 2005: 12; Schonmann, 2006: 20-21) but rather to satisfy an adult desire to see a romanticised version of childhood on stage. This idea, which is mainly developed by Jacqueline Rose in her publication *The Case of Peter Pan, Or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1993), does not only compromise the claim that *Peter Pan* is the first play created for children, but it also has far-reaching consequences for children's entertainment (literature, film and theatre alike) and the possibilities of creating and researching work for 'the child'. In this chapter, I will use this 'controversial' play, and this 'disputed' early period of children's theatre, to expose many of the complex issues that underline children's theatre in the UK. I will argue that financial sustainability, the construction of childhood and 'adult' theatre, censorship and the influence and presence of adults within the audience, are as pertinent now as in the past. As the development of children's theatre as a movement is multifaceted – intersected by these various

societal and theatrical developments – this early period is difficult to frame in terms of a linear, chronological, development. Neither is it possible to draw distinct disciplinary lines, prompting me to also discuss related practices such as the Punch and Judy show, puppetry and traditional British pantomime.

Peter Pan: the original play for children?

Peter Pan's success is often credited to the fact that it has been re-staged continuously after its first production and is also found as pantomimes, books, musicals, cartoons and merchandise. Most people have heard or seen the story of the boy who never wanted to grow up, and who takes the Darling family to 'Neverland' to help the Lost Boys fight pirates and their leader Captain Hook. The story of *Peter Pan* has also repeatedly featured in the area of literary criticism and the numerous critical debates initiated by Rose⁷. Indeed, after various transformations, *Peter Pan* is now a critical presence in the academic discussion on children's literature. However, *Peter Pan* has not featured to this extent in the academic debate on children's theatre. One reason might be that *Peter Pan*, via children's literary criticism, has been established as a literary text and not as a performance text; the main difference being that *Peter Pan* as a performance text is a communication between performer and audience, using elements such as space, props, lights, sounds, and not just words (Fortier, 2002: 4). As a literary text this active role of the audience is removed and the text is considered solely in a fixed form. In addition, children's theatre demands performers on stage, who have a direct and explicit communication with those sitting in the auditorium. Therefore when Rose's theory is applied to children's theatre, it becomes problematic.

⁷ See the Fall 2010 publication of the *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* which is focused completely on Rose's legacy.

Schifra Schonmann, for example, paraphrases Rose's claim and applies it to children's theatre, writing: "Children's fiction sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, recipient), but where neither of them enters the space in between" (Schonmann, 2006: 20).

I would argue, that children's theatre only exists in the space between the adult theatre practitioner and the child audience, because the performance text is only established through an active communication, or as Manon van de Water writes, "Performances are part of a semiotic process between the performers, the performed, and the audience" (van de Water, 2009: 19). This does not mean that children's theatre is not flawed and that 'the adult and their desire' does not come first (Schonmann, 2006: 20). Indeed, this desire to communicate with the child as an audience, either because of an ideological position or merely for financial gain, is what initiates children's theatre and lies at the heart of the movement. As such, Rose's criticism goes beyond compromising *Peter Pan* as the first children's play; if children's theatre does exist, it will always be influenced by the adults' desires, presence and influence, just as it did with *Peter Pan* and will continue to do in the present.

However, regarding *Peter Pan* as the first children's play is problematic because there were earlier plays labelled and advertised to be for children. For example *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll was first adapted in 1880 by Kate Freilgrath Kroeker (Pickering, 1993: 221) as well as performed as Christmas entertainment at the Prince of Wales Theatre in 1886, notably with much input from Carroll himself who took an active role in the casting process (Gänzl, 1994: 20). In 1901, *Katawampus* was performed as a 'musical play for children'. Judge Parry, who

initially wrote the story for his own children, was encouraged by his publishers to adapt it for the stage (Watkin, 1996), suggesting that there was indeed a market for entertainment for children before *Peter Pan* took to the stage. Other musical plays for children were *Bluebell in Fairyland* (1901) and its sequel *The Cherry Girl* (1903) both written by Seymour Hicks and performed in the Vaudeville Theatre in the Christmas season (Gänzl, 1994: 654). After *Peter Pan* there were more plays intended for children such as *Where the Rainbow Ends* (1911 and 1912) a musical and children's play, *Make-Believe* (1918) and *Toad of Toad Hall* (1929 and 1930) both by A.A. Milne (Nicoll, 1973: 245). Jean Sterling Mackinlay staged Christmas performances for children from 1914 until 1939 (Hartnoll and Found, 1992), which were mainly written by her husband Harcourt Williams (Nicoll, 1973: 245). From 1915, children could attend the Old Vic on Sundays to see Shakespeare plays performed especially for them (England, 1990: 17), and in 1927 Bertha Waddle founded the first professional company, the Scottish Children's Theatre, which regularly toured schools (Ibid).

The existence of these plays before and after the performance of *Peter Pan* suggest that the play was not an anomaly and there are various other plays that might be claimed to be the 'first children's play'. Arguably the history of children's theatre is also disputed because recognising a play for children is complicated by its interdisciplinary and changing form. Indeed, as Rose highlights, even *Peter Pan* confuses the discipline by featuring 'traits' associated with the pantomime and fairy plays (Rose, 1993: 94-101). Puppetry shows, fairy plays and traditional story telling performances for the child – which all preceded *Peter Pan* – were often performed for children in domestic circles or out on streets and public spaces. They are all forms of performances in which a communication is established between the adult performer

and the child audience, and as such they satisfy the definition of children's theatre as given at the beginning of this thesis. All these types of performances have now been integrated within the different children's theatre movements, and their dismissal in this early period appears unjustified. Contrastingly, these 'unofficial' early children's performances highlight questions such as what exactly motivated these performers to look for, and address, the child with their work. As there is evidence of children being part of audiences from the great miracle plays in ancient Greece, to the ritual processions in Egypt (Swortzell, 1990: xviii), the 'groundlings' of the Globe, and the various performances in Victorian Britain, the pantomimes, the musicals, operas and even the music halls⁸, it is clear that separation between the adult and the child audience is a more recent construction. Ton Panken, a Dutch researcher who has written one of the few publications completely focused on the history of theatre for the child, suggests that the origins of this separation lie in the British Victorian era where in the upper middle-classes the child existed in great isolation, moving from the private nursery to the boarding school (Panken, 1998: 58). This Victorian middle-class also had money to spend on their children rather than just providing the basic needs. This in turn created a growth in the sale of toys, books and entertainment especially tailored for the Victorian child (Crone, 2006: 1073). However, the construction of childhood also influenced what was considered 'adult' theatre. During this period a section of the Victorian middle class moved away from performance types based in fantasy and nonsense, to a more 'sophisticated' realistic theatre. One performance type that became re-classified as theatre for the child is puppetry, and to

⁸ The music hall brought popular entertainment based primarily around songs. Dagmar Kift (1996) notes in, *The Victorian Music Hall*, that a survey in 1852 showed that around 10 per cent of music hall visitors were young people under the age of 15 and a further 25 per cent were teenagers (1). Although some of the children attending were brought along with their (working-class) parents, there were also young people who attended without permission, considering the halls much more attractive than Sunday School or evening institutes (Ibid: 65-67)

further explore these societal and theatrical shifts, I will now focus on the tradition of Punch and Judy.

Punch and Judy

Punch and Judy shows emerged at the end of the eighteenth century in the form of street performance using basic transportable theatres. Simple hand puppets replaced the 'sophisticated' marionettes with their delicate strings, a form the 'fashionable' Punch first appeared in as an importation from the Italian *commedia dell'arte* (McCrae, 2001: 8, Shershow: 1995:161). Similar to the pantomime performance, the Punch and Judy show had a set of traditional stories and characters. Punch, a wicked, violent but clever husband, performed alongside Judy, his suffering wife who gets repeatedly beaten with a stick and, in one of the most popular stories, loses her baby as Punch throws it out of a window. Rosalind Crone observes that the Punch and Judy shows at the opening of the nineteenth century were extremely violent, but also proved very successful with the audiences that they attracted on the streets (2006: 1057-1058). As with most puppetry, Punch and Judy shows entertained children as well as adults; the children being generally amused with the slapstick content and the adults attentive to the subversive and satiric nature of the presentation of the domestic abuse, and social and moral disobedience committed by Punch (see Crone, 2006). However, as the shows were outdoor performances and thus not charging for tickets, relying instead upon donations, Punch and Judy showmen performed mainly for those paying, or in other words, the adults in the audience.

The inclusion of a Punch showman as a street exhibitor in Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* allows a unique insight into the performance

and its performer around 1861. The Punch man's account is evidence of the changing necessity of performing for the child audience, not through any real desire to enlighten young lives, but solely to make his entertainment financially sustainable. Mayhew's Punch showman explains that he is struggling on the streets, and he is not earning as much as he previously was, suggesting that he has been losing some of his 'paying audience' during his career (Crone, 2006: 1067). Interestingly, he also shows a dislike for a certain selection of young audience members that, even though they show great enthusiasm for the showman and his show, are nevertheless penniless and unruly. Via Mayhew, the punch showman writes:

The boys is the greatest nuisances we has to contend with. Wherever we goes we are sure of plenty of boys for a hindrance; but they've got no money, bother 'em! And they'll follow us for miles, so that we're often compelled to go miles to avoid 'em. (Mayhew, 1968: 46)

The Punch showman explains that the boys are very disruptive for the shows. They throw each other's caps into the frame, tap the drum themselves, rather than the assistant doing it and 'peep' to catch a glimpse of what happens behind the curtain (Ibid: 47). To this end Whitechapel, Spitalfields and Chelsea are the worst areas in which to perform, whereas the "gentlemen's houses" constitute the good places, as the showman is looking to be invited into the houses (Ibid). Nine and ten, twelve until three, and six until nine are stipulated to best time to walk the streets because "the children are mostly at home at them hours" (Ibid). A little rain is described as desirable, so rich families keep their children indoors and look for something that "quiet 'em a bit" or "pacify the dears" (46).

What Mayhew's showman illustrates is a dislike and dismissal of the working class young audience because they are unaccompanied by adults and have no means

to pay for his efforts, while the middle class young audience has become his new focus. He moves his shows to these areas or, mainly during the summer, to seaside resorts where the same middle classes seek entertainment to occupy the young (Leach, 1985: 97). In other words, the showman is driven by economic motives and as such seeks out which audience – where and when – can provide him with the maximum amount of daily income. The Punch and Judy show demonstrates that the creation of one of the first types of performance aimed at children is primarily established through social economic factors and shaped by an exchange between demand and supply. As Scott Cutler Shershow (1995) writes in his examination of the Punch and Judy show:

Punch thus participates both literally and figurally in the cultural construction of bourgeois childhood... the gradual redefinition of Punch and Judy into an entertainment for children, the status it enjoys today, was shaped by a particular economy of exchange which had the further effect of expropriating the show into a new carefully insulated social space (173).

Shershow is correct in recognising how the Punch showman's account in Mayhew's work illustrates the shift of this type of performance from the street to the drawing room and its transformation from the amusement of the general public to becoming children's entertainment, which is ultimately motivated by the showman's necessity for financial sustenance. This new place of performance also means that the Punch showman needs to adapt his performance to suit this particular young audience, or rather the paying adults. The Punch man, for example, describes how he adapts his show for the 'sentimental' families who want a 'sentimental' style:

To the sentimental folk I am obliged to perform werry steady and werry slow, and leave out all comic words and business. They won't have no ghost, no

coffin, and no devil; and that's what I call spiling the performance entirely.

It's the march of hintellect wot's a doing all this-it is sir. (Mayhew, 1868: 43-44).

Indeed the Punch man illustrates the dilemma faced by the various performers working with the Punch and Judy show; finding this new young audience meant that the performance had to be adapted to suit the Victorian construction of the child as innocent and pure. Although the format of the puppet show was deemed suitable for young minds, the lack of moral justice and the physical violence was troublesome. As early as 1870 George Meredith was concerned, asking "whether the puppet-show of Punch and Judy inspires our street-urchins to have instant recourse to their fists in a dispute, after the fashion of every one of the actors in that public entertainment" (quoted in Shershow, 1995: 174). Compromising the traditional story lines to suit young minds was not well received, however, by the remaining adult street audiences. Collier recounts, for example, how one showman got "lamentably pelted with mud, because, from some scruple or other, he refused to allow the victory over the Devil to Punch" (quoted in Shershow, 1995: 172). And, as Michael Byrom argues, "when the satire disappeared from Punch and it became a variety show, it was only for children and gradually adapted itself to such and audience" (1972: 26). As such it seems that the construction of childhood (especially by the middle classes) was on the one hand essential in re-defining the Punch and Judy show as children's entertainment, and hence offering a new source of income for the showmen. On the other hand, the ideology accompanying the new construction of childhood, further disassociated the Punch and Judy shows from their adult audiences, as they became censored, restrained or in other words: 'childish'.

Sophistication and Degradation in the Theatre at the Turn of the Century

I have used the example of the Punch and Judy show because the development of puppetry is especially exemplary of the shift from adult to child audiences and the 'coming of age' of adult entertainment. Where most puppetry was an acceptable form of performance for audiences consisting of both adults and children from around the second and first millennia B.C.E (Blumenthal, 2005: 11) it was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that UK puppeteers were re-designated a role solely within children's entertainment. George Speaight writes in 1967 that some puppeteers resent this 'allocation' and compares the consideration of puppet theatre as the theatre of children with folk tales becoming the literature of children (Speaight, 1967: 30). Eileen Blumenthal recognises that this redefinition of puppetry as a children's entertainment was not solely related to the construction of childhood but also because of the nineteenth century obsession with science and presenting "objective data" which lead to realism as an art form being widely embraced by theatre directors and playwrights (Blumenthal, 2005: 20). She writes:

Realism is one theatrical ground where puppets cannot compete on equal footing with live actors. But the alternative seemed to accepting society's verdict that a non-realistic form such as puppetry was fit only for children. Since children had usually been a part of the target audience anyway, many puppet artists settled into this truncated role. (Ibid: 20-21)

The emergence of realism within the theatre was partly due to the Victorian obsession with science and objective data, but also due to technological advances such as the developments in stage lighting which meant that every small detail on stage could be

visible for those in the auditorium, lending itself to the creation of realistic and naturalistic sets (Hudson, 1951: 53).

Early Victorian theatre had seen a celebration of different ‘hybrid’ entertainment forms which were mainly fantastical and magical spectacles, rich with fairies, fairy tales, performing animals, clowns and other elements which would be considered today as childish nonsense (Ibid: 14). In this period, not only children and adults shared the theatrical experience, all social classes attended the theatre, albeit segregated within the theatres and different theatre venues (Booth, 1991: 1-2). However, towards the end of the century, the sophisticated and educated upper-middle classes became drawn to either a more civilised realistic (melo)drama centred on upper-middle class characters⁹ or to a political and social theatre, where the ‘short’ realistic movement (lasting around thirty years) brought playwrights such as Ibsen and Bernard Shaw (Styan, 1981: 1). These playwrights did not aim to please the general theatre-going public, but instead turned to provide these ‘small, select and elite’ audiences with suitable theatre, something which Alliance Nicoll describes with the term ‘minority drama’ (1973: 217). This minority drama came from a “distrust of the general public” that wanted “mere entertainment, usually frivolous, often wanton” (Ibid). Instead “dramatic caviar” was presented by these minority playwrights, who importantly, also diverted from theatre as a commercial endeavour.

It is possible to imagine that this form of theatre had, in contrast to the early-Victorian ‘hybrid’ spectacles, very little to offer for the children in the audience. At the same time the subject matter of these plays was deemed not suitable for the innocent Victorian child who was to be protected from the realities of adult life.

⁹ Michel Booth writes about the changes to the theatrical form of melodrama during Victoria’s reign that there “was a movement in the direction of greater social and domestic realism” and that the rising middle-class audience was reflected in the “social status of its characters and settings” (Booth, 1991: 154).

Popular and un-realistic entertainment still continued, but many forms that appealed to children, including puppetry, slapstick and clowns, moved to venues such as the music halls (Blumenthal, 2005: 21), places which were perceived by the sophisticated upper middle class audiences as vulgar, indecent and breeding grounds of crime and prostitution (Kift, 1996: 65). This is especially evident in the various accounts of the degradation of the pantomime, where it was believed that the music hall had a very negative influence.

Appearing in the UK as early as 1717 (Taylor, 2007: 12), the pantomime was firmly established as a traditional British phenomenon during the Victorian period (Wagner, 1881). However this did not mean that the performance was a 'fixed' form and had not changed over the centuries, rather the pantomime was a highly adaptable form which incorporated popular trends and entertainment (Sullivan, 2011: 5). Rose argues that the pantomime conformed to the 'cult of the child'¹⁰ and by 1900 the fairy sequence had been extended and become a central part, as was evident with Tinkerbell, the fairy in *Peter Pan* (Rose, 1996: 96). However, one of the other Victorian adaptations is the introduction of music hall stars, which in contrast to encouraging the concept of childhood innocence, transferred the tarnished reputation of the musical hall with its sexual and vulgar celebrations (Kift, 1996: 65). This importation, mainly established in 1880-1890 by Augustus Harris who was the manager of Drury Lane theatre, was at odds with the upper middle class idea of sophistication, however it did put "bums on seats" (Lathan, 2004: 45). Many

¹⁰ According to Rose the theatrical 'cult of child' is the trend in late-Victorian Britain in which adults attended and enjoyed child-based sentimental drama's (1993: 96). The plays Rose mentions to support this observation are *Bootle's Baby* (Globe, 1888), *The Little Squire* (Lyric, 1890) but also *Alice in Wonderland* (Ibid). The difficulty comes when Rose writes that the 1898 revival of *Alice* was put on for the general public in evening performances, "demonstrating the extent to which 'fantasy themes associated with childhood had become acceptable to adult audiences by the turn of the century'" (Crozier, quoted in Rose: 97). As I have argued, fantasy themes have been acceptable for adults throughout the history of theatre, and it is at the end of the century that the construction of childhood starts to define what 'childhood themes' are.

Victorian pantomime enthusiasts were unhappy with this development, for example in 1881 Leopold Wagner reminisced about the days when the pantomime was a “real treat”, “intelligible to the merest child” and when “...clog dancers, gymnasts, contortionists, Whitechapel songsters, and other music hall “novelties” were not considered indispensable for success” (8-9).

I believe that it is in this context that *Peter Pan*, and similar plays, emerged and functioned as an upper middle class replacement for the ‘tarnished’ pantomime during the Christmas season, something safe and sentimental and as such suitable for children (Rose, 1993: 94). As the upper middle classes moved away from the Victorian ‘unrealistic’ and hybrid entertainment forms these were redesigned for the child audience, and as Rose puts it, children’s theatre can be considered as a “residue as opposed to autonomous new form” (Ibid: 101). Just as the Punch and Judy show had been censored and adapted to suit this young audience, these fantastical spectacles of Victorian entertainment (including the pantomime) had to be appropriated for the same market. Just as the Punch showman had to adapt his existing trade, some of the new children’s playwrights were attracted to this new audience, even though financially this audience was not profitable outside the Christmas season. This desire to write for young audiences is hugely important in the development of early theatre for children. Nicoll recognises plays “designed for professional production before audiences consisting largely of children” to also be part of the ‘minority drama’ movement (1973: 242). However, Nicoll argues that although one would have expected that minority dramatists would have triumphed in the field of children’s theatre, hardly any of them had much to offer and only two works deserve consideration: *Peter Pan* and *Toad of Toad Hall* (1929) by A. A. Milne. Nicoll blames the poor quality of these plays mainly on the authors “who did

not look beyond restricted audiences” (Ibid: 245) but also suggests that *Peter Pan* and *Toad of Toad Hall* do deserve recognition because they also amused the adults in the audience (Ibid: 244).

What Nicoll expresses is still very much the dilemma that is faced by the creators and researchers of children’s theatre today. The adult facilitates the child’s visit to the theatre and is necessarily included in the audience, and because of this, plays for children are still judged by adults: by the parent or the teacher who has taken the child to see a performance, the reviewer and even the researcher. A theatre practitioner will be content if a show is acclaimed by the adult, if not only for the reason that this might encourage other parents to also take their children to the theatre. However when a performance is too popular with the adult audience, as *Peter Pan* was, the intentions of the performance and the practitioner will be doubted because, after all, it is children’s theatre. Just as the Punch and Judy showman adapted and censored his performances to please upper middle class parents because he lost a majority of his adult audiences, performances today still need to adapt to a consensus of what is suitable for the modern child, as well as what is not suitable for the modern adult.

Rather than suggesting that current children’s theatre is free from the difficulties surrounding the first production of *Peter Pan* and other plays for children from this period, and as such it cannot distance itself from this ‘history’, I have argued that the problems of financial sustainability and the cultural construction of the child, are integral to the movement. Since this early period, different children’s theatre movements have developed in the UK, many with very different aims and motivations, but all of them subject to the negotiation of the same conditions. As Paul

Harman writes: “theatre for young audiences hid for a long time under the protective umbrella of education” because, in terms of finances, this was the safest place to be with cheap venues and secured audiences (Harman, 2009: 11). At the same time ‘Theatre in Education’ had to deal with the expectations of what is suitable for children, something which clashed with political ideologies and the educational subjects of the plays (Swortzell, 1993: 246). Theatre as an art experience has the need to negotiate the idea that funding art for children has no direct educational benefits, while at the same time it is completely dependent on funding, as production costs are high and audience numbers low. Finally, commercial theatre has to appeal to parents, and as such the motivations are often questioned and it is argued that commercial shows are not really for children at all. The discussion of the Punch and Judy show and entertainment at the turn of the century has illustrated the ways in which the upper-middle classes are essential in the formation of children’s theatre by both deciding what is suitable entertainment for the child and what is not suitable for the adult. Ruled by the adult’s desire of what children should see on stage, the theatrical communication was initiated and children’s theatre was born.

Theatre in Education: The Post War Period and the Rise of Political and Ideological Theatre

Theatre and education have a long historical association. Lowell Swortzell writes in his historical overview of theatre for the young, that theatre has been used as educational tool to learn subjects such as Latin and classical literature in many European countries from medieval times onwards (Swortzell, 1990: xxi-xxii). At the

same time, theatre does not just educate the child but throughout history adults have also been reformed, instructed and motivated through a wide range of dramatic forms from medieval morality plays, Brecht's *Lehrstücke* (learning plays) up to the current use of actors in corporate and management training programmes. Arguably the difference between child and adult, and the reason that theatre is currently perceived to have a greater educational value for the child, is that education and the preparation for adult life is presented as one of the most important goals in childhood (Reason, 2010: 3).¹¹ As previously discussed, within the Romantic conception of childhood, the child is perceived to exist in a state of innocence and moves towards the adult stage of experience not just by physical growth but also through learning the ways of the world and gathering knowledge. As such the innocent child does not only need to be protected against the darker side of 'adult life' as was discussed in relation to Punch and Judy, or celebrated as Barrie does in *Peter Pan* but the child also needs to be prepared and have the right 'tools' for life when it comes to adulthood.

It is this idea of preparation and the desire of parents to give their child the 'best start in life' that has become an attractive marketing tool. Take, for example, toys such as a rag doll; this simple and effective toy has accompanied the child throughout history, however it is now advertised in shops such as Early Learning Centre as to 'help' the child "to enjoy using their imagination" with the claim that it "inspires your child to explore and enjoy the world around them". A shape sorter box is advertised for children as young as six months to develop learning skills such as hand to eye coordination and problem solving. (See the Early Learning Centre

¹¹ To highlight this connection between the 'myth' of childhood and education, Reason uses the work by Philippe Ariès, whose seminal work *Centuries of Childhood* has also been used in the introduction of this thesis. Other works that examine the historical development of childhood in relation to education include: Michalis Kontopodis, Christoph Wulf and Bernd Fichtner (eds.) *Children, Development and Education: Cultural, Historical, Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Springer, 2011); John Beck, *Toward a Sociology of Education* (Transaction Publishers, 1978)

website available at: <http://www.elc.co.uk/>) In terms of theatre, the appeal of a performance being beneficial for a child because it also provides an educational experience attracts both parents and those with funding. At the same time, the idea that educational theatre can provide the child with an experience that has potential to enrich their lives and could encourage the child to become a responsible citizen adding to the welfare of the state, is politically and ideologically appealing, and as such motivates practitioners to work within this field without much financial gain.¹²

As I will continue to argue in this section, the political and ideological appeal of theatre for the child is essential to the Theatre in Education movement (TiE). Moreover the idea that theatre can be an opportunity of development has helped the educational dimension of theatre for young audiences to attract funding and audiences, and through this to exceed, in terms of the number of productions, the commercial and artistic equivalent output of a large part of the previous century. Even within academic research the history of TiE is, in contrast to theatre for the young with entertaining or artistic motives, well documented. In fact, educational theatre or applied theatre, which is an area where theatre for the young has been partly integrated, remains a strong and (financially) supported area of research and teaching at universities.¹³

This section will aim to place the TiE movement within the wider history of children's theatre and illustrate that the educational focus is part of the continuing

¹² TiE practitioners received very low wages for the long hours they were expected to work. For example Margaret Faulkes from Theatre Centre writes: "I recall the insurance agent whose company would not insure us because it was well known that "actors stayed out late at night and had champagne parties." He was not convinced by my argument that £5 a week and early morning calls were hardly conducive to riotous living" (see *Theatre Centre: 1953-1993 40 years of professional theatre for young people told by the people who created it*)

¹³ This academic research and teaching of theatre in education includes: Tony Jackson's work at Manchester; a specialised MA in Drama and Theatre Education at Warwick Institute of Education; Allan Owens at the University of Chester; a BA in Drama, Applied Theatre and Education at the Central school of Speech and Drama; and Helen Nicholson at Royal Holloway. In addition to this, many educational departments or teacher-training courses will have the availability of a module focusing on drama and theatre in education.

negotiation of the practitioners within children's theatre to suit the financial conditions, autonomy of the young audience, the relation between adult practitioner and the child in the audience, and societal expectations. Additionally, the TiE movement is important to the rest of this thesis as it highlights the political engagement of children's theatre and shows the origins of more recent work in theatre that aims to reflect the racial and cultural diversity of Britain. This section will discuss the radicalisation of the TiE movement and how it acquired a negative reputation through its strict control over the participants, the choice of dark issues and subject matter for its plays and, arguably, compromising the quality of scripts, actors and staging.

Political and ideological motivations of TiE

The beginnings of TiE can be located in the early 1960s. The movement continued and flourished during the 1970s and still maintained a dominant position until mid 1980s. Although the Standing Conference of Young People's Theatre (SCYPT), which was the main organisational movement behind TiE, was disbanded in 1990s,¹⁴ to this day educational plays that follow the TiE structure and principles are still being performed within schools. The strength of the movement was not just in securing funding and having the ability to attract audiences, the ideological principles of the movement also found connections with the societal aims and desires recognisable in post-war Britain. After the Second World War theatre for young audiences was no longer only beneficial for that audience, but through its perceived ability to reform and educate, it was also considered 'useful' for the general good of society (see

¹⁴ See Julian Bryant, 'Youth, education and community,' Available at: http://creatingtheatre.com/?page_id=65

Panken, 1998: 134). Indeed, as Helen Nicholson illustrates, in the post-war period “education was seen as a major force for social change,” and as such “a comprehensive state education system and non-hierarchical teaching methods became an important symbol of post-war democracy” (Nicholson, 2009: 13). Theatre was recognised as being able to function as a non-hierarchical teaching method, as the child within an audience could be given a central role in interpreting a performance and incorporating its educational messages. As such theatre became a tool to “explore ideas, feelings and values” (Nicholson, 2009: 24). Ultimately, it was thought that theatre could ‘prepare’ young audiences to create a better society.

In wider context the emergence of TiE and its aims and concerns reflected some general theatrical developments in the UK, where the Lord Chamberlain’s role in censorship was abolished with the Theatres Act in 1968 and plays became ‘increasingly ’ open about their political involvement (Downing, 1977: 19).¹⁵ As discussed in the previous section, the middle-classes had come to dominate the theatre as its audiences and repertoire’s subject matter during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, and this continued through into the immediate post-war period. In 1956 John Osborne’s play *Look Back in Anger*, was one of the plays that inspired a new focus on the working classes and the ‘kitchen sink drama’ came to replace the ‘drawing room drama.’ Stuart Bennett writes that after a visit of the Berliner Ensemble to London in the 1960s, the “Alienation/Distancing Effect of Brecht was recreated, but in an educational context” and the audience was “invited to examine a social situation objectively-not just what is happening, but why” (Bennett, 2005:

¹⁵ For more on British theatre during the 50s and 60s, political engagement and the working classes, see Dan Rebellato, *1956: And All That: The Making of Modern British Drama* (London: Routledge, 1999); Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne and Owen Hale (eds) *New Theatre Voices of the Fifties and Sixties* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1981); Arnold P. Hinchliffe, *British Theatre 1950-70* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974)

18).¹⁶ Socialist, Marxist and even Trotskyist¹⁷ influences were recognisable in the way the young audience was invited to ‘analyse’ work that was aware “of the underlying social structures of capitalism” (Bennett, 2005: 18). TiE practitioners were also interested in empowering the working classes through their theatre and were thus committed to performing within school contexts to reach the working-class young audience that was, generally not taken to the theatre by their parents, (see Nicholson, 2009: 24). This is evident in the very first TiE initiative, which was undertaken in 1965 by members of Belgrade Theatre in the industrial town of Coventry, who recognised the need to access local schools to reach all young audiences and provide them with free access to theatrical production (see Turner, 2010: 6).

The organisation behind TiE, the Standing Conference of Young People’s Theatre (SCYPT) was set up in 1975. In 1977 it published its first journal, primarily as a vehicle for articles by practitioners with the aim to “act as a national voice for the member companies” and “deepen understanding between companies of aims, methods and experiences” (1977: 1). Later it became focused on promoting theoretical approaches within the TiE movement, arguing that this would help to maintain quality in practice and defend the work especially against funding cuts.¹⁸ Reading the *SCYPT* journal, it becomes evident how strongly political influences run throughout the movement. The political engagement is particularly clear through the featured plays, which focus on racism (as will be discussed in more detail), the

¹⁶ For more titles on Brecht see Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and method* (London: Verso, 2000); Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht* (London: Verso, 2003); Carol Martin, Henry Bial (eds) *Brecht Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1999)

¹⁷ Stuart Bennett a key figure in the TiE movement follows Trotskyist principles and brings these to his practice (Interview).

¹⁸ See issue number 5 published in May 1980, which is completely devoted to the usefulness of theory and mentions that the conference in 1979 illustrated how the practitioners on the one hand embrace theory but on the other hand react with frustration and even aggressively towards theoretical work (3). See also the editorial of issue number 8 in April 1982, which explains what theory is and why it would enable the practitioners to learn from other companies and their programmes, and illustrates that the issue is ongoing (2).

miners' strikes (see *The Price of Coal*, 1978: 6-9) and community (the whole of issue 3 in 1978 is about Community Theatre for Young People). Political involvement is also clear through theoretical articles, such as 'Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction' taken from the work of Bertolt Brecht (1980: 28-35) and 'Towards a Free Revolutionary Art- a manifesto (1938)' taken from Leon Trotsky, Diego Rivera and Andre Breton (1980: 25-29).

Following this political agenda and in order to encourage the young audience to be analytical, plays were not just to be watched and enjoyed, but they were placed within workshops that explored issues and made sense of the theatrical experience. As Jackson writes:

...there will always be some element that will take that event beyond the self contained play- through a particularly close rapport with a small group of children, a subsequent workshop, or a programme of follow-up work planned with teachers. Truly these are programmes rather than 'just plays'...TIE is concerned not just to 'leave it there' but to follow through, to press the issues and the challenge as far and as deeply as possible with the age group in question. (Jackson, 1993: 3)

This TiE structure was deemed 'empowering' for the young audience, because instead of traditional 'hierarchical' structured educational sessions in which the teacher tells the student what they need to know, the young people were given the opportunity to come to their own conclusions in terms of the issues within the play. Moreover, within the wider political ideology of the movement, learning in itself is empowering, especially when it concerns working-class children who are oppressed by the middle-class society.

However, it is not just the TiE structure that typifies the movement but also the subject matter and ‘themes’ chosen for the plays and workshops. The issues and ‘the challenge’ mentioned by Jackson in the quote above, needed to be worthy of exploration, and as such these issues were usually of a social, political and ideological nature. Mirroring the ‘growing up’ of adult theatre (as discussed in the previous section), theatre for the young has its own ‘coming of age’ after the Second World War. No longer did the fantasy and fairy-tale orientated stories found in the beginning of the twentieth century, suffice (Panken, 1998: 135), nor did the frivolity of pantomimes and musicals and their commercial interest in the ‘family’ audience. Many writers, critics and performers considered this theatre to play solely to the middle-class and that it was “to do with sexual titillation of the worst order, is nostalgic, backward looking and safe” (Pammenter, 1993: 60). TiE was the complete opposite of this type of theatre, as Cora Williams writes:

TIE is a radical wing of the arts industry...The art form rejects the notion of complete, well-rounded characters; instead it sets out to puzzle and disorientate its audience, for their emotional journey with the characters is the essence of the educative experience” (1993: 101)

Williams continues to argue that all meaningful theatre- and therefore all TiE- “examines the human condition at times of crisis” (Ibid). This engagement with the human condition at times of crisis and as well as the general social and political orientation of the TiE plays also influenced the style in which these plays were performed. Although there were ‘officially’ no restrictions in styles, forms and genres, realism was the most utilized style (Mirrione, 1993: 74). Nicholson argues that to some extent the principles of TiE were compromised by the ‘illusion of theatre’ and that this was “a hindrance to young people’s engagement with the ideas

and ‘real’ situations set up in many TiE programmes” (2009: 25). This movement towards realistic styles is especially interesting in comparison to the ‘coming of age’ of adult theatre as discussed in the first section of this chapter. The TiE movement followed this shift and theatre for young audiences becomes more ‘realistic’ and starts dealing with serious issues.

TiE fully incorporated political ideology within its movement and next to its desire to perform for and empower working-class young audiences, it developed the operational structure based on the specific democratic principles associated with socialism and Marxism. (see Nicholson, 2009: 26). Brian Way, who was hugely influential as a drama educator, established ‘the model’ adopted by the TiE movement in 1953. His Theatre Centre was not initially an educational initiative, as Way himself did not value theatre as an educational tool and thought that drama within the school class was much more suitable for those purposes (see Way: 1981). Instead, Way’s aim was to centralise the child and create theatrical performances of high aesthetic value that were also inspiring for the young audience (Ibid)¹⁹. The Theatre Centre as formed in 1953 was a collective of (young) actors looking for innovative work (Bennett, 2005: 14). Way set up a very practical model where each touring company was made up of two men and two women so that scripts could be devised according to this availability in terms of numbers and with a respect towards gender equality (Ibid). This model slotted with TiE’s ideology perfectly. Every member of the company,

¹⁹ During the popular years of TiE, however, Theatre Centre did adapt many of the principles of the movement as well as its general political engagement. For example in 1985 the Artistic Aims include: “To encourage young people to develop and practice socialist/feminist philosophies”; “To challenge established and institutionalised attitudes to gender, race, class and sexual orientation”, “To research and reveal the sources of oppression, both at home and abroad and to act decisively to fight that oppression.” Theatre Centre currently continues these principles and aims to create innovative work for young and teenage audiences. Brian Way’s legacy is upheld by the annual award (currently accompanied by a financial incentive of £6000) in his name that is presented each year to a writer who impresses a panel of judges with a play for ‘young people’. Entries are judged on quality, on the way that the writing stimulates the imagination and whether a play demonstrates “risk, passion and understanding of young audiences” (see the *Theatre Centre* website available at: <http://www.theatre-centre.co.uk/index.php?pid=21>).

including the cast, was responsible for every aspect of the production. This would include the acting as well as leading the subsequent workshop as ‘teachers’, but also building the set, creating the costumes and props, liaising with the educational institutions, and driving the tour bus. An authoritative, un-democratic figure such as a director was not tolerated, all duties and responsibilities were to be shared and all company members were, in principle, equal.²⁰

The political ideology of the movement was essential as it motivated its practitioners to take on the many responsibilities in creating, facilitating, performing and leading the workshops for very little financial reward and without wider recognition from the theatre profession, or in other words, without the possibilities of fame, critical recognition, starred reviews or standing ovations (see Williams, 1993: 92). Instead, the idea that performing for young audiences will empower them in life and will ultimately contribute to a better society was sufficient motivation for the TiE practitioners. The importance of this motivation should not be underestimated in terms of the wider children’s theatre movement because arguably the very existence of this type of theatre is in part connected to its practitioners wanting to engage with an audience which is economically unviable and critically undesirable. Where Mayhew’s Punch and Judy showman reluctantly turned to the young audience for economic reasons and Barrie owed much of his success to the fact that he also appealed to adult audiences, the TiE movement did the opposite and chose to perform solely for the young and to turn away from commercial success and the capitalist market structure. I would argue that this choice remains as TiE’s current legacy, in that children’s theatre is a unique phenomenon among other entertainment for

²⁰ The importance of this collective working process is clear in the *SCYPT* article ‘Inside the Company’ A discussion on company structures chaired by Tony Coult’ (1980, 40-48). Here the discussion focuses on ‘dialectical materialism’, which Harry Miller (Cockpit TIE Team) explains is the “theatrical framework to inform our work” (41).

children which is driven by commercialism and entices children through advertisement, marketing and merchandise to the capitalist consumerism.

TiE Against Racism

What is also important in respect of the wider concerns of this thesis, is the way in which TiE engaged with the issues of 'race,' ethnicity and culture in their educative programmes on a regular basis. TiE also consciously and deliberately implemented theatre as a tool against racism. Perhaps this engagement with racism would have been unavoidable considering that the growth of TiE, through the early 1960s to the early 1980s, coincides with the growth of immigration to the UK²¹ and the subsequent racial tensions within society.²² As a movement aiming to create educative theatre that engages and addresses contemporary issues within society, it simply could not dismiss the growing presence of racism and discrimination, especially considering that the working class children in deprived areas for whom the movement predominantly performed was the main group affected by the diversification of society. Moreover this period in Britain's social history also sees a positive development against racism in general. As Saggar writes: "The period between the 1965 and 1968 Race Relations Acts is a most interesting one because of the extraordinary coalition both within and beyond liberal circles to support the extension of anti-discrimination law into new areas." (Saggar, 1992: 82)

²¹ For more titles on Britain and immigration: Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Colin Holmes (ed.) *Immigrants and Minorities in British Society* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1978); Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island: Immigration and British Society 1871-1971* (London: Macmillan, 1988)

²² More titles on racism during this period of British history see Charles Husband (ed) *'Race' in Britain: Continuity and Change* (London: Hutchinson, 1982); *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain* by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (London: Hutchinson, 1982)

One of the areas in which these Race Relations Acts had a significant influence was education, but the ultimately, profound changes within the schooling system only developed gradually. The early educational responses to immigration and the diversification of society in the 1960s were focused on integration and included initiatives such as English language provision (Leicester, 1989: 1). The next step was the recognition that children had needs beyond their language attainment, those that related to their cultural backgrounds and that, rather than just a problem, could be seen as an enrichment to British culture; this was the beginning of multicultural education (Leicester, 1989: 1).²³ Here multiculturalism does not relate to the current (highly varying) meaning of the term, which usually suggests a political strategy of maintaining racial, ethnic and cultural separation within society, but in contrast the term acknowledges the various cultural influences within society and argues that this diversity needs to “permeate the whole of school life and the child’s total education experience” (Ibid: 3). The hugely influential Swann Report, published in 1985, was created by a committee established by the government in 1979 with the objective “to enquire into the education needs and attainment of children from ethnic minority groups” (Ibid: 3-4).²⁴ However, rather than simply assessing the needs of this particular group of children, the Swann Report argued that education for *all* children had to reflect the culturally plural society of Britain and also the diversity of the contemporary world (Lynch, 1986: 2).

²³ For more titles on early multicultural education see: Maurice Craft, *Teaching in a Multicultural Society: The Task for Teacher Education* (Lewes: The Falmer Press, 1981); James Lynch, *Multicultural Education: Principles And Practice* (London: Routledge, 1986); Sally Tomlinson and Hilary Tones, *Ethnic Minorities in British Schools: A Review of the Literature, 1960-82* (Portsmouth: Heinemann Educational, 1983)

²⁴ See Michael Swann, *'Education for all': A Summary of the Swann Report on the Education of Ethnic Minority Children* (Runnymede Trust, 1985); *Education For All: A Brief Guide to the Main Issues of the Report* (Dept. of Education and Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1985)

Stuart Bennett²⁵ had a significant role in encouraging TiE to adopt a more ethnically and culturally diverse approach in order to address the increasing cultural diversity of the industrial areas that the company toured. In *Theatre for Children and Young People: 50 Years of Professional Theatre in the UK* he explains that this increasing need to address the increasing diversity within society was recognised by the local education authorities of the major cities and inner London run by the Labour Party, and companies were encouraged to base programmes around equal opportunities policies and to promote social equality (Bennett, 2005: 17). In this context Belgrade TiE tried to develop educational material that related to the multi-cultural community of Coventry, as Bennett explains:

At Belgrade TiE we were aware of the Asian community working in the textile factories in Coventry, and the number of Asian children in schools. We ran a project on the story of Ram and Sita to widen all children's experience of story-telling. Then we set out to find secondary material relevant to the West Indian community. We researched slavery in America, and looked for a proactive aspect. We dramatised the revolt in Virginia in 1831 led by Nat Turner (Personal communication, 2011).

Rama and Sita (1969) was part of the infant programme (thus aimed at 5 to 7 year old), and was created to explore the “emotional depth children can absorb in playing out a story they already know” (Belgrade TiE, 1970: 32). The story, which was assumed to be familiar to children in predominantly Asian schools, was first told in class so the children had a chance to “assimilate the story in their own way” before it

²⁵ Stuart Bennett, editor of *Theatre for Children and Young People: 50 years of Professional Theatre in the UK*, has held a hugely important position in the development of TiE. Bennett joined Belgrade TiE as an actor/teacher in 1967 and led the company as the Head of Department between 70-72 (8). He also worked as an editor of *SCYPT* and *New Voices*. He is currently active in the organisation London Drama and a whole range of other projects to ensure the dissemination of historical TiE documents, archives and other theatre for young audiences initiatives, as well as supporting and promoting the current provision of theatre for the young in the UK.

was performed by the group of actors (Ibid). The story was performed with masks and a ‘head-dress’ inspired by the depictions of Ravanna (Ibid). It was also accompanied by a sitar (Ibid), a plucked stringed instrument used throughout the Indian subcontinent. Bennett’s second example, *Because You’re Black* (1972) was a programme “dealing with the position of the negro in society” both in the historical context of Nat Turner and the slave revolt, and in “contemporary context where the slave of the first part of the play later appears as a prosecutor in court to accuse society of crimes against black people” (Belgrade TiE, 1972: 29-30). The programme for top juniors (thus for 11 to 14 year olds) was considered a success as teachers felt it had “brought race into the open without sensationalising it” (Ibid: 31). Alongside *Rama and Sita* and *Because You’re Black*, Belgrade TiE had other programmes/plays that would now be recognised as intercultural such as *How Rain Came to Hweng Chow* (1968)²⁶ based on Chinese legends (Belgrade TiE, 1969: 4), and *The Emergent Africa Game* (1970) created with Frances Ankoma-Sey, a drama specialist from Ghana (Belgrade TiE, 1970: 25). In the first publication of the SCYPT journal (1977), four play/programmes that deal with discrimination, racism and fascism are discussed: *Marches* by Cockpit about racial tension following Enoch Powell’s notorious ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech in 1968 (4), *The Rise of Hitler* by Belgrade Theatre Coventry (8), *No Pasaran* by M6 Theatre Company about the rise of Fascism in Europe (12) and *Fat Cat* by Key Perspectives which focused on fascism and racism as a response to growing racism in Peterborough (16).

²⁶ The aim of *How Rain Came to Hweng Chow* (1968) was to “involve a class of infant children in a imaginative story which would be heightened by a special theatrical style of presentation” as well as “introduce elementary facts about people in another environment” (Belgrade TiE, 1969: 4). The play was considered successful as the annual report reads: “The costumes, props, simple set and stylised movement which the Chinese convention required proved particularly fascinating to the children” (Ibid: 5)

Although the focus of the plays certainly suggests that the TiE movement was sensitive towards the issue of racism, with predominantly white actors the dramatisation of these issues was not straightforward. Finding actors/teachers who could represent racial and ethnic diversity within the cast for these productions was problematic, as noted in the Annual Report of Belgrade TiE (1972):

It seemed illogical to discuss a project on race without anyone of different racial extraction. Contact was made with Anton Phillips, a Jamaican actor, who is also a trained teacher. He joined the company and contributed views on race relations as he had experienced them. (29)

Bennett further explains about Belgrade TiE:

We clearly needed Black actors. I went to the Spotlight Office in London - there were no Black actors on their books, but they sent me next door to a Performers Agency. From there I contacted two versatile Black performers who joined the company (one was Alfred Fagon who became a pioneer Black dramatist) (Personal communication, 2011).

He continues:

Clearly there was a growing need to train Black and Asian actors. At Rose Bruford College in 1976 we set up the Community Theatre course. I researched training. There were no Black students in any of the main Acting Schools. We sent material to 6th Form Fairs across the country, inviting Black students to spend a day at the college before applying. From this we recruited a line of students, such as Paulette Randall and Harmage Singh, who went on to develop Black and Asian Theatre. Denise Wong developed Black Mime Company (Ibid).

This initiative by Bennett and Rose Bruford seems to precede many other companies that did create work addressing racism but did not represent diversity in terms of company members. Moreover, after the initial discussion of racism in the first issue of the *SCYPT* journal, there is not much evidence that the movement was concerned with this topic in further publications.

A new journal about theatre for young audiences, *New Voices* has, in contrast to the *SCYPT* publication, more discussion of the issues relating to racism, diversity of representation and multiculturalism. This is not surprising as the emergence of this journal is explained in the editorial as a result of the SCYPT conference in 1985 and dissatisfaction with the organisation:

The Voices which asserted themselves at that Conference comprised black, white, male, female, straight, gay, disabled, working class, middle class, older and younger members. All felt in common that SCYPT was dominated by a tiny, conservative, dogmatic and unrepresentative minority; many ‘unofficial’ meetings at the Conference expressed this from different points of view. (*New Voices*, Issue 16)

As such *New Voices* was committed to represent its members and their work and focus on the issues previously ignored. For example issue sixteen was “committed to the revealing of hidden cultures and histories”. Issue 16 (Date unspecified) includes, among others, a debate on whether Apartheid in South Africa is a suitable topic for young audiences in the UK, and features articles entitled ‘Multi-Cultural Influences- A Dialogue Between David Johnson and Tony Gouveia’ and ‘Celebration of Difference’ by Philip Tyler.

The latter two articles, devoted to work by Theatre Centre, illustrate how this company was instrumental in diverse representation. As Tyler writes:

In the late 70s and early 80s Theatre Centre gradually evolved a policy of multi-racial/integrated casting. This development, virtually unique in the YPT/TIE movement at the time, meant that all performing companies would have a racial mix and that audiences would see black and white performers playing mother and daughter, best friends etc. Thus one aspect of the “mixed” company came into being. (Tyler, *New Voices*, Issue 16)

This practice of mixed and integrated casting is still very much present in contemporary theatre for children. But where many current companies choose to only cast actors representative of multi-cultural backgrounds, Theatre Centre also encouraged and incorporated the cultural influences which these actors brought to their work. As such the work became intercultural, as David Johnson explains:

The Company was faced with the challenge of how to cross-fertilise different cultures, creative and excitingly. What kind of theatre was possible when combining Western styles with African drumming and costumes, Caribbean accents and dances, Japanese music and instruments? We started to create our own contemporary myths which drew on many cultural performing styles in order to entertain, whilst dealing with issues such as racism, sexism, stereotypes, identity. (Johnson, *New Voices*, Issue 16)

In terms of the topic of this thesis, this development of an intercultural strategy to represent diversity within British society and to respond to racism is certainly a significant development. Also the fact that during the SCYPT Conference in 1985, a motion to support the principle of Positive Discrimination was passed almost unanimously shows how, in general, the movement was progressive and embraced the changing society of Britain (*New Voices*, Issue 16). The motion meant that actors from oppressed groups “should be given preferential treatment when it comes to jobs

or casting; and, where companies have control over content, through the writing, devising and choice of subject matter too” (Ibid). Although the extent to which positive discrimination was implemented in practice after the motion was passed in 1985 is difficult to trace, it is nevertheless evident that work for young audiences became, in terms of actors, increasingly diverse.²⁷

In the same year in which positive discrimination was accepted by the TiE movement, 1985, another significant development was the establishment of Tara-In-Education, the first Asian Theatre-in-Education company. Tara Arts director writes about this initiative in *New Voices* (Issue 16, Date unspecified), in an article titled: ‘Who is this Gandhi? Jatinder Verma answers “why Tara-In-Education.” Here, Verma explains that the company was a twentieth-century response to Thomas Babington Macaulay’s nineteenth-century “denunciation of the entire corpus of the Indian literature” (Ibid). At the same time as the formation of the company Anglo-centric pressures on immigrants to adapt and learn English to achieve “real equality” in society were obvious, as asserted, for example, in 1980 by Timothy Raison the then Minister of State for Immigration (Ibid). Tara Arts had already been established in 1977 as a company creating work predominantly for (British Asian) adults, prompted by the murder of a 17 year old Sikh boy²⁸, and Tara-In-Education was intended to deal with the same racial tensions through education for younger people, as Verma writes:

The initiative emerged from an acknowledgement of the need for changes in perception of Asians: through History, English and all other curricular

²⁷ For example the Appraisal Report (1995) of Theatre Centre by the Arts Council Appraisal Team, lauds the company for its approach towards diversity: “Theatre Centre has long been in the forefront, not just within the field of TYP, but in British theatre as a whole, for its equal opportunities policies and practice... Always sensitive to charges of tokenism, it has created opportunities for artists from ‘minority’ groups to take initiatives and to have leading roles on and off stage” (41).

²⁸ See http://tara-arts.com/#/about_tara/history

compartments. The Asian perspective in British History did not exist: as did not Asian literature in English Studies, etc. (Ibid)

Tara-In-Education's first production *Crawl*, which toured schools in around and inner-city London, focused on the Crawling Order in 1919 "which forced Indians to crawl on their hand and knees past the spot where an English missionary had been assaulted" (Ibid).

The students' reaction to this play as discussed by Verma is also important in terms of other plays dealing with racism and colonialism, as they highlight that performing these issues can actually lead to an increase of racial tension and division within schools. As Verma writes:

Responses to this limited effort at changing perceptions of colonialism in India? "Chip on your shoulder", "biased history" (comment from an Asian student) "why remind us ... after all, it's not our fault." By and large, these students' comments, teachers echoing the feelings of the students, reminded the company of the dangers of fomenting "divisions" that were latent in the school population. (Ibid)

The second play by Tara-In-Education, *Strange Fruit*, evoked the same kind of responses and here "the use of hand-held masks for white characters heightened the alienation and, correspondingly, the "divisions" in schools." And Verma continues:

For a Black TIE Company, therefore, the choices appear to be fairly clear. Either sustain the status quo by "multi-cultural" offerings that leave the "divisions" in society unchallenged. Or surface the divisions, and thereby risk a reduction in one's role- as educational stimulants. (Ibid)

In this quote, Verma addresses one of the observations of teachers and academics came to in the 1980s; 'multicultural' attempts of simply celebrating cultural

difference was not an antidote for the structurally embedded racism in schooling and the society in general (Gill, Mayor and Blair, 1992: viii).²⁹ Instead of multicultural education, anti-racist education was necessary to go beyond reflecting diversity to actively address the divisions of society.³⁰ Verma ends the article by indicating that the next project *Sepoy's Salt, Captain's Malt* is informed by the previous two performances and goes further than bringing an “anti-colonialist perspective” and “unlocking the divisions in society” (Verma, *New Voices*, Issue 16) This new production suggests answers to questions and draws “the possible links between Colonialism and class discrimination” (Ibid). Indeed, this concern of class discrimination shows that Tara-In-Education, and racism as a topic, fits perfectly within the wider political orientation of the TiE movement.

Barry Troyna and Richard Hatcher illustrate in their book *Racism in Children's Lives: A Study of Mainly-White Primary Schools* (1992) that the issue of division in anti-racist education is highly complex. Whereas attempts made by schools and teachers to address racist attitudes of primary school children are genuine, black children might understand these attempts as drawing unwanted attention to their difference. Moreover, white children might perceive these attempts “into the terms of attempted black dominance as challenging the fragile equality of their interpersonal relationships” (Ibid: 129) As a result the attempts become problematic and divide the school class. Other TiE companies tried to deal differently with the problem of division within schools and moved from issue-based work that ultimately isolated black and ethnic minority students and connected them to problems within society, to

²⁹ See also Philip Cohen and Harwant S. Bains (eds.) *Multi- Racist Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1988), which addresses the division within British society in the late 1980s from the perspective of young people.

³⁰ See for more titles on anti-racist education: Barry Troyna, ‘Can You See the Join? An Historical Analysis of Multicultural and Antiracist Education Policies’ in *Racism and Education: Structures and Strategies*. (ed.) Dawn Gill, Barbara Mayor and Maud Blair (London: Sage, 1995).

character specific work that dealt with identity as a theme. For these companies, allowing audiences to consider their own identity as well as the similarities and differences between themselves and others, followed an anti-racist agenda on the principle that racism was embedded within society in the generalisations and prejudices about the ‘other’. An example of this work will be fully discussed in chapter four, which will focus on children’s theatre and identity, and will examine the TiE play and post-show discussion of *My Name is Savitri*. Another example is the play/programme *Angel* by Pit Prop, a TiE company established in 1979 in Wigan. Its accompanying resource pack shows how the teachers and audience/participants are encouraged to think about issues of identity:

The resources in this section aim to give the pupils a sense of their own identity and that of others, to form a basis on which to subsequently better understand how racism and other forms of prejudice can restrict peoples’ sense of self in a damaging and unnecessary way. (Pit Prop Theatre, ‘Resources for Teachers: *Angel*’)

Although *Angel*’s play and project was clearly aimed at an audience of teenagers rather than children, other projects such as David Holman’s³¹ *Billy the Kid* (1984) were performed for five to eight year olds. The story follows a young black

³¹ David Holman is one of the most prolific playwrights of the children’s theatre movement with more than 70 works to his name (Holman, 1994: iv). Starting his career at Belgrade TiE and working at Theatre Centre, his work is typical of the societal concerns of the TiE movement. For example, environmental concerns are found in play such as *Drink The Mercury* (1972) about heavy metal pollution in Japan, *Adventure in the Deep* (1973) about the pollution of the oceans and *Solomon’s Cat* (1987) about endangered species in Africa (Till, 1994: iv). He has also written various plays on racism and discrimination, including *Billy the Kid* (1984) and *Hanover School, State of Oppression* (1984) which through three different stories explores the issues of racism and oppression: ‘Pot Black’ about reaction to the Deptford fire of 1981 in which 13 black men and women died; ‘Tennis Play’ about the moral dilemma of two young tennis players who are invited to participate in a lucrative tournament in apartheid South Africa which was at the time boycotted by musicians, actors and sportspeople; and ‘Rap Play’ staging a confrontation between two Brixton Black youths and their white neighbour (O’Leary, 1984). He currently lives in Australia and as well as creating internationally recognised work for adults, also remains active in the field of children’s theatre in this country (see <http://australianplays.org/playwright/CP-holult>; and http://www.writewords.org.uk/interviews/david_holman.asp)

boy who has to move to the country with his mum to find new work, and fearing this new environment he has to find confidence and believe in himself. Following the same principles of the anti-racist agenda, the main difference in the work for the younger audiences was that the message was more subtle and indirect. As Nick Baker writes in a review of the play:

In fact the play is only tangentially to do with race. The fact that Billy and his mum are black is almost irrelevant. It's a play about racism not taking place in circumstances where it easily could, thus effectively reinforcing the natural lack of prejudice in the very young (*The Times Educational Supplement*, March 1984).

Of course, 'the natural lack of prejudice in the very young' can be disputed, however the idea that it is better not to draw negative attention to the fact that the boy has a different colour and thus indirectly suggesting that having a different colour is indeed negative, remains very prominent in the field of children's theatre, as will be discussed in more detail in chapter four. In such a highly contested field as TiE, the movement away from issue-based theatre, towards identity seeking was not fully embraced by all practitioners as is evident by presence of the article 'No Such Thing as Anti-Racist Ideology' by A. Sivanandan in the *When Sleeping Dogs Awake* (1988) teacher's pack of Belgrade Theatre company, which reads:

If anti-racism for the New Right was an assault on their education and values, it was for the New ("social forces") Left an essay in cultural politics, personal politics-which, in practice, descended into culturalism, ethnic politicking, inter-personal relations, identity-seeking. The fight against racism became a fight for culture, and culture itself was evacuated of its economic and political

significance to mean life-style, language, custom, artefact (*New Statesman*, May 1988).

Indeed, this debate has not left the field and different educational strands of multicultural, anti-racist and even anti-racist multicultural and intercultural³² education, have continued to shape the work of those creating theatrical performances for the child. In this way TiE has created a legacy of theatre for young audiences that is highly conscious of race and culture.

TiE's decline: Increasing tension within the movement and the issue of quality control

Tony Jackson argues that the decline of TiE in the 1980s was predominantly due to cuts in funding from both central and local government and that it was the participation element of TiE “that took the brunt of the new pressures” (Jackson, 1993: 26). The decline of the participatory structure of TiE came from both external and internal pressures; the external being the changes due to Margaret Thatcher's government, as it reduced public funding to the arts and changed the educational structure by implementing the national curriculum, which put emphasis on developing skills for the workplace and not the arts (Ibid). Moreover Thatcherism's arrival gave way to a “more censorious political atmosphere” (Ibid). There is an illustration of this censorious atmosphere in 1982 when Norman Tebbit, a member of Thatcher's

³² Intercultural education, in which the emphasis is on learning about other different cultures that intersect the society, only became popular in the UK in the twenty-first century and has thus only been influencing children's theatre recently. See for more titles on intercultural education: Jagdish S. Gundara, *Interculturalism, Education and Inclusion* (London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 2000); Pieter Batelaan, ‘Intercultural Education in Europe: A Recent History of Dealing with Diversity and Learning to Live Together’ In *Confronting Islamophobia in Educational Practice*, edited by Barry van Driel (Stoke on Trent: Trentham, 2004); Eleanor Nesbitt, *Intercultural Education: Ethnographic and Religious Approaches* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004)

cabinet and MP for the racially-mixed Chingford constituency urged parents to keep their children away from school so that they would not see *Susumu's Story* (1982), a play written by David Holman and aimed at audiences of 9 to 13 year olds. Tabloids such as the Daily Mail, largely fuelled the controversy following this play about the bombing of Hiroshima, however, the 'social nature' of the play meant that the funding of Theatre Centre came under review (Baker, *Times Education Supplement*, March 1984). In this new economic climate, theatre companies needed to be even more cost effective, something which could be achieved according to Jackson by creating 'performance-only pieces' (Ibid). Instead of being collectively devised, these theatre pieces were written by an external playwright and suited large groups of children, in contrast to the small classroom audiences TiE was used to working with. Jackson's argument is, however, compromised by the fact that Brian Way, founder of Theatre Centre, published *Audience Participation* in 1983 and actively encouraged other practitioners to use participation without having educational aims. Although some practitioners completely turned away from audience participation, new work made for young audiences was most often staged in very small venues (including schools) and included audience participation. Indeed, the assertion that theatre without participatory elements, written by an external writer is more cost-effective than devising a programme using the actors of a company, can be disputed (see Williams, 1993:100; Swortzell, 1993).

I would suggest that next to the loss of funding, the decline in TIE is also indicated in Jackson's description of the internal pressures on the movement. Here the "loss of confidence in the participation method" is due to the feeling that teachers are better in handling such work that is considered by some practitioners as "simply exhausting" (Jackson, 1993: 27). Also the effectiveness of the participatory elements

are put into question as practitioners became frustrated “by activating children towards decisions and understandings about the need for change in society only then to walk away leaving them in the hands of institution, resulting in little or no change” (Ibid). This gave rise to the idea that if theatre was more powerful through performance alone it would continue to work beneath the surface (Ibid). TiE was as such “failing to provide enough of an artistic experience” (Ibid). Arguably this effectiveness did not only concern the participatory elements of the plays but the political motivations of the movement on the whole. The negative connotations that the movement had evoked, not just for the young audiences who were exposed to a wide range of negative topics and work lacking artistic quality but also its own members which were strongly controlled by the political ideologies of *SCYPT*, were responsible for initiating a counter-movement in which the emphasis was placed on art and not education. As such the political ideology that underlined TiE was responsible for both its rise and ultimately, its fall.

Various personal conversations suggest that the *SCYPT* movement practised a strict control on its members and some were pushed aside, humiliated during conferences, and bullied if they, their work or their ideas were not favoured by the others.³³ Literature about TiE is much more subtle about the internal conflict. Jackson mentions that there was some unavoidable “tension and misunderstanding between TIE companies and those who controlled, or taught within, institutions that tended to be inherently conservative” (Jackson, 1993: 25). Nicholson discusses the political controversies and tensions in more detail and argues that the ‘crisis in the political left’ was of huge significance for the TIE practitioners (2009: 36). For example in

³³ This information about *SCYPT* practice was usually entrusted to me informally. However Guy Holland who only became active as a children’s theatre practitioner in the UK after the TiE’s domination of this field, is quite open about the ‘disgusting practice’ that went on and is thankful to Margaret Thatcher for putting a stop to this kind of theatre.

SCYPT's issue number 9, published in April 1982, the editorial is devoted to the struggle of the Polish People, and besides calling for solidarity, it also attacks Thatcher and US president Ronald Reagan who had used the violent crushing of the uprising of the people as an opportunity to illustrate the evils of the communist regime (3). The overtly political orientation of the movement was not only causing friction within, but also in the public eye it was creating a negative reputation.³⁴

The popular children's playwright David Wood shares his experience of encountering the movement's overtly idealistic and political engagement when speaking at a children's theatre/ TiE conference about his play *The Owl and the Pussycat Went To See...* During his speech a woman stands up from the audience to angrily inform Wood that his play is a complete disgrace. When he tentatively asks why exactly this would be, he discovers that the main problem is the marriage between the two animals at the end of the story. As he writes in an unpublished part³⁵ of his article for *Theatre for Children and Young People: 50 Years of Professional Theatre in the UK*:

I was told that marriage is a middle-class institution and that children shouldn't be encouraged to think of it as automatically "a good thing". If I was to write a play for children about marriage, I should write it as a project, to be taken into schools, in which the pros and cons of marriage are discussed.

Then children could make up their own minds. (Wood, Unpublished: 6)

³⁴ An example of the negative reputation TiE developed is satirised by the comedy programme *The League of Gentleman*, which shows three actors of a small TIE company fighting out their individual differences and disagreements during a performance in a school hall, leaving the young audience looking on with open mouths, shocked at the revelations the disillusioned actors make. Later when the van of the actors is stopped at a police cordon (the whole town is suffering from nose bleeds due to consumption of human meat) the misplaced ideology and self-importance is further ridiculed by making the frustrated actor shout: "You can't stop theatre!" The sketch is good at illustrating the idea that the TIE movement, regardless their ideologies and principles, gained the reputation of being a tool for egocentric teaching, where the emphasis was on the message and the adult performance, not on the child or young person.

³⁵ The fact that this publication is edited by Stuart Bennett who himself was active in the TiE movement, could explain the decision to cut this section which criticises TiE.

David Wood was rather disheartened by the fact that a fantasy story based on a poem by Lear would need to be turned into an “academic exercise” rather than simply enjoyed by the young audience. In fact the entire TiE movement, where the emphasis was on education rather than theatre created a difficult environment for Wood’s work as ‘magic’ had become a dirty word and theatre buildings were ‘middle class institutions’ (Ibid). Wood, who wanted to create professional performances high in production values to tour British theatres and therefore be accessible to as many young audiences as possible, was too commercial to be respected by his contemporaries.

The reputation of TiE was not helped by the consistent focus on important but ultimately negative aspects and subject matter. There is an undeniable value in engagement with social injustice, however the list of addressed topics; racism, bullying, discrimination, (domestic) violence, sexism, suppression (many companies were sympathetic with the miners’ strikes) and even AIDS, understandably make difficult material for the younger audiences and uncomfortable viewing.³⁶ Moreover, the low budgets of TIE companies often meant that production costs had to be kept low and sacrifices were made in terms of props, music, and costumes but also in the quality of actors and writing. For example, Williams explains that very few TIE companies could afford resident writers, and although writers were considered valuable, only a very small number of TIE practitioners would have been “prepared to concede to the actor creative pre-eminence in the devised theatre process” (1993: 100). Critics of the movement, such as the American children’s theatre expert Lowell

³⁶ Speaking from personal experience, watching a play about the Bosnian War aged ten (this was during the early nineties in the Netherlands where the educational theatre movement was very similar to the TIE movement in the UK) or a production about bullying where at the end of the play the audience is left with an image of a boy contemplating suicide (ready with a rope and stool), can indeed leave a young person with a negative idea of what theatre entails.

Swortzell, recognise that it is the lack of playwrights or the absence of clearly-defined roles within the devising process, that inhibited the movement from reaching its full potential in terms of creating quality performances. Swortzell uses the words of an American publisher who in 1974 described the TiE movement in England as rich in content, exciting and contemporary, but added that the “scripting was often of poor quality, scenery scuffed and costumes grubby” (1993: 240). Swortzell argues that art cannot be created by committee and instead of the production of powerful individual pieces of theatre, TiE’s “scripts seldom played as effectively in the hands of teams other than those that originally had devised them” (Ibid: 241). Therefore Swortzell is not surprised that these devised productions were called programmes instead of plays and for him, recognising the TiE movement as a theatre movement was inherently problematic (Ibid: 239).

Numerous practitioners in the UK challenged TiE’s status as an artistic or theatrical form. Ultimately its ambiguous nature, its position between drama and theatre and its practitioners as both actors and teachers, became problematic. At the beginning of the 1980s, TiE seemed no longer to be able to apply to both and was more frequently positioned as an educational form. Arguably the subsequent clear separation between theatre and education signalled the growth of children’s theatre with artistic motives. Brian Way, who is –somewhat ironically- remembered as the “Stage director whose passion launched a worldwide movement for educational theatre in schools” (Dodds, *Guardian*, 2006) repeatedly states in *Audience Participation* (1981), his second (and last) book, that he does not support educational theatre. For Way, drama and theatre are two radically different forms and disciplines. As he writes:

I do not believe that Children's Theatre should be a kind of audio-visual aid for studying history or geography or English Literature or political or religious problems ... this is much better done through forms of classroom creativity, including creative dramatics or child drama. The theatre experience can indeed be a stimulus, but it can be so without overtly setting out to *educate*. (Way, 1981: 85, author's italics).

Way illustrates the difference between the need for aesthetic education and the desire to use art for educative purposes by using a quotation from George Eliot, arguing that ceasing to put the aesthetic appreciation at the heart of the educational experience is "*when the picture changes to a diagram*" (Ibid, Way quoting George Eliot). Although Way still argues for performing within schools and using small sets so that productions are easily transferable and low in cost, he is very strong in emphasising that this does not mean companies can in any way compromise the quality of performance (Ibid: 202)

Way's opinion about the direction of children's theatre is emblematic of the field. Even TiE's key figures such as Geoff Gillham, start to recognise that the socialist principles of the movement do not have to also be present in the devising methods, and that it is better when a play is created by only one artist, so it is a meaningful artistic expression (1981: 23).³⁷ This is not to suggest that the growth of children's theatre as an art experience was instantaneous and that TiE suddenly ceased to exist, in contrast, only very slowly did companies refocus their work. It is

³⁷ Gillham illustrates that the previous collective method for the creation of plays, which brought so much internal dispute and conflict, was not a form of socialism: "Democracy here is the struggle of individuals to do what they want to do as individuals and not to be oppressed by the others (majority or otherwise). Or for others, how to convince yourself to put up with what *they* want, for the sake of the other's personal development. In other words, this democracy or co-operative is the opposite to what it appears- not socialist but individualist. *Workers'* democracy is inimical to these individuals-dogmatic, inflexible, unresponsive towards persons" (1981: 23)

only possible to really recognise the artistic strand of theatre taking the upper hand over TiE in the early twenty-first century when theatres such as Polka, Halfmoon, the Egg and the Unicorn, devoted solely to these young audiences started to appear. It is, however, important to stress that although the two movements might be considered to be wholly separate, in reality they are inherently connected and TiE's legacy and influences are strongly present in the theatre practice of today. The next section will discuss this influence with a specific focus on political orientation and representation of a multi-cultural society. It will also return to children's theatre that is commercially viable, and illustrate how, after a period in which there is little development, theatre based on films and television programmes become popular and financially successful.

From TiE Onwards: The Rise of Artistic Visions and Commercial Ambitions

On the 6th and 7th of May 1989, a conference was organised entitled 'Theatre for the Under Fives'. This event was an initiative of the Children's Theatre Association (CTA), an organisation established in 1983 as a response to loss of funding in the field. As the organisation writes in the conference documentation: "The CTA was formed to safeguard companies and performers of Children's Theatre and to raise status and standards... both artistically and administratively" (1989). Indeed, the CTA was a departure from the TiE movement and SCYPT, and an indication that theatre for the young in the UK had gradually shifted its focus and motivation away from the educational and the political ideology that had driven the practitioners working within TiE. The emphasis was on theatre as art and by using the word 'children' rather than

young people, the organisation indicated that the focus was on a much younger audience than that addressed by the TiE companies.

The reason that this focus on a much younger audience implies a shift away from the TiE principles is that this movement rested predominantly on the intellectual participation of the young audience. As explained in the previous section, TiE used theatre to empower the young audiences to challenge issues within society. It would be unfair to many companies to claim that this was done in a didactic and dogmatic way, instead the aim was for the young audience to come to these conclusions themselves after being presented with the various social issues within plays and encouraged to engage with these in post-show workshops (see Bennett, 2005: 18). However, an audience of five years or younger is severely limited in their ability to participate in TiE aims as they often do not yet have the intellectual capacity to recognise, understand and apply social messages to their environment.³⁸ These young pre-school audiences could also not be reached in schools and a return to the middle class theatre institutions where companies need to rely on middle class parents to pay for the tickets and bring their children, was not desirable in the eyes of TiE.

As is evident in the discussion of the work by David Wood and Brian Way, these pioneers already practised this new focus before the CTA was established and while the TiE movement still dominated much of the children's theatre in the UK. There were many more practitioners and companies working with different aims and motivations during the 1960s and 1970s. For example Polka Theatre, now considered

³⁸ Piaget's work on children's moral reasoning is important here. In his research (1932), focusing on games, he found that only children older than 9 could understand that all players were responsible for the rules and that these could be changed by mutual consent, younger children would all recognise the rules to come from a higher authority and as such had to be accepted (Smith, Cowie and Blades, 2003: 260) *Understanding Children's Development* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing). The moral judgement is of course important for the TiE movement as the desire to teach children that they are active participants in their social environment is only realistic achievable if the audience had developed this moral subjectivism.

as the first company to open a theatre venue dedicated exclusively to children in the United Kingdom, had been a touring company specialising in puppetry since 1967 (Polka Theatre).³⁹ Carl Jenner, who later established Unicorn Theatre, is exemplary of those practitioners that were active in the field during TiE's domination. Instead of simply recognising theatre buildings as middle class institutions, these practitioners wanted to transform theatre buildings to suit the needs of the child. The necessity of buildings designed strictly for children's plays which were colourful, with good sight lines for children taking their height into consideration and with everything else- including the ticket desk and toilets- designed for children, was already mentioned at the Children's Theatre Conference in 1963 (Wilson, 1963: 395). By this time, two venues in the UK were already dedicated to young audiences: Unicorn's first theatre, located in London's West End, opened in 1961 and in the same year, puppet theatre Little Angel opened a venue in Islington. Both venues were not built but converted to suit the young audience. Polka Theatre opened the doors of its venue in November 1979.

The early presence of these theatre venues exclusively for the child highlights how theatre for children with other motives than those of the TiE was already present before the decline of the latter movement. In fact, the CTA itself followed the British Children's Theatre Association (BCTA), an organisation established as early as 1959, and which covered all organisations making theatre for the child, including those with educational, commercial and artistic motivations. The first General Secretary Michael Pugh, who was also the founder, explains why he took the initiative in the yearly journal of the BCTA, *Outlook* (Pugh, 1979). Wanting to address the 'nasty' atmosphere in children's theatre before 1959, with jealousy and companies stealing

³⁹ See 'Polka Theatre where theatre begins...' available at: <http://www.polkatheatre.com>

each other's bookings at schools, Pugh organised a cocktail party at Highfield Hotel and tried to convince companies and 'highfliers' such as Jenner and Brian Way to attend (Pugh, 1979: 9). Although the practitioners were very reluctant to come, in the end the meeting was a success and led on to the formation of the BCTA (Ibid). An early report of the BCTA dating from April 1962 gives some insight to the various members of the organisation.⁴⁰ This report, as well as Pugh's account, illustrates that these companies performed predominantly in schools but did not follow the programme structure of TiE or the focus on social issues in society. Instead the work was of an artistic and entertaining nature underpinned with educational values (see *Outlook*, 1973; *Outlook*, 1979; BCTA Report, 1962). Therefore, rather than suggesting the decline of TiE initiated a new movement within children's theatre, the decline of TiE revived a movement already present, but under-valued, and more importantly under-funded, in children's theatre.

For example the topics and subject matter selected and addressed in work for young audiences returned to the folk and fairy tales that have been described as the initial focus of children's theatre in the first section of this chapter. As Paul Harman writes:

After a period in which the publicly funded specialist companies focused almost exclusively on contemporary social issues, a more recent trend is towards a more sympathetic exploration of folk and fairy tales, in which layers of meanings have been built up over the centuries to produce rich and mysterious challenges to the imagination (Harman, 2005).

⁴⁰ In this BCTA report dating from April 1962 members include: Harlequin Theatre for Children established in 1958, The Langstone Children's Theatre Group, The Leeds Children's Theatre, Worthing Children's Theatre Group, SARUM Theatre for Children established in 1961, The Pegasus Theatre also established in 1961 and The Scottish Children's Theatre, established as early as 1927.,.

Although the TiE movement did often perform folk and fairy tales for the youngest audience (something which is often overlooked by Harman) through the educative programmes accompanying the performance, such tales of make-believe always had an additional dimension, grounding them in social reality or questioning the traditions that were embedded in these stories.⁴¹ As mentioned in the new direction of children's theatre, this intellectual participation was removed; not only because children under the age of five were too young to participate in this manner, but also because the story and the staging became more important than these educational messages. Indeed, with the emphasis on art, not on enhancing children's learning, companies also moved away from TiE's often-minimal style in terms of staging. Keeping props, music and other performative elements to a minimum ensured low production costs, but importantly, it also ensured children were not distracted by the 'magic' of theatre and kept at a distance for intellectual, and not emotional, participation. Instead, companies with artistic motives used various performative elements such as music, dance, puppetry, stage design and technology to capture the audiences' attention and engage them emotionally as well as intellectually, thus making the general practice of children's theatre more interdisciplinary.

The work of theatre company Oily Cart is exemplary of this interdisciplinary approach and demonstrates the inventiveness of contemporary work made for young audiences. Oily Cart, established in 1983, was one of the theatre companies that shifted its focus to create work for the under fives, something which at the early stages surprised other practitioners in the field as they did not recognise the ability of very young children to understand theatre, never mind sit still during a production (see Webb, forthcoming). The artistic director, Tim Webb, did not consider this

⁴¹ For example *Punchin' 'ell out of 'er* by theatre company Bruvvers used the traditional Punch and Judy show but then transformed the format to teach children about sexism and domestic violence (Gillham, 1981: 16).

audience ‘impossible’ but set out to explore how these very young audiences are able to interact and engage with performances through elements such as music, colours and movement. Indeed, this practice was expanded to create effective work for audiences with severe and complex learning disabilities and even audiences as young as six months to two years, with the company also evoking engagement through various sensory stimuli such as touch, smell and taste (Ibid). Oily Cart also explores the kinaesthetic awareness of the body in projects such as *Big Splash* (1999) set in a hydrotherapy pool with the audience and actors in the water, and *Something in the Air* (2009) in which actors and audiences are suspended in the air. Current work also uses digital media, for example in *Baby Balloon* where the individual faces of the audience members are projected onto balloons. Although there are many companies that use more traditional elements of theatre and storytelling, on the whole children’s theatre in the UK currently encompasses many different styles, genres and generally embraces an interdisciplinary approach.



Illustration 2.6 - *Something in the Air*. Oily Cart’s show for young people with complex learning disabilities was in collaboration with the aerial theatre company Ockham’s Razor. In this performance the young audience was raised into the air by specifically designed ‘nest’ chairs. (Photo: Oily Cart)

Commercial theatre

Alongside the development of theatre aiming to provide the child with an artistic experience, theatre for the young that is commercially sustainable or even profitable is also seen to grow with the decline of TiE. It could be argued that this development was due to TiE loosening its grip on theatre for the young thus encouraging practitioners to shed the political ideology and create financially successful productions, however evidence for such a hypothesis is lacking. It is more likely that the growth in approaching the young audience as a commercially interesting audience is more closely related to the growth and success of television, as will be discussed in more detail. It is, however, clear that before the early 1980s there were no significant developments of this type of commercial theatre for the young since its first productions. Although disrupted by the First and Second World Wars, this type of theatre has always done well during the Christmas period when parents traditionally take their children to see a performance. Even the competition of cinema and television does not appear to have had a significant effect on the numbers attending traditional Christmas performances, as the number of such performances is seen to steadily grow in the twentieth century. Also in terms of repertoire and subject choice there is not much development and theatres frequently re-stage *Peter Pan* and *Toad of Toad Hall* to attract audiences during the festive period. Beside these two popular plays there are fairy-tale adaptations and some adaptations of children's literature. However, new writing for the commercial stage since *Peter Pan* appears to be non-existent.

Before the late 1990s, hardly any work for young audiences is staged outside the Christmas period. National Theatre's first in-house production for children, *Sir*

Gawain and the Green Knight (1977) was also an adaptation (Reynolds, forthcoming). The director Michael Bogdanov continued this success and adapted *Hiawatha* (1980), but both shows were staged during the Christmas season (Ibid), and other major performances staged for young audiences at the NT, for example *Coram Boy* (2005) and *His Dark Materials* (2003), were during the festive season. This suggests that without the yearly Christmas tradition, children's theatre continues to struggle to be commercially viable. David Wood's theatre, which was regarded as 'commercial' by TiE practitioners, was in fact not commercially sustainable through tickets sales and needed to rely on sponsorship from Clarks Shoes to fund the production costs (Wood, 1997: xix). The company Wood set up to tour his adaptations for the young, Wriggling Feet, struggled after this sponsorship deal was discontinued and was eventually disbanded. As explained in the previous section of this chapter, Wood's vision was to tour his work in regional theatres giving as many young audience members as possible the chance to see theatre. However not many theatres were willing to book his company as the audience numbers attracted to his performances would in comparison, not match those for adult performances (Wood, Personal communication).

It is difficult to place Wood within the commercial strain of the children's theatre movement, as ultimately his vision was to provide children with quality artistic productions. Nevertheless, Wood's productions are currently commercially sustainable all year round and do not need to rely on any secondary funding. It could be suggested that with his plays performed internationally on a regular basis, he has a healthy income from royalties and additionally many of his plays are published.⁴²

⁴² David Wood has so far 48 plays to his name. One of Wood's original plays *The Gingerbread Man* (1976) has since its first production been performed in the US, Japan, Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland, Dubai, New Zealand and Australia and must have generated a high amount of royalty fees. The show is a rare example of a children's production (next to *Peter Pan*) that is followed by two storybook version

Moreover, the way Wood mainly relies on adapting popular children's fiction is recognised as commercially appealing and many other companies have since followed this example and created equally successful productions. Shows like *Winnie The Witch* (2002) by Watershed, *Double Act* (2003) by Watershed and *Tracy Beaker Gets Real* (2006) by Nottingham Playhouse Theatre Company were adapted from popular books by Jacqueline Wilson, and the recent *Horrible Histories' Frightful First World War* (2008), *Woeful Second World War* (2008) and *Egyptians and Romans Stage Show* (2011) by Birmingham Stage Company, are all examples of children's fiction adaptations that can tour the UK nationally and visit larger theatres venues such as Bristol Hippodrome, Blackpool Grand Theatre and Richmond Theatre. Indeed, it is now possible to identify a trend within commercially viable children's theatre that relies heavily on successful adaptations and tapping into existing merchandise franchises.⁴³

Although there are several studies of the effects of television in relation to the child's perception of theatre,⁴⁴ studies of how the growing popularity of television and

and a model animation series, thus generating its own merchandise series rather than being part of one (see 'The Gingerbread Man' available at:

http://www.davidwood.org.uk/plays/plays_the_gingerbread_man.htm) Around 6 individual plays and a further 4 play volumes are published and for sale in the UK and internationally. Wood has a further 19 titles to his name including storybooks adapted from his plays and his publication on children's theatre (see 'David Wood's Children's Books' available at: http://www.davidwood.org.uk/my_books.html).

⁴³ For example shows such as *Tweenies Live!* (1998) have made the adaptation of popular television series hugely attractive. The first ever *CBeebies Live!* (2008) theatre show features popular characters including PC Plum, Jenny Jumble, Postman Pat and Jess, Boo, Bill & Ben, the Jakers and the Koala Brothers, Tamba from Tikkabilla and Tommy Zoom (BBC, 2008 available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/bbcworldwide/worldwidestories/pressreleases/2008/01_january/cbeebies_live.shtml) The tour which performed 200 shows in 45 theatre venues exceeded expectations selling over 120,000 tickets (Ibid). As the BBC press release states: "The live events team have, to date, achieved success across a range of quality children's and entertainment brands transforming them in to innovative live stage productions. As a result the live events team have seen a whopping 400% increase in revenue over the last four years" (Ibid).

⁴⁴ For research into the child's perception of theatre in relation to television see Jeanne Klein (2005) 'From children's perspectives: a model of aesthetic processing in theatre' in *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 39(4) pp. 40-57; (1987) 'Children's processing of theatre as a function of verbal and visual recall' in *Youth Theatre Journal* 2(1) p9-13. As well as research funded by Sainsbury and the Arts Council in the Midlands in which 164 children between 10 and 14 year old were interviewed in relation to the theatre and the findings suggested that they prefer television and cinema to 'babyish' theatre (see Reynolds, *Telegraph*, March 1999; Stringer, *Evening Standard*, March 1999)

cinema have affected the development of children's theatre are absent in the literature. I would argue that instead of competing with children's theatre, television, which initially borrowed heavily from theatre⁴⁵, could also be considered to have contributed to the growing number of commercial shows outside the Christmas season, which in contrast to commercial family productions, do not aim to also appeal to the adult in the audience.⁴⁶ Although watching television is often presented in a negative light,⁴⁷ arguably children's television has provided children with entertainment in which they can practise control. Television is not an unmediated form of entertainment as it is still the adult who creates children's programmes and decides what is available for the child in terms of programming. However, this medium is highly accessible because 99% of UK households have a television set⁴⁸ and many channels broadcast programmes especially for the child, offering choice in terms of what to watch. Moreover, the fact that children often watch television on their own without parental supervision means that the child has more power over what he or she watches than with theatre and film where parents and carers need to supervise their children and facilitate the trip through buying tickets and arranging the journey to the theatre.

⁴⁵ Not only were the first television films for children adaptations of stage plays such as *Alice* in 1946 (McArthur, 1978: 18) and *Toad of Toad Hall* also in 1946 (Ibid: 20). Many of the early television programmes used puppetry, such as *Muffin the Mule* in 1946 (Ibid: 7), *Larry the Lamb* in 1947 (Ibid: 22) and *Andy Pandy* which appeared on screen from 1950 to 1970 (Ibid: 32).

⁴⁶ In live theatre shows such as *The Tweenies*, *Live!* there are no jokes or innuendos for adults, instead adults are encouraged to join in singing nursery rhymes and dance like their children.

⁴⁷ As early as 1963 a Unesco Report edited by Wilbur Schramm shows an extended annotated bibliography of studies around the world of the influence of television on children and adolescents with an introductory overview of research results. Although there are some studies in the UK that focus on the potential to learn while watching television (31-34), a majority of studies focus on negative effects such as reduction of outdoor leisure time (22-30), the influence of violence and aggression on TV (41-46) and the effects on maladjusted and disturbed children (48). More recent studies continue this trend and focus on the ill-effects of television see: BBC News 'Too much screen time 'risks children's mental health' (Oct 2011) available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-11500084>; BBC News 'Long-term harm' of too much TV for toddlers' (May 2010) available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/8654963.stm>

⁴⁸ Jack Williams discusses in *Entertaining The Nation: A Social History of British Television*, the rapid growth of television in the UK: "In 1959 fewer than 10 per cent of all households in Britain had a television set. Ten years later about 75 per cent of all households had a television set and by 1978 over 90 per cent." (2004: 14). For other titles on the history of television see: Mark Aldridge, *The Birth of British Television* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Edward Buscombe, *British Television: A Reader* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000)

Additionally, because television mainly broadcasts series, in contrast to the singular event of a theatre visit, children are able to familiarise themselves with the programme, the format and the characters and are able to talk about particular series with other children in the playground. In this way children encourage each other to watch certain programmes and become very loyal viewers. This 'free' promotion and peer pressure has not gone unnoticed and advertisers realise the value of television in terms of the sale of their products. Although children do not often buy the products promoted in the advert breaks and the huge range of merchandise that accompanies some series, they have power in terms of encouraging parents to buy these products for them.

Parents are not just pressured into buying the items promoted on television or associated with particular series; they often choose products relating to their children's favourite characters as it guarantees to please the child. This also works in terms of theatre where parents are attracted to buy tickets for a performance because they know that their child likes the television programme and will therefore also like the show. This is very similar to the appeal of literary adaptations, which attract audiences because the child or even the parents have read a book, and will have an idea of what the story will be about, thus adding to a sense of familiarity. The difference between a literary adaptation and a television adaptation is that in terms of recreating a television series on stage, there is less artistic freedom and the characters' images are strongly protected, so often they need to be presented on stage by puppetry or actors in full body suits. Although it could be argued that this use of puppetry makes the theatre production more 'realistic' in terms of imagery, it also contributes to a loss of 'immediacy' and the 'liveness' of a production, in the same way that the large performance venues in which these productions are staged add to the distance

between the child in the audience and the action on stage. In contrast to the TiE productions, where the child was positioned as central to the performance and was involved in the on-stage action, in the commercial television- inspired shows there is as much interaction between the child and the performers as between the child and television set at home. Because of such factors as these, many theatre practitioners do not recognise television adaptations and other commercial performances to be part of the children's theatre movement. Despite a rise in commercial theatre for young audience the field predominantly consists of subsidised small-scale performances and companies driven by ideological reasons to create work for the child.

TiE's Legacy

Although the decline of TiE is followed by a rise in commercial productions and theatre companies with artistic visions, arguably some of the principles continue to influence the general practice of children's theatre. Indeed, Reason notes that although TiE is a separate movement from children's theatre with education as its primary motivation, as professional theatre companies seek to attract schools to productions with study guides and the provision of activities before and after performances, "It is increasingly difficult to construct firm distinctions between TiE and theatre for children in each of its different forms" (Reason, 2010: 5). This is perhaps not surprising considering many of the most influential practitioners have worked in the TiE movement: including David Wood who worked for Watford TiE (Wood, 1997: xvi), Tim Webb who started as a writer and performer in the TiE teams at the Glasgow Citizens' and Greenwich Theatre (Webb, forthcoming) and Paul Harman of ASSITEJ UK who worked as an actor-teacher at the Belgrade in 1966 and

went on to run the Liverpool Everyman Priority Community Theatre Project and set up the Merseyside Young People's Theatre company (Turner, 2010:10). As mentioned above, one of these remaining legacies is that children's theatre is predominantly a non-commercial form of entertainment, in contrast to television and film where large amounts of money are made by big studios, advertisers and creative teams. As illustrated, theatre is able to link itself to these financially successful forms of entertainment and create adaptations relating to popular television series or successful films, however most companies seek to create original work and stage performances in small theatre spaces which they believe enables children to engage and feel more involved in their productions (see Harman, 2009: 7). In a sense, these companies are, similarly to TiE, driven by ideological principles rather than financial benefits.

Although the TiE movement had a much stronger political agenda and its practitioners aimed to educate their audiences and in turn reform society, even after its decline, the left-wing political orientation of the movement remains. The political messages within the plays for young audiences become less explicit, however, children's theatre retains the TiE principle that children are entitled to theatre regardless of their economic and social background. To realise the principle that all children have the right to art and cultural participation and to enjoy the benefits of attending a 'live' performance, it continued to be important that the accessibility of children's theatre was extended to include those children that are not taken to the theatre by their parents. Therefore, the companies that want to perform in professional performance spaces to safeguard the quality of their productions or to ensure that the children were able to disconnect art from an education context, remain interested in

encouraging schools to organise theatre visits.⁴⁹ Moreover, schools remain attractive places to perform considering there are no additional costs in terms of venue or those involved in transporting school children to and from the theatre building.

Bennett explains that Local Education Authorities (LEA) funded TiE companies centrally, however, after the Education Reform Act of 1988, funding was given to individual schools that then decided which companies to book (Bennett, 2005: 21). Of course, receiving funding at the end of the creation process is not viable for theatre companies and the Arts Council and National Lottery Funding, to which companies submit proposals for projects and performances or receive long term financial support for all activities (subject to the valuation of the Arts Council), thus became the main sources of income (Harman, 2009: 13). This redistribution of funding does not mean that companies have full artistic freedom; although organisations such as the Arts Council and the National Foundation for Education Research recognise the educational benefits of theatre for young audiences (see Reason, 2010: 10-14), there are several additional agendas to satisfy, not only to secure funding, but also to draw audiences, either via schools or through parental initiatives. For example the Arts Council's report *Achieving Great Art for Everyone*, which essentially illustrates "what matters over everything else when funds are tight," suggests that deeply embedded in the Arts Council's agenda is an idea that "the art itself must be enriched by the contribution of the whole of England's vibrant and changing society and by the transforming impact of digital technology" (Arts Council

⁴⁹ All theatres for children such as Unicorn, Polka Theatre and The Egg have educational outreach departments, but also other venues have such departments which enable local schools to visits and offer projects and workshops for children and young people in the context of their own schools, such as the National Theatre (<http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/education>), the Globe (<http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/education>) Birmingham Repertory Theatre (<http://www.birmingham-rep.co.uk/participate/students-and-teachers/>) and Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre (<http://www.royalexchange.co.uk/page.aspx?page=727>)

England, 2010: 3).⁵⁰ As well as the emphasis on the need to represent the ‘vibrant’ or diverse society it is clear that performances that use digital technology are considered more attractive and increase their possibility of obtaining funding through the Arts Council.

Other agendas that children’s theatre companies can satisfy to increase funding and attract interest from schools are the National Curriculum and the educational objectives of the government. As a result certain recurrent themes are clearly identifiable and illustrate the influence of these funding agendas. One example is theatre that relates to a diverse society, others include the celebrations of the King James Bible,⁵¹ The Olympics⁵² and the governmental initiative to encourage the subject of science.⁵³ However the connection between performances and the National Curriculum are not always as obvious and in some cases there are multiple ‘curricular links’ highlighted in the literature accompanying particular productions. For example the long list of ‘curricular links’ included in the free education resource pack of the performance *Deep Down Cowboys* (2011) by Theatre Alibi, which follows the adventures of the Russian crew of a submarine boat who are obsessed by American

⁵⁰ The other issue deeply embedded in this report is that “Children and young people must learn about and love their culture if they are to carry it on” (Arts Council England, 2010: 3; available at <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/consultation/>). The importance of the provision of high quality performances for young audiences, which is affirmed throughout this report, suggests that children’s theatre is currently popular with the Art Council and hopefully this will encourage funding for this field.

⁵¹ Chapter four will discuss *The Mysteries* (2011) by Tara Art, which was created in relation to the celebrations of the King James Bible.

⁵² The revival of Unicorn’s *Billy the Kid* (2007), a play about football and WWII, in 2011 as well as forthcoming plays such as *Run! A Sports Day Musical* (2012) by Polka Theatre are, with their focus on sport, clearly related to the Olympic games in London. Also *How Was It For You?* (2012) in which the Unicorn Young Company will present their take on the Olympics, suggests that the upcoming games in London also influences what is staged for and by the children.

⁵³ The play *Cosmos* (2009) by Dragon Breath theatre, which will be discussed in the conclusion of this thesis, aims to introduce young audiences to the basic concepts of science. Space is currently popular with other plays such as *Bob, The Man on The Moon* by Travelling Light and Sixth Sense Theatre; *The Way Back Home* (an intergalactic tale) by Big Wooden Horse and Theatre Royal Winchester; *Moon and Genie* by Half Moon; *Something Very Far Away* (a play about love, loss, space and time) by Unicorn Theatre; *Luminous Tales* (about a girl who loves the moon) by Ripstop Theatre are performances touring in 2012.

cowboys, relates to the subjects “Science, English, History, PSHE, Music, Drama and Art” (Hulton, 2011: 2). This suggests that rather than basing a performance on a specific educational subject, as in the practice of TiE, the performance is created and is subsequently linked to the National Curriculum.

Paul Harman suggests that, “schools are now being offered original plays about the most profound personal experiences- of loss and separation resulting from divorce, illness and death, for example” (Harman, 2005). Rather than centralising the child within the performance structure as TiE attempted, plays now aim to centralise the child’s personal experiences within the content of the play. An example of a play that engages audiences as young as three to five years old with the subject of death and loss is *Upstairs In The Sky* (2003) by Quicksilver Theatre. Quicksilver was among the first companies to create work for the very young in the 1980s and to centralise the artistic experience of the child (English, 2005:182) As their website reads:

We were among the first to believe that theatre for children should, first and foremost, be good theatre. That it should actively put children at the heart of the creative process, and engage with their intellect and emotions. That it should embrace every art-form. That it should draw strength from the diversity of the communities it serves. We still believe those things today.

The performance of *Upstairs In The Sky* is wholly set within the context of a classroom and the story is initiated by the delivery of a cardboard box with the items (including coloured sheets of paper, different coloured fabric, cotton buds, a piece of string and a little cocktail umbrella) that ‘construct’ the story in which a princess goes to visit her granddad who is having a ‘party’ in the sky. That the granddad has passed away is never stated explicitly and as the directors Carey English and Guy Holland

explain in an interview, this element of the story is often only recognised by the young audiences who have lost someone close to them. Other elements can be recognised more easily, for example the competition and arguments between the two storytellers who deliver the box and are responsible for ‘building’ the story, resemble the way siblings interact.

Upstairs In The Sky is an example of how contemporary children’s theatre in the UK incorporates elements and principles of TiE but also has moved away from the movement to include a clear artistic dimension. The production is funded by Arts Council England and with only two performers, no decor needed and no extra costs for a venue, the performance is an example of the ‘basic’ style used in TiE. Performed within an education context, the accompanying literature suggests that the production supports children’s “emotional well-being” and aims “to give them tools to build their social skills and develop their creative abilities” (Quicksilver).⁵⁴ It also has an interactive element as the children have a role in ‘guessing’ what the items represent and at the end of the performance the ‘story box’ containing all the items that construct the story are left in the class, so the children can continue and ‘build’ stories themselves. Additionally, the teachers are included within the process and are instructed in an INSET session focusing on imaginative play (Ibid). Indeed, from conversations with Carey English it becomes clear how much importance the company puts on the educational value of their work and instead of simply performing in schools, English tries to incorporate and demonstrate the way young children learn through creative play. In contrast to TiE, the performance does not stage pressing societal issues but focuses on the art of storytelling. It encourages its

⁵⁴ In the literature for teacher accompanying the performance, Pat Broadhead, Professor of Playful Learning is quoted on the education value of *Upstairs In The Sky*: “...this production will help to nurture important debates and support adults’ and children’s learning about the potential of play as well as introducing them to high quality theatre in the safe spaces of their own schools and classrooms” (*Upstairs in the Sky* PDF available at: www.quicksilvertheatre.co.uk/.../pdf/UpstairsInTheSky.pdf)

audience to empathise and sympathise with the characters of the story, rather than ensuring the intellectual distance that was promoted by those TiE practitioners influenced by Brecht. However, and despite the fact that the play's content is not explicitly political and the practitioners do not associate themselves with TiE, the educational content and even the fact that the play exists through the UK's art funding, means that TiE's legacy is more present than some practitioners are willing to accept. As long as practitioners maintain that the accessibility of theatre is more important than financial success, theatre will continue to apply to and satisfy the agenda of those with funding and operate within an educational context.

Theatre responding to a Diverse Audience

Another legacy of the TiE movement is the awareness of the young audience as being diverse in terms of race, ethnicity and culture. As I have already discussed, TiE created and performed plays for young audiences that could be used as educational 'tools' to address racist attitudes within schools and society. The decline of TiE led to a decline in the 'directness' and 'openness' of the political message underlining these plays and the educational message it wanted the young audience to adopt. However, the implemented practice of colour-blind or non-traditional casting and the introduction of non-western performative elements are still currently recognisable within theatre with artistic motivation and, to a certain extent, those with a commercial interest. Respect for racial and cultural diversity is strictly guarded when it concerns theatre for young audiences. Many practitioners try to avoid stereotyping and certain language deemed inappropriate. At the same time performances try to be inclusive by featuring a multicultural cast, intercultural performative strategies, and

encouragement of global awareness, and often stories will evolve around anti-discrimination messages.



Illustration 2.7 - *Hippity Hop*. For this production Oily Card collaborated with hip hop DJs, artists, dancers and poets to create a multi-sensory show celebrating street culture. (Photo: Oily Card)

As previously mentioned, the engagement with the diversity of the young audience is partly down to this being a topic and concern ‘high’ on the agenda of the Arts Council and thus complying could ensure funding.⁵⁵ Moreover, as children’s theatre is still performed in educational contexts, practitioners continue to realise the need to reflect the diversity of the audience they address. Referring back to the shared ideology that all children should be able to experience theatre and have a right to cultural participation regardless their social and economical background, I would like to reiterate that this principle does not solely concern class but also race and culture.

⁵⁵ See for example Sir Brian Mc Master’s report commissioned by the then Labour Secretary of State in relation to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, entitled: *Supporting Excellence in the Arts: From Measurement to Judgement* (2008). Here Mc Master states: “The diverse nature of 21st century Britain is the perfect catalyst for ever greater innovation in culture and I would like to see diversity put at the heart of everything cultural. We live in one of the most diverse societies the world has ever seen, yet this is not reflected in the culture we produce, or in who is producing it. Out of this society, the greatest culture could grow. As I have said, it is my belief that culture can only be excellent when it is relevant, and thus nothing can be excellent without reflecting the society which produces and experiences it” (Mc Master, 2008: 11). As previously argued these findings supporting diversity in the arts, are reflected in the Arts Council report *Achieving Great Art for Everyone*.

A majority of practitioners are aware that their work could exclude a part of their young audience if it is culturally offensive and insensitive or has no inclusion of actors from different ethnicities or cultural backgrounds. This concern is especially relevant in a culture that through a colonial past and the recent processes of globalisation, is now a diverse society where it is possible to find multiple cultures and people from various ethnic backgrounds. In other words, British culture is not homogenous nor is the young audience for whom the practitioners perform. This principle of diversity is essential for the following two chapters of this thesis, in which I will argue that using the practice of interculturalism (with caution) can ensure that children's theatre engages with the diversity of society and its audiences.

Within this thesis there are various examples of plays that demonstrate how children's theatre has embraced the diversity found within British society as well as those which are exemplary of an international engagement and present stories and characters from different parts of the world. Such international or 'global' plays are essential considering that the processes of globalisation have added to the interconnectedness of society through, for example, the internet, budget air-lines and a global market, which makes in turn, the encounter of cultural difference a daily experience for children in the UK.⁵⁶ Research suggests that children are aware and concerned about global issues such as poverty in Africa and global warming and thus theatre engages with these concerns.⁵⁷ Representation of diversity can also appear in

⁵⁶ Research such as the Primary Review Report titled *Community Soundings: the Primary Review regional witness sessions* (2007) by Robin Alexander and Linda Hargreaves, show how primary school children "expressed concern about climate change, global warming and pollution, and optimists were balanced by those who felt that governments were not doing enough to respond to the urgency and magnitude of the challenges. Some children also deplored the gulf between the world's rich and poor. In the words of one child: 'America consumes, Africa wants'. There was also unease about terrorism" (12).

⁵⁷ For example Unicorn's play *The Garbage King*, adapted by a novel by Elizabeth Laird, tells the story of a young boy in Ethiopia who has to deal with human trade and ends up living with other abandoned and homeless children on a garbage mount in Addis Ababa. The performance is intercultural as well as interdisciplinary, using puppetry, dance and music by Ethiopian Temesgen

plays in a completely integrated manner, where the intercultural elements such as music and dance are not explicitly recognisable but are wholly incorporated in western performative elements.⁵⁸



Illustration 2.8 - *Drum*. Oily Cart's performance for young babies featured many different types of drums and also used shadow puppetry within its performance. (Photo: Oily Card)

Diverse Representation: The multicultural backlash and political correctness

Although a large number of companies have adopted intercultural and international performance styles, a majority opt to solely include a multicultural cast without incorporating the different backgrounds of such a cast within the story of the play. As shown in the previous section of this chapter, TiE companies developed this practice

Taraken, to affirm the setting. In the teacher's resource pack accompanying the play various links are drawn with the curriculum but the play is also connected to the UNICEF 'Rights Respecting Schools' Award and the resource pack and play aims to provide a context for discussion and reflection on "the principles and values of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child" (Steele, 2010: 2; available at unicorntheatre.com/media/files/For%20Schools/The%20...)

⁵⁸ Oily Cart's work is exemplary of this practice. In their productions all casting is multicultural and unrelated to the characters of the plays, however, in addition music, dance and puppetry is used from a variety of backgrounds. For example in the performance *Drum* for babies and audiences with complex disabilities, a variety of drums from all over the world are used and the rhythms are predominately African. Max Reinhardt, the musical director of Oily Cart is also a world music DJ and is one of the regular presenters of Radio 3's *Late Junction*, and as such responsible for this 'intercultural influence' (see Webb, forthcoming). Also the puppetry used in this production resembles Indonesian Shadow puppetry, however as the image projected is the shape of a baby, the performative element is mixed with Western culture.

in light of anti-racist education for young children and current work, such as that created by Unicorn theatre, also includes this approach as the ‘Unicorn Assemble’ used for every production is racially and ethnically diverse, with casting not often related to the characters. Although this casting strategy tries to convey the idea that a different skin colour does not mean that a person is different, it risks being a denial of culture and a suggestion that as long as someone does not differ culturally, he or she is able to be ‘British’.

It is, however, not surprising that many theatre companies often choose the ‘safe’ way of representing diversity or even completely avoid engaging with the precarious issues of racial and cultural difference; this practice has become increasingly scrutinised as concerns about representing diversity are connected to the interrelated phenomena of the multi-cultural backlash and to the fear of ‘Political Correctness’. Indeed the development of the term ‘Political Correctness’ to its current negative connotation captures the fight between tradition, popular opinion and the values of multiculturalism. As explained in the terminology of this thesis, there is an important difference between accepting that a society is multicultural in the sense that many cultures exist within Britain side by side due to a “fundamental movement of peoples”; and encouraging a multicultural ideology relating to identity, in which cultural groups are encouraged to retain and protect their cultural heritage and seek “with others of the same kind public recognition for one’s collectivity” (Modood, 2007: 2).⁵⁹ Although theorists like Tariq Modood recognise the latter meaning to mainly exist within American politics, in Europe, multiculturalism implies an existence of cultural diversity (Ibid: 2). Current European politicians including David

⁵⁹ For more titles on multiculturalism see: Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000); Pathik Pathak, *The future of multicultural Britain: confronting the progressive dilemma* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008); Anthony Simon Laden, David Owen (eds) *Multiculturalism and political theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Cameron, whose speech in Germany on the fifth of February 2011 focused on the failings of multiculturalism,⁶⁰ illustrate how the two meanings have become entwined. When Cameron made this claim, his criticism was in relation to “the doctrine of state multiculturalism” suggesting that the encouragement of distance between cultural groups is undesirable and has allowed “the weakening of our collective identity” (Cameron, 2011). His speech was also considered to suggest that past and present immigration has had negative effects on British Society.⁶¹

Cameron’s speech is exemplary of how the popularity of the term multiculturalism has moved from a relatively positive concept to a negative political ideology, and is currently attacked from both left and right-wing perspectives (Spencer, 2006: 208-209).⁶² Modood explains that countries such as Canada, Australia and the United States, “which have long historical experience of immigration and indeed which have been built up out of immigration”, were the first countries to describe themselves as multicultural societies and only decades later European societies, including Britain, followed suit (Ibid: 3). The recognition of Britain as a multicultural society relates to the post-war increase in immigration, but

⁶⁰ The full transcript of Cameron’s Speech on radicalisation and Islamic extremism is available online at: <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/02/terrorism-islam-ideology>

⁶¹ The fact that Cameron delivered his speech hours before the English Defence League held one of the largest rallies against Islam ever staged in Britain, did not help the association with nationalistic ideologies and anti-immigration sentiments. Indeed, some of the EDL protesters regarded the speech as an encouragement of their principles. See the *Guardian* article ‘David Cameron sparks fury from critics who say attack on multiculturalism has boosted English Defence League’ written by Toby Helm, Matthew Taylor and Rowenna Davis, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/feb/05/david-cameron-speech-criticised-edl>

⁶² To briefly summarise the criticism of multiculturalism across the spectrum: On the right people such as Douglas Murray (director of the Centre for Social Cohesion) argue that problems are caused by immigrants, especially from countries where the Muslim faith is the major religion, because in the practice of multiculturalism they did not have to integrate and accept the values of their ‘host’ culture (Malik, 2011). People occupying a centre to left position such as Kenan Malik, takes issue with the pluralism of multiculturalism and argues that being forced to show respect for cultural difference, mainly the ‘reactionary’ and often ‘despicable’ values of religious cultures, is against a progressive society (Malik, 2002). Instead universal values have to be found (Ibid). Lastly, Slavoj Zizek uses Marxist theory to illustrate that liberal multiculturalists respect the cultural difference of society only at a safe distance, thus multiculturalism is desired because it separates. Ultimately, to continue this desire for safety, the mechanism of neutralisation makes sure that the ‘Other is deprived from its Otherness’ and is integrated in the capitalist market structure (Zizek, 2010).

where in this early period the tension in society brought about by an increase in immigration was mainly focused racial and ethnic difference, due to the growing number of people from the Muslim faith living within Western Europe, this focus shifted to cultural and religious difference. Modood suggest that it is this high presence that “Muslims have become central to the merits and demerits of multiculturalism as a public policy in western Europe” (Ibid: 4). As such, events that are considered ‘attacks’ against the West by people from the Muslim faith including the terrorist attacks on the 11th September 2001, the London bombing in 2007 and the killing of military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan, are also read as the failing of multiculturalism.⁶³

The term ‘Political Correctness’ has also been derived from United States and given a slightly different meaning in Britain. The term was first used in American colleges in the late 1980 and initially “stood for an attempt to remove terms from everyday discourse which were considered racially or sexually pejorative and discriminatory” (Gabriel, 1998: 65).⁶⁴ When the term started to be used in Britain, particularly within the tabloid press, it was tied in with the multicultural backlash that was already unfolding (Ibid: 67). ‘Political Correctness’ became a catch-all term for any kind of perceived censorship on the grounds of race, culture, religion and equal opportunities for women and people with physical disabilities. People across the

⁶³ The failings of the multicultural society are not only located within these attacks from Muslim extremists but also within the attacks upon people from a Muslim faith or other minorities living in the UK. This illustrates once again that the attack of the multicultural society comes from both left and right wing positions. As Stephen Spenser writes: “Because of the focus on cultural difference, Nick Griffin and his ilk could argue for the supremacy of English culture and take an aggressively separatist stance supporting the impoverished and ideologically disenfranchised whites at the expense of ethnic minorities, while cloaked in politically correct rhetoric of multiculturalism” (Spencer, 2006: 211) *Race and Ethnicity: Culture, Identity and Representation* (Abingdon: Routledge)

⁶⁴ For more titles on ‘Political Correctness’ see Geoffrey Hughes, *Political Correctness: A History of Semantics and Culture* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2011); Marilyn Friedman and Jan Narveson, *Political correctness: For and Against* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995); John K. Wilson, *The Myth of Political Correctness: The Conservative Attack on Higher Education* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Richard Feldstein, *Political Correctness: A Response from the Cultural Left* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997)

political spectrum, associate ‘Political Correctness’ with the intervention into freedom of speech, especially when it comes to critiquing faith.⁶⁵ In terms of children the struggle appears to be located between educating the child with respect for a diverse society and the argument that the child does not have to be involved in the ‘adult’ ethical struggle. The tabloid press regularly features stories about the ‘banning’ of traditional nursery rhymes such as Baa, Baa Black Sheep and Three Little Pigs (because it might be offending people from the Muslim faith) something which seems to define the popular phrase “political correctness gone mad.”⁶⁶ That often these stories are only partially true and are based on choices made by individual schools and institution and thus not really ‘banned’ or ‘politically incorrect’, does not seem to matter. The outrage that even children are ‘victims’ of the ‘political correct regime,’ seems to tap in to a popular sentiment.

The fear of ‘political correctness’ as well as the backlash in terms of multicultural representation and the seemingly ‘forced’ compliance with equality policies, has also affected children’s theatre. Not only because the government’s education policies, changed radically by the introduction of the National

⁶⁵ The controversy following Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* is important here as the upset it caused within the UK’s Muslim population meant that multicultural censorship (which was later included in the term political correctness) was not solely aimed at right-wing politicians, teachers and people that would not embrace the diversity of society, but also towards artists and writers with generally left-wing backgrounds who had shown to be able to create equal upset to religious minorities (Kerbel, 2009 available at <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/current/articles/spring2009/kerbel.html>). See also Kenan Malik, *From Fatwa to Jihad: The Rushdie Affair and Its Legacy* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009).

⁶⁶ The two nurseries that introduced a new version of the traditional nursery rhyme Baa Baa Black Sheep, called Baa Baa Rainbow Sheep, were used as a typical example of ‘political correctness gone too far’ (see Chris Brooke, ‘Baa baa rainbow sheep,’ March 2006, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-379114/Baa-baa-rainbow-sheep.html>). The choice to replace black with rainbow was, however, not due to racial concerns but an educational effort in which the children replaced black with a range of descriptive words such as happy, sad, black, white, blue, pink, bouncing ect (see BBC News ‘Nursery opts for ‘rainbow’ sheep,’ March 2006, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4782856.stm>) See also Sarah Harris’ article ‘Three Little Pigs CD’ banned from Government-backed awards for offending Muslims and builders,’ February 2008, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-509975/Three-Little-Pigs-CD-banned-Government-backed-awards-offending-Muslims-builders.html>

Curriculum,⁶⁷ rather than celebrating multicultural diversity, aim to place cultural difference within the wider context of “British values” to encourage social cohesion (Andrews, McGlynn and Mycock, 2010: 299; Carrington and Short, 1995; Andrews and Mycock, 2008). Although educational authorities no longer fund children’s theatre, the way plays are able to connect themselves to the National Curriculum is affected by changes in governmental attitudes towards multiculturalism. Beyond education, and in relation to popular opinion, some of the traditional stories are defended against ‘political correctness’, as complying with contemporary sensibilities and incorporating modern views on equal opportunities and diversity is seen to compromise the authenticity of a traditional storyline.⁶⁸ Moreover, as James Donald and Ali Rattansi explain in *‘Race,’ Culture and Difference*, the multicultural celebration of diversity promoted by the Swann report, suffered from what they term as the “saris, samosas and steel-bands syndrome” (1992: 2). As has been discussed in the previous section, as early as the 1980s educators and practitioners such as Verma

⁶⁷ As will be discussed in chapter 4, the introduction of the National Curriculum (as part of the Conservative’s Educational Reform Act in 1988) is considered a victory of the Right who used the curriculum to enforce a singular and sentimental interpretation of ‘British Culture’ through a range of subjects including History, English Literature and Citizenship (see for example Andrews, McGlynn and Mycock, 2010; Carrington and Short, 1995; Andrews and Mycock, 2008; Donald and Rattansi, 1992; Troyna, 1993).

⁶⁸ For example the Punch and Judy show, which strongly featured in the first section of this chapter. Initiatives such as the Punch and Judy Fellowship and Carry on Punch and Judy receive funding from English Heritage and aim “to celebrate the continuing life and times of an anarchic folk puppet family” (see <http://www.punchandjudy.org/COPAJ%20mainframeset.html>). Therefore many of the current professors resist ‘political correctness’ and are unwilling to address the ongoing criticism it receives especially in regard to Punch’s violence towards his wife. Although featured to a lesser extent in criticism on the show, the black or foreign puppet depicted with exaggerated features which appears in many of the story lines predominantly to be ‘dumb’ and killed by Punch, is also under scrutiny (Speaight, 1970: 87). In an interview about political correctness and the puppet show with Bryan Clarke and Geoff Felix from The Punch and Judy Fellowship, the only question relating to the presence of the ‘black puppet’ is brief and dismissive: Question: “Do Punch and Judy men still use the black man in the show?” Answer: “Do you want to ban him as well?” (available at http://www.thepjf.com/political_correctness.html). It is interesting, especially in relation to the discussion in section 1 where it was discussed how the Punch and Judy showman adapted his material to suit the Victorian middle class audience, that many showmen now reject the more recent demands of performing for the child and refuse to adapt their material to address current societal concerns, including those of equal opportunities and representing diversity. It appears that rather than pleasing its contemporary child audience, the entertainment is more concerned with preserving long-standing tradition.

began to recognise that multicultural attempts were simply not enough to address institutionalised racism, however with the decline of TiE, plays with an obvious anti-racist messages that in part depended on the educational context and the post-production sessions to enforce their messages, also lost popularity. Although non-educational intercultural, multicultural and international plays remained and continue to be performed today, in relation to the increasing criticism of multiculturalism, they risk being branded as superficial manifestations of culture and blamed for further disenfranchisement of cultural minorities (Ibid). For example the term ‘token’ is often placed before either actors with a different ethnicity or people with disabilities to indicate that these people have no additional contribution besides promoting the diversity and equality ideals of their theatre company. Similarly the use of references and elements taken from minority cultures to seemingly please those that provide funding and policy makers rather than the young audience, is a sensitive topic. Guy Hutchins explains that he was once contacted by a company desperately seeking a Kathak dancer for a production that had already been created (Personal communication, 2010). For him this was disrespectful, as it seemed to suggest that the performance was created without integral cultural knowledge (Ibid). For Hutchins the cultural reference was added in at a later stage, implying that it was something ‘additional’ to increase the possibilities of funding and its ‘multi-culti’ appeal (Ibid).

A very important change within the practice of children’s theatre is tied up with these growing concerns of representing diversity. As discussed in the previous section, company members usually created TiE plays together, a collective process that was blamed for the lack of quality control and causing much internal conflict within companies. However, this collective process allowed companies to incorporate cultural diversity through the internal influences of the actors who had a specific

cultural background. Making plays about racism without having cast members actually understanding this issue from a personal point of view was considered disempowering for ethnic minorities.⁶⁹ Actor Tony Gouveia recalls during a conference in 1987, how he was used as a tokenistic Black actor before he started work at Theatre Centre, and only in his work in theatre for young people his voice became integral to the production and could he play what he really was: “a human being” (New Voices number sixteen). When the movement of children’s theatre turned away from the collective process, to reinstate the artistic director or external playwright at the heart of the artistic process, cultural diversity no longer came as an internal reflection of the participating members of the theatre company.

Arguably, the tensions of the multi-cultural backlash and ‘political correctness’ ensures that while the need for plays representing the diversity of society are increasingly important because society is increasingly diverse and influenced by global connection; representing diversity on stage is also increasingly considered problematic. It is the aim of this thesis to highlight this complexity and the problems associated with the practices of interculturalism, multiculturalism and internationalism, but also to illustrate the need and possibilities of creating theatre that represents and reflects the diversity of society.

This chapter on children’s theatre history has really been about the changing dynamics of the theatrical communication between adult and child. It has illustrated how this dialogue involves the expectations, motivations and appreciation by parents

⁶⁹ For example, both Theatre Centre and Belgrade TiE showed concern about creating work without having an integral knowledge of the issues addressed in performance. As previously discussed Belgrade TiE noted that “It seemed illogical to discuss a project on race without anyone of different racial extraction” (Belgrade TiE, 1972: 29) whereas the company members of Theatre Centre have “felt it inappropriate for it to promote work which should more properly be undertaken by specialist groups” after the company lost its collective devising process (Arts Council Appraisal Team, 1995: 41).

and carers, society, government, education and those with funding. The current diversity of society is another aspect within this dialogue. Indeed, the practices of interculturalism, multiculturalism and internationalism are embedded and relate to the way children's theatre as a movement has to adjust and adapt to match societal expectations as well as the way it constructs and reconstructs the child. By discussing TiE and its current legacy, it has been shown how children's theatre and the practice of interculturalism, multiculturalism and internationalism, cannot be discussed 'outside' the context of education. Whereas this dimension is not essential in discussing these practices when performed for an adult audience, in terms of the child it is fundamental; as in addition to the problematic nature of the intercultural performance, it is also essential to consider how practices that reflect the diversity of society are important for the cultural participation of the child and to educate about difference.

Chapter 3

Intercultural Performances for Young Audiences in the UK: Engaging with the Child in a Globalised Society

This chapter deals with the possibilities of intercultural performances as ways of engaging with the child's current globalised society. Rather than reducing the discussion regarding the globalised society and the intercultural performance to the way global economics oppresses and standardises local cultures, children's theatre opens up possibilities to represent and engage with an interconnected world and diverse society. While acknowledging the problematics of the intercultural production in terms of commercial appropriation and in relation to Edward Said's critical framework of Orientalism, the chapter will also look at how placing the child at the centre of the theatrical experience and importantly the creative process preceding the production, can simultaneously engage young spectators at both global and local levels as well as between traditional and contemporary representations, thus allow them to become active participants in a global cultural exchange.

The connective processes of globalisation have changed and are changing the lives of children in the UK. A majority of children now live in cities where migration and immigration, stimulated by the availability of international travel as well as an international workforce created by the global trade, has significantly altered and diversified the ethnic and cultural make-up of society (Madge, 2001: 20-24). At the same time, British society is globally connected through web-based and digital

media.¹ Moreover cheap international air-travel is increasingly available and purchasing products and food from all over the world is now the norm. Possibly first, second and third generation children of those originally immigrating to the UK are likely to stay in touch with family and friends from the culture they/their family originally left using these forms of media, communication and travel (Vertovec, 2009). This global connectedness ultimately increases the child's encounter with cultural differences and contributes to the child's awareness of the world as a single place.

Although these contemporary realities are broadly recognised to have an impact on the lives of children, the concept of globalisation is often, and particularly in the area of theatre studies, associated with the arts becoming increasingly commodified through free-market economies and the ever-growing power of multinational companies.² It is feared that a Western capitalist monoculture will eventually devour and destroy all local and 'minority' cultures (Lechner and Boli 2005: 140). For example Joost Smiers, professor of political science of the arts, studied of the changing nature of the arts in relation to the globalisation of the market. In his book *Arts Under Pressure* (2005) he outlines the developments in copyright and marketing, and argues that the increasing control of international companies in terms of 'owning' and 'branding' a broad range of artistic 'products' (such as songs, photographs, images of paintings) forces artists to compromise cultural significance

¹ There is a growing field of literature that examines web-based and digital media in the lives of children. See for example: Sarah L. Holloway and Gill Valentine, *Cyberkids: Children in the Information Age* (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003); Sarah L. Holloway and Gill Valentine 'Transforming Cyberspace: Children's Intervention in the New Public Sphere.' in *Children's Geographies: Playing, Living, Learning* (eds.) Sarah L. Holloway and Gill Valentine (London: Routledge, 2000); John Palfrey and Urs Gasser, *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives* (New York: Basic Books, 2008); Sonia Livingstone, *Children and the Internet* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009)

² Most critics discussing globalization in this paper have an economic interpretation: see, for example, Rustom Bharucha (1993), Maurya Wickstrom (1999), Dan Rebellato (2009), Joost Smiers (2005) and Jack Zipes (2004). However there are many more examples of how theatre studies interpret this term in a strictly economical sense such as: *Staging the Nation* (2005) by Jen Harvie.

and particularity to appeal to a wider international audience to ensure an income, therefore weakening cultural particularity on a local level (Ibid: 129).³

While much children's theatre reflects on the child's experience of a globalised society by staging and exploring different cultures as well as stories set or originating elsewhere in the world, a contradiction is nevertheless created frequently. On the one hand, globalisation is interpreted by practitioners and critics as a solely macro negative economic term, while on the other hand it is deemed important that the child engages and reflects on his or her place in a global society.⁴ Indeed, globalisation is a term and a process that encompasses more than economics, and a restricted economic discussion will not benefit children's theatre. Robertson argues, for example, that globalisation is the growing interconnectedness of the world and the resulting awareness that the world can be seen as a single place (Robertson 1992: 8). Moreover Robertson points out that globalisation is a cultural process which is interpreted differently in different places: he suggests that the global is not the opposite of the local but rather the two scales are in continuous interplay, what he calls 'glocalization' (2007: 546-547).

³ Joost Smiers uses the concept of 'world music' to illustrate that this kind of music which has the association of being 'unmediated and authentic,' is actually a label created by Western music companies by way of 'branding' the commercially available music from non- western origin. Meanwhile through the commercial repackaging, this type of music has become far removed from its original form (Smiers, 2005: 118). What needs to be added to this observation by Smiers is that by marketing 'world music' as a distinct but a wholly diverse category (simply every kind of music without Western origin) has also to a certain level promoted and empowered the artists who were previously misrepresented and undervalued in the industry. (see *World Music: The Rough Guide* (eds.) Simon Broughton, Mark Ellingham, David Muddyman and Richard Trillo (London: Rough Guides, 1994))

⁴ Teaching the 'global dimension' or global citizenship is promoted by Tide (Teachers in Development Education), DEP (inspiration resources training for a just and sustainable world), DEA (Promoting education for a just and sustainable world), DFID (Department for International Development) or charities such as Oxfam and Unicef. As explained in the previous chapter, because children's theatre needs to appeal to schools and is additionally predominantly orientated towards the political left, issues such as human rights, sustainable development, diversity and social justice which are included within the 'global dimension,' are popular (see Clive Belgeonne, *Teaching the Global Dimension: A Handbook for teacher education*). The teachers' handbook *Young Children and Global Citizenship*, argues that children need space to explore their ideas and feelings about their communities that "are more and more visibly globalised" (Teachers in Development Education, 2006: 4). See also Mary Young and Eilish Commings' extensive handbook for primary teaching titled *Global Citizenship* (2002) which is written for charity organisation Oxfam.

As such this chapter will discuss children's theatre in relation to 'glocalisation' and mainly focus on the way intercultural theatre can stage the interplay between the global and local and how this can challenge the negative perception of globalisation existing in the field of theatre studies which as I have suggested is derived from a limited economic model. To discuss how theatre for children can engage and facilitate engagement with the growing interconnectedness of the world but also what should be avoided when addressing cultural difference, I will examine two case studies: *The Lion King* (1999), a musical primarily aimed at young children and *Once Upon A Tiger* (2010), an international production for young audiences. I use *The Lion King* to discuss the negative effects of the global market structure and the dangers of the intercultural performance that exploits cultures. My discussion of *Once Upon A Tiger* will be presented as an example of how to engage with a young audience on both global and local levels at the same time.

The second part of this chapter focuses on Japanese (influenced) theatre in the UK. Although it might seem that the cultural exchange between the UK and Japan is not compromised by a colonial past or considered exploitative because Japan is also active participant in the global market; through exploring Edward W. Said's theory of 'Orientalism' I will argue that Japan has an unique position within this theoretical framework, preventing cultural exchanges being straightforward, but at the same time not less worth while. Indeed I will illustrate the difficulties as well as the benefits of using traditional Japanese cultural references by examining A Thousand Cranes Theatre production of the play *Tales From Old Japan* (2010). While I will also problematise the use of Japanese culture in a contemporary representation in relation to *The Cat Who Ran* (2009) performed by and at Unicorn Theatre.

Global Outlooks and Local Connections in Theatre for the Child

Intercultural performances in global context

According to Ric Knowles, intercultural performances can function as “sites of negotiation” that evoke “the possibility of interaction across a multiplicity of cultural positionings, avoiding binary codings” (2010: 4). Indeed, as explained in the introduction of this thesis, the intercultural performance can create a theatrical dialogue where different cultural references and practices are performed together and as such create a cultural mix or hybrid forms. This might include, for example, performances and stories told with Shadow play or puppetry,⁵ or African drum and other performative elements taken from a specific culture that are performed in productions with a different cultural origin. In many instances there will be a writer, director or performer from a certain cultural background who belongs or belonged to that culture and who creates these performances with an integral knowledge. In other cases the performances might have been created through cultural exchanges or

⁵ Shadow play or shadow puppetry has its roots in various countries such as Greece, Nepal and Turkey, but the best known forms are the Indonesian form of Wayang Kulit and the Chinese shadow puppetry which appeared in the UK as early as 1777 (see ‘History of puppetry in Britain’ Available at: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/h/history-of-puppetry-in-britain/>; David Currell, *Shadow Puppets & Shadow Play* (Marlborough: Crowood Press, 2008). In some contemporary productions the shadow puppets are wholly updated, using ‘modern’ shapes and bright colours. For example in the production *La Di DaDa* (2008) by Quicksilver Theatre and Indefinite Articles, the young audience sits in a white tent and the colourful shadow puppets are projected around them. In *A Bear Called Paddington* (2006) by Polka Theatre the shadow puppet is used only in the beginning of the play to show how Paddington moves from Peru to Britain. And in Oily Cart’s performance *Drum* (2011) aimed at babies, a shadow puppet in the shape of a baby fascinates the audience by appearing and disappearing as well as jumping up and down. For more titles on Indonesian shadow puppetry see also Edward C. Van Ness and Shita Prawirohardjo, *Javanese Wyang Kulit: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Ward Keeler, *Javanese Shadow Puppets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Matthew Isaac Cohen. ‘Contemporary Wayang in Global Contexts,’ *Asian Theatre Journal*, Volume 24, No 2 (Fall, 2007) pp. 338-369.

collaborations between two or more countries. Likewise, the intercultural nature of a performance is also established through an exchange with the young audience. It is only through the audience's active interpretation of the performance text that meaning is constructed and as such understanding the frame of reference through which every young audience member approaches a performance is essential.⁶ This frame of reference is constructed through previous and direct experiences and as such the child's local environment and cultural background is very important in the way they perceive theatre. This means that when a performance is only representative of a single culture, the intercultural dialogue is still established due to the diversity of the audience and their interpretation shaped by their 'frame of reference'. As the UK is a culturally diverse society, a certain level of this intercultural exchange is unavoidable.

Theatre practitioners as well as governmental advice and pressure groups such as Platform for Intercultural Europe⁷ often argue that intercultural projects can help to bridge gaps between cultures, encourage understanding and promote equality as well as represent and empower cultural minorities living in the UK (Frank, 2008). Nevertheless interculturalism is a contested term and practice evoking many problems in Western societies with colonial pasts and neo-colonial presents and thus raises many questions about the homogeneous, exploitative and unequal powers that underline all such intercultural exchanges (Stone Peters, 1995: 205). As this chapter focuses on globalisation, it is important to note that the intercultural production is seen frequently as a Western phenomenon that appropriates and renegotiates cultural

⁶ This is why this thesis uses the term intercultural above others such as cross-cultural or multicultural performances, as interculturalism also allows the consideration of the cultural exchange between the cultures on the stage and the cultural environment and background of the young audience members, as discussed in the introduction of this thesis.

⁷ The Platform for Intercultural Europe is an civil society organisation established in 2006 "active from the local to the European level" using and promoting the Intercultural Dialogue in "domains ranging from the arts, education, youth and social work, to work on minority rights and anti-discrimination" (see Sabine Frank (ed.) for The Platform for Intercultural Europe, *Rainbow Paper* 5).

difference to suit the needs of the market. Bharucha, and other critics, use Edward W. Said's theory of 'Orientalism' to contextualise current intercultural practices.⁸

With this theory, which lies at the heart of postcolonial studies, Said illustrated how the West, also termed the 'Occident', represented the East or the 'Orient' through a range of expressions including art and literature, using stereotypes and assumptions (Said, 1978). This appropriation and representation of the 'Orient' as childlike, depraved and irrational (Ibid: 40), or, as "a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (Ibid: 1), implied that the West should practice authority over the 'Orient' and protect the "Oriental grandeur" in a contemporary context (Ibid: 79). Moreover, Said recognises a "reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed" in the electronic postmodern world and media such as film and television force information into "standardized molds" (Ibid: 26).

In light of the processes of 'Orientalism', the intercultural production becomes inherently problematic as the West's engagement with the cultural other is considered to continue this model of appropriation and seen to often resort to a stereotypical representation. Bharucha argues that Western intercultural performances are potentially "involved in the draining of source cultures through arbitrary, non-negotiated, and essentially one-sided modes of transportation determined by the globalizing mechanism and complicities of the market and the state" (1997: 32).

Bharucha argues that the Western practice of interculturalism is not a cultural exchange, instead "it is the West that extends its domination to cultural matters"

⁸ Ric Knowles writes in his short publication *Theatre and Interculturalism* (2010) that Orientalism ultimately positions the West and Rest as binary opposites (21). Crucial in the development of intercultural criticism is Brook's production *The Mahabharata* (1980) which was understood by critics, including Rustom Bharucha, Una Chaudhuri (1991), Gautam Daguja, Biodun Jeyifo, and Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert (2002), as a performance that had been established through the exploitative relation in which the West appropriates the cultural 'other' (Ibid: 23).

(Bharucha, 1993: 2). Indeed, as mentioned, this is how economic globalisation is generally perceived as “westernization by another name” (Lechner and Boli, 2004: 1) and the way in which the world has become “a singly, integrated economy” in which everyone is “dependent on everyone else” (Ibid: 157).⁹ Moreover, this is exactly what Marx envisaged the capitalist market system to be capable of: “turning the world into a single marketplace” (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2004: 9).

As such, in relation to the previous chapter’s discussion of the TiE movement, Marxist and socialist influences and their current legacy in the world of children’s theatre, the threat of capitalism and westernisation as translated in the word globalisation is understandably perceived as a destructive force in the life of a child. For this reason, when children’s theatre is discussed in relation to globalisation, the function of a meaningful artistic expression is partially abandoned to consider theatre once again as a tool of resistance and a strategy to counter the forces of globalisation, rather than recognising the need to engage and incorporate the child’s increasingly diverse and digitalised society in cultural expressions made for them.

For example, Jack Zipes in his chapter ‘Political children’s theatre in the age of globalization’ (2004) does not specifically define globalisation but from the discussion it is clear that he associates the phenomenon with how American children have become “insatiable consumers of manufactured identities that falsely promise excitement and happiness” (9). According to Zipes this consumerism creates a

⁹ In *Theatre and Globalisation*, Dan Rebellato briefly considers the other interpretations of the term (cultural and political); however he continues to state that globalisation is “a specifically economic phenomenon” (Rebellato, 2009: 10). Rebellato does not fully explain why it is an economic phenomenon besides pointing out that cosmopolitanism as a “separate force running through human history” is its cultural counterpart (Ibid: 11). Rebellato argues that cosmopolitanism is much older than globalisation, which according to him does not range back further than the late eighteen century (Ibid: 11-12). Moreover, he argues that a person’s attitude to cultural and economic phenomena are independent of each other, thus if you dislike McDonald’s you do not necessarily need to dislike Brazil music (Ibid: 12). Rebellato is ‘unconvinced’ by the term ‘glocalisation,’ which is in his eyes a strategy against globalisation (Ibid: 59). Therefore, “combining two bad ideas is not obviously a great way of creating one good one; second, I am not persuaded that you solve genuine global problems by inventing new terminology” (Ibid).

dilemma for contemporary children's theatre, as practitioners have to find a way "to attract an audience while at the same time avoiding absorption into the culture industry, where it would be subjected to the forces of globalization, which turn everything into spectacle" (Ibid). Indeed, spectacles are not beneficial for the child, as "instead of revealing society" the spectacle "produces and reproduces power relations that maintain and reinforce the status quo" (Ibid: 10). As such, work for children needs to be "antispectacular" in the sense that it is "politically subversive or threatening" and deals with the political relations in children's lives, so the performance can open up "fissures in the totalizing tendencies of global capitalism" (Ibid: 13).

Therefore he argues for performances such as *Martha* (2002) by the Scottish company Catherine Wheels, described as a "simple, fantastic story" told as "realistically as possible," following the friendship of a grumpy old woman and a wild goose with the themes of the "possibility for change and friendship" (Ibid: 6). What Zipes proposes is a return to the social, political and educational plays of the TiE movement, as the type of theatre Walter Benjamin (whom he uses throughout his work) recognised as "proletarian theater" and "a way for children (the most oppressed group in society) to come to terms with conditions that were not of their own making" (Ibid: 24).¹⁰ In other words "unspectacular work by children's theaters and other groups must continue to confront the society of the spectacle if theater's vital, dangerous impulse is to be kept alive" (Ibid: 25).

Zipes' article is certainly an interesting argument for returning to the TiE tradition in order to defend against the increasing commercialisation of society and

¹⁰ Zipes uses the essay 'Programm eines Proletarischen Kindertheaters,' that can be found in Walter Benjamin, *Über Kinder, Jugend und Erziehung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970). It has been translated by Susan Buck-Morss and published as 'Program for a Proletarian Children's Theater,' *Performance1* (March–April 1973): 28–32. However, this translation is not recommended by Zipes who finds the text problematic and incorrect.

childhood. However his way of looking at globalisation with a purely economic interpretation and simply another term for consumerism is not representative of the expanding field of global studies that has moved beyond the cliché of simply blaming all that is wrong on the increasing interconnectedness of the world (Lechner and Boli: 2004: 1). Although there are still theorists in the field who adhere to a strictly economic interpretation, many in this field, including Robertson, have redefined the term to expose how it operates on various levels, including the economic, to provide a much more accurate debate on how globalisation changes peoples lives for better and for worse.¹¹ For example, John Tomlinson describes globalisation as a process of “complex connectivity”, referring to the “rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependence that characterize modern social life” (1999: 2) This “ever-densening network”, that reaches beyond the national borders, is not just used in terms of the global transport of capital but includes the movements of “people, knowledge, images, crime, pollutants, drugs, fashions and beliefs” (McGrew, 1992: 65).

By seeing these global networks (or processes of connections) as facilitating the flows of cultural elements and not simply capital, the direction of these flows can also be reconsidered and understood as moving not just from East to West, but from multiple locations to multiple locations (Hugh, 2000: 49; Campbell, Mackinnon and Stevens, 2010: 19). Moreover, it can be suggested that within these locations from

¹¹Zygmunt Bauman defines globalisation as the compression of time and space (see *Globalization: The Human Consequences*, 1989: 2) Robert J. Holton argues that globalisation is best seen as “set of intersecting processes that falter as much as they advance” and “have the quality of networks rather than structures” (see *Globalization and the Nation State*, 2011: 236) Anthony Giddens defines globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (see *The Consequences of Modernity*, 1990: 64). Manfred B. Steger has arguably the most comprehensive term arguing that: “Globalization refers to a multidimensional set of social processes that create, multiply, stretch, and intensify worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges while at the same time fostering in people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant” (see *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*, 2003: 13).

which the cultures flow and the locations in which cultures are interpreted, there is not a passive adoption but an active negotiation and, at times, resistance in light of cultural influences.¹² Thus, instead of the “death of geography” in which space and time are of no concern, it is possible to recognise the way in which space and local context matter greatly (Nayak, 2004:5). This is why theorists such as Robertson prefer the use of ‘glocalization’ to suggest that the global is not the opposite of the local but rather that the two scales are in continuous and complex interplay (2007: 546-547). Instead of simply creating a homogeneous and standard culture, also the hybridization of cultures is facilitated by the network of global interaction and the processes of globalisation (see Hannerz, 1992; Pieterse, 2009; Kraidy, 2005).

This reason that this chapter will use the term ‘glocalisation’ is because it aims to illustrate how the child as an active audience can interact and interpenetrate both local and global cultures and challenge this binary opposition. As such the theatrical experience of the child does not need to avoid intercultural production out of fear that these standardise and commodify cultures. Instead the aim is to facilitate meaningful cultural exchanges that do not seek to maximise profit, but instead relate to the child’s increasingly globalised society. Although the focus in this chapter is not globalisation in a strictly economic interpretation, because in the UK all cultural expression to some extent relate and rely on the market structure of this country, it is not possible to disregard theatre as an economic activity. Therefore, in order to understand the dangers of the Western capitalistic market structure for the intercultural production, Disney’s *The Lion King* has been chosen as an example which is engaged in what Bharucha terms a “globalizing mechanism” (1997: 32). Although Bharucha mainly

¹² In considering that globalisation is interpreted, negotiated and resisted on local/global levels it is important to recognise that this is still influenced by “global structural inequalities, power relations, international regulatory frameworks and dominant corporations” (Hopper, 2007: 189). Thus, a balance needs to be found in considering human agency within the context of these forces.

writes about how cultures in his native India are affected by Western global powers, his criticism can be extended to all those countries, which, in his terms, belong to the ‘third world,’ therefore *The Lion King*’s engagement with ‘African’ culture seems suitable in this chapter.

The Lion King

The Lion King opened on the 31st of July 1997 in Minnesota and opened in 1999 at the Lyceum Theatre in London.¹³ The musical was adapted by Elton John, Tim Rice, Hans Zimmer, Lebo M. and director Julie Taymor from the animated Disney movie from 1994, and was as such already part of a global brand. The story follows a young lion cub named Simba who is in line to the throne of the Savannah. However, things are ruined by his power hungry uncle Scar and his pack of evil and grotesque hyenas, who succeed in killing Simba’s father by pushing him into a herd of wildebeests. Simba is then made to believe that his father’s death is his own fault and he is better off leaving the kingdom altogether and seeking refuge in the Jungle. Here he meets two other outsiders, who become Simba’s new friends and family. Nala, a childhood friend, eventually meets a mature Simba by chance and convinces him to return and defeat Scar who, for his part, is driving the kingdom to destruction. Simba succeeds and restores peace and order or, as the story has it, ‘the circle of life’.

The stage production had to find a way to transfer the animals to the stage and to continue and reinforce the African setting of the story. Its creators arguably

¹³ The Lyceum Theatre is located just on the border of the West-End theatre region in London and has 2107 seats. The theatre has existed since 1765, however the current building dates from 1904. After various transformations, including serving as a ballroom, it was converted back into a proscenium arch theatre to house large-scale musicals with a very spacious orchestra pit. See ‘Lyceum Theatre’ on the London Theatreland website, Available at <http://www.london-theatreland.co.uk/theatres/lyceum-theatre/history.php>.

embraced this by incorporating various performative elements that the West typically associates with African culture: costumes made out of fabric with West African wax prints, music with rhythmical Conga drums, masks resembling African traditional wooden masks and water urns, the set with earthy natural colours, and a selection of dance from tribal rituals (Disney, 'Exploring The Lion King').¹⁴ As such the show is not just set in the African savannah with African animals, rather the show used its African setting to celebrate an essentialised representation that elided the cultural diversity of a whole continent within a Western theatrical form.

Creator Julie Taymor argues that the musical's global success is rooted in universal appeal, as the themes of the story such as father/son relationships and the balance of nature, as well as the intercultural performative elements, are recognisable anywhere in the world (Ibid). However, it could be argued that notions of 'African' cultures are selected and appropriated to sell in the West and its universal appeal functions as a homogeneous and standardising force, complying with market structure of capitalism.¹⁵ The musical is also seen to represent the danger of the arts and commerce merging, creating a phenomenon that Maurya Wickstrom calls 'Retail Theatre'. Wickstrom points out that advertisements in the programme of *The Lion King* reads 'enjoy your audience with the King. And remember, even in the jungle, American Express helps you do more' (1999: 285). This advert, she argues, not only

¹⁴ Disney's 'Exploring The Lion King' website is available at: <http://www.exploringthelionking.co.uk/>

¹⁵ The danger of universalism is that it closely relates to Western cultural imperialism- a concept where the values and beliefs of the West are enforced on others with the use of its military and economic dominance (in Tomlinson, 1999). These values and beliefs, such as democracy and free markets, are incidentally deemed 'universal' and applicable everywhere, even though 'other' countries have not voluntarily chosen to adopt these values (Lechner and Boli, 2004: 140). A good precedent here is *Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling, first published in 1894 and also adapted into a animated film version by Disney in 1967. See Jopi Nyman, *Postcolonial Animal Tales from Kipling to Coetzee* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2003); Shaul Bassi, 'Traffic in the Jungle: Teachers, Lawyers, Doctors and Animals in Three Kipling Films' (2001) in *Considering Children's Literature: a Reader* (ed.) Teya Rosenberg and Andrea Schwenke Wyile (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2008); M. Daphne Kutzer, *Empire's Children: Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children's Books* (New York: Psychology Press, 2000).

illustrates how theatre and the market have become entwined, but also how it places and inscribes the audience in the fiction of the musical by suggesting that they are also in the jungle and are having an audience with the King (Ibid: 285). The commercial reason for placing the audience within this fantasy world rests on an idea that the consumer wants to buy the experience (Ibid: 297-298). As Wickstrom writes:

By creating environments and narratives through which spectators/consumers are interpellated into fictions produced by and marketed in both show and stores, entertainment and retail based corporations allow bodies to inhabit commodities and so suggest that commodities, in turn, can be brought to life. (Ibid: 285)

In this sense the African setting of *The Lion King* becomes at the same time a set for the global market and in a perverse sense, by commodifying the experience as well as the characters and the world they inhabit, the Western audience can buy and consume a westernised version of 'African culture'. Consequently *The Lion King* is seen to represent a global product: culturally representative of no one but equally consumable by everyone, or at least those for whom economic considerations do not bar access.

This type of 'Retail Theatre' and its usage of the global market is also something that Rebellato discusses in his book *Theatre and Globalisation* (2009). Rebellato groups the successful global musicals under the term 'McTheatre'¹⁶ as they operate under the same standardising principles which aims to provide the customer

¹⁶ Rebellato is basing this type of 'McTheatre' on the important sociological book by George Ritzer *The McDonaldization of Society* (1993). In this book Ritzer examines how economic activity is becoming standardised and organised for efficiency along the lines of fast food outlets. In relation to culture, Ritzer argues that this economic activity is creating cultural homogeneity and is driving out local differences. Since, studies have used Ritzer's work but continued to illustrate how McDonald outlets are not standardised throughout the world and to some extent adapt to the local and national environment, both in terms of what kind of products are sold (think of a McSpicy Paneer in India), how the employees are treated but also how costumers use the fast food outlet (see Alex Bellos, 'Planet Mac' (2001) *The Guardian* Available from: www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,3604,469231,00.html). What is also interesting is that in recent work, Ritzer uses the concept of 'glocalisation' to argue that the glocal "is an increasingly important source not only of cultural diversity, but also of cultural innovation" and thus needs to be supported (see 'The Globalization of Nothing,' 2003: 199).

with the same 'quality' experience anywhere in the world (Ibid: 41). The fantastical world of *The Lion King* has been transported and subsequently staged in 15 different countries, where each performance featured identical replicas of the masks and sets (Disney, 'Exploring The Lion King'). According to Rebellato mega musicals turn the theatrical performance into a standardised franchise limiting the liveness, uniqueness, and the immediate experience of the audience, as the individual performances can no longer connect to space and time (Ibid: 41-42). Rebellato also specifically mentions *The Lion King* as a prime example of the importance of selling merchandise. He suggests that because of the original outlay (some twenty million dollars), on top of the excessive costs to stage the musical each night, box office intakes alone cannot cover its costs. Put differently, it is unlikely that the musical will recuperate the initial investment through ticket sales alone (Ibid: 48). *The Lion King's* financial viability and commercial success thus lies with its merchandise such as T-shirts, cds, books, posters and many, many more such items (Ibid).

To return to Bharucha's criticism of the intercultural performance, in the case of *The Lion King* the creative process is underlined by capitalist appropriation of cultural specificity and as such the show has an exploitative effect on its source culture and is evidence of a one-way mode of transport of both culture and capital. However, this capitalist appropriation in the creative process does not make *The Lion King* an example of a standardised theatrical experience. This idea would undermine the role and participation of the audience, suggesting that the spectator instead of actively constructing meaning, only passively consumes. Indeed, it appears that the audiences' engagement in Wickstrom's 'retail theatre' is limited to buying the ticket or paying to be part of the fiction and experience. Moreover, the assertion that *The Lion King* is a standardised experience assumes a homogeneous audience that will

interpret and understand the performance according to the same frame of reference, rather than acknowledging the cultural diversity that can be found in the UK. Indeed, the argument that *The Lion King* has taken the local cultural specificities of the African continent and shaped this into a standardised global product, which is the same anywhere in the world, needs to consider that this global product needs to be interpreted on the local level of the audience, and to complicate matters further, a local level which is interpenetrated by the global.

This interaction between the two scales of the local and global, which occurs when an audience enjoys a theatrical performance, relates to Robertson's concept of 'glocalization'. This interaction is partly due to the way the child's experience and interpretation cannot be separated from their direct environment and culture. For example, the building,¹⁷ the journey to the theatre and even next to whom they sit is important in the theatrical exchange. Although Rebellato suggests that *The Lion King* is a purely global, standardised and homogenised theatrical experience, the same anywhere in the world, the child's visit to the mega musical remains an individual experience formed by the perception and connection to their direct environment and informed by his or her cultural background. As such the global world of the stage is interpreted in relation with the child's local environment, and the child's local environment is influenced by the global interconnectedness of society.

This interaction is also similar to what was previously described as the intercultural production, in which there is a dialogue between the culture performed on stage and culture of the receptive audience. Although I have previously recognised that *The Lion King* has taken notions of 'African' culture to resituate these in the

¹⁷ A good example is the two principle theatres in the UK: Unicorn and Polka. Each theatre displays completely different interpretations of how to understand and adapt to this relation between child and theatre space. The Unicorn's building is very 'contemporary' with materials such as concrete, steel and big glass windows. In contrast the Polka theatre is 'playful' and 'warm' with bright colours, carpet floors and teddy bear exhibition.

format of a Western musical, some of these cultural elements are clearly recognisable for their cultural difference, such as the music created by the South African musician Lebo M. who uses African languages such as Zulu, Xhosa and Swahili in his compositions. Indeed, this influence proves to be too culturally different for the online-critics who argue that one of the problems of the musical is the fact that the songs are unmemorable (see Dalglish, 1999; Elkin, 2004; Cavendish, 2009). A child living in the UK with a South African background will interact with these elements in a completely different manner, perhaps enjoying the cultural representation. Moreover, the cultural elements shaped more profoundly by Western consumer culture will also contribute to the intercultural interaction; although multinationals such as Disney and McDonalds are deemed to represent a global culture consumable by all, there are in fact many individuals in the West who do not feel represented by this consumer culture and choose to reject these particular influences. The different levels of engagement and the differences in interpretations means that it would be useful to reject the notion of a single global culture and instead consider these as competing cultures that use the global market for their efficient spread around the world (see Hopper, 2008: 109). As such, the staging of one of these competing global cultures still establishes an intercultural dialogue with the audience.

After considering how *The Lion King* has possibilities to establish an intercultural dialogue and, rather than a standardised global product, has possibilities to engage with its audience on both global and local scales, it is important to recognise that Bharucha's criticism that intercultural performances use cultural appropriation in their creative process is not addressed in this discussion. This is because this appropriation is not wholly due to the 'globalizing mechanism' but the capitalistic structure that underline the process of the cultural exchange. In other

words, the cultural exchange is motivated by the commercial appeal of the cultural other. Therefore the second performance of this chapter, *Once Upon A Tiger*, a small scale subsidised project, is used as an example of completely different interpretation of the intercultural exchange.

Once Upon A Tiger

Once Upon A Tiger by Moby Duck¹⁸ was established through collaboration between a group of children from the UK living near Birmingham and a group of children from the outskirts of Seoul, South Korea, using a specifically designed blog to allow them to share ideas, learn and engage with each other's culture, despite geographical distance.¹⁹ The project's designer Peter Wynne-Willson, ultimately wrote the final script with contributions from Yoon Won Hye, incorporating the storyline from various suggestions made by the children. Wynne-Willson also directed the production with professional actors that toured the UK in 2010.²⁰

¹⁸ Moby Duck theatre company based in Birmingham aims to create theatre based on "stimulating, challenging and accessible stories for young people and adults that celebrate the common ground between cultures" (see 'Moby Duck' Available at: <http://www.moby-duck.com/hello.html>). It was established in 1999 by artistic director Guy Hutkinson who himself grew up in India with English parents and as such experienced living between cultures (Hutkinson, Personal communication, 2010). Indeed, this cultural experience continues to profoundly affect and influence the work by the company which predominantly features Indian and Korean inspired work (Ibid).

¹⁹ The full blog and script is available at <http://onceuponatiger.blogspot.com/>

²⁰ Peter Wynne-Willson is an independent children's theatre practitioner who teamed up with the children's theatre company Moby Duck for this project. With a background in TiE Wynne-Willson has developed a unique style in which he 'builds' stories for children with children, a style that can be also be recognised in *Once Upon A Tiger* (Wynne-Willson, Forthcoming). Wynne-Willson explains in a forthcoming chapter that he has based his technique on the way he understands his distant relative J. M. Barrie created *Peter Pan* with the Lewly brothers (Ibid). His engagement with South Korean culture came from his position as Visiting Professor of Theatre-and-Education at the Korean National University of the Arts (Wynne-Willson, Personal communication, 2010). However, his participation in cross-cultural and intercultural work also comes from the cultural diversity as found in his home city of Birmingham (see Wynne-Willson, 'Paper for Symposium on Cross-Cultural Collaboration,' 2008). Other productions with Korean influences include *The Bridge* (2005), *Tiger Trail* (2006) and *Looking for Yoghurt* (2008). See also Peter Wynne-Willson's website 'Young People's Theatre Writer and Director' Available at: <http://www.pwynne.hostinguk.com/>

The participating children decided to set the story in South Korea because the title, *Once Upon A Tiger*, was the only pre-established element of the play, as well as a sentence commonly found at the beginning of many traditional stories in South Korea. South Korea is a country with which the UK has had no direct history of colonial involvement, nor can it be described as a 'third world country', the term Bharucha uses to theorise the flow of cultures. However, Asiatic countries such as South Korea and Japan are also part of the 'Orient' as constructed by Western cultures, and Western intercultural productions presenting these particular cultures still risk presenting this other using stereotypes or solely in an historical context, rather than with an awareness and appreciation of the contemporary culture. For example, using stage make-up to accentuate stereotypical physical properties such as yellow skin, exaggerated accents, the 'Oriental' character portrayed as less intelligent than the others and suggesting to the child that in the Asiatic countries everyone is dressed in kimonos, wears conical straw hats and uses handheld fans.

The blog shows how the two groups of children devised the play and in doing so took inspiration from their immediate environments and personal concerns. At the same time, they thought about and engaged with the culture of each other. In this manner, the creative process of *Once Upon A Tiger* provided the participating children with an opportunity to get involved in the intercultural exchange; an exchange that took place on both local and global scales simultaneously. For example, an early contribution by the South Korean children was to set the play around an old local tree ('*Once Upon a Tiger*', Blog, 2009). The children wondered how it survived the Korean War 50 years earlier and the English group were asked if they were aware of this war. The South Korean children decided the locals must have protected it

during the war with arms as it was so special to them, and also discussed what their town looked like 700-800 years ago.

The South Korean children uploaded multiple pictures of the tree onto the blog enabling the English children to continue the discussions concerning trees, war and the past. The English children tried to find reasons why a tree would be so important to the people of a town or village, and came up with reasons ranging from the tree holding happy memories, or that it was a repository for secrets or that there was a myth that if the tree were to fall down it would be the end of the village. The children also wanted to share their favourite tree in England, a ‘conker tree’. When one of the English children introduced a red squirrel, which he had seen on a tree, it ultimately became the play’s highlight: an out of tune singing squirrel who lives in the ancient tree.



Illustrations 3.9 and 3.10 - *Once Upon A Tiger*. The image on the left illustrates the set design with visible European and South Korean influences. The image on the right shows Charlotte and the ‘Bad-singing Squirrel’ (Photos: Chris Cuthbert/Acquis Media)

The final script charts a very inventive and creative story, incorporating lots of original ideas, including a flying tiger rug fitted with a pizza oven. The story follows Young Hee, a brave, energetic, tech loving girl and her friend Andy Sherbet, a nervous and anxious boy, on a journey to understand an old grumpy lady, Charlotte, and learn the secrets of her tiger rug and the old tree in her garden. Although this play text was a result of the intercultural exchange, facilitated by web based and digital media that in contemporary society interpenetrates the child's direct environment with global influences, the performance had to re-establish this dialogue with the audience not involved in its creative processes. Even though the children had sent pictures of some of the costumes and staging, the director still had to select how the cultural influences would be represented in the play. The play did not seek to present a historical 'Oriental' representation to reinforce the South Korean setting, but it was not devoid of cultural references either. One of the three performers was South Korean and delivered her lines in Korean throughout, made understandable by physical gestures and through the interaction with the other characters. The music accompanying the play could be described as mainly Western, but there was also a gong and rhythmic drumming, related to forms such as P'ungmul, the Korean drumming and dance tradition.²¹

In contrast to *The Lion King*, these cultural references were not selected and adapted to sell in the West. It is impossible to claim that *Once Upon A Tiger* existed outside the capitalist market structure of the UK and I would not argue that participating in the intercultural exchange without the motivation of maximising

²¹ See for more titles on *P'ungmul*: Nathan Hesselink, *P'ungmul: South Korean Drumming and Dance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Hesselink, 'Rhythm and Folk Drumming (P'ungmul) as the Musical Embodiment of Communal Consciousness in South Korean Village Society' in *Analytical and Cross-Cultural Studies in World Music* (eds.) Michael Tenzer, John Roeder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Keith Howard, *Perspectives on Korean Music: Creating Korean Music: Tradition, Innovation and the Discourse of Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006).

profit would wholly negotiate the problems and criticism of the intercultural production. However, the small scale of the performance completely changes the dynamics of this exchange not only in terms of its creative process but also in performance. For example, in small productions staged in smaller theatre venues, the relation between performance and audience is much more ‘intimate’ (Way 1981: 65).²² In other words, small theatre spaces literally bring the audience closer to the performers and their actions. Arguably this encourages children to feel involved in the action of the play and this is often further encouraged by audience interaction or participatory elements (Ibid). Because this close relation and interaction – which might not always be invited or an official part of the performance but a spontaneous incident initiated by the child – has to be re-established every time a production is staged, every performance becomes unique.

In *Once Upon A Tiger* the audience interaction occurs when a hunter attempts to shoot the tiger and asks the audience’s advice on the angle from which to aim. In the attended performance some of the audience members react by discouraging the hunter while others give genuine advice on the best way to kill the animal. Although the interaction is only a short moment, it increases the audience presence within the performance and thus also the intercultural exchange. Furthermore, this presence allows the local scale, in other words the interpretation of the play according to the child’s space, time and frame of reference, to interact with the global influence of the play, and vice versa. Considering that this local scale of the child is interpenetrated by the global influences of society, and the local interpenetrates the global influences of

²² I attended the performance of *Once Upon A Tiger* on Saturday the 10th of April 2010 at Tara Art Studio in Earlsfield. Rather interestingly, the front cover of the programme clearly states ‘Global Theatre for Local Audiences’. This is a theatre space belonging to Tara Arts, who are the leading stylistically radical, intercultural British South Asian theatre company, see Graham Ley, ‘Theatre of Migration and the Search for a Multicultural Aesthetic: Twenty Years of Tara Arts’, *New Theatre Quarterly*, Volume XIII, No. 52, (1997) pp. 349-372.

the play through the active participation of the children in the creative process, *Once Upon A Tiger* illustrates a full interaction of the global and local scales.



Illustration 3.11 - *Once Upon A Tiger*: The ambitious and arrogant hunter Mr Figglehorn dressed in a traditional English tweet jacket gets bitten by the ‘Asian’ tiger. (Photo: Chris Cuthbert/Acquis Media)

Demonstrating the interaction between the local and global scales, *Once Upon A Tiger* challenges the dominant perception that globalisation is solely an economic process, which creates a standardised global culture that oppresses local cultures and reduces the participation within the theatrical dialogue to a mere act of consumerism. Indeed, also the discussion of *The Lion King* shows that although its creative process and cultural engagement is compromised by the desire to maximise profit, the audience interaction and participation in the intercultural dialogue has not been standardised and homogenised but remains diverse, as ultimately the audience and their interpretation is diverse in the UK’s contemporary society. Instead of trivialising the capitalistic structure that underlines these intercultural performances, by contrasting the hugely profitable international musical hit with a small scale subsidised production, it has been illustrated that the absence of a primarily

commercial motivation increases the possibilities for the intercultural interaction. Centralising the child, not profit, in the creative processes of *Once Upon A Tiger*, has encouraged this play to be an intercultural exchange not just a form of cultural appropriation. Additionally the small scale brings performers and audiences closer and increases the interaction between the cultures and the global and local scales that interpenetrates the performance as well as the audience.

Rather than avoiding addressing the globalised society and dealing with cultural difference, *Once Upon A Tiger* uses the web based and digital media that increases the global interconnectivity and as such provides an example of how theatre can engage with the changes in society. Indeed, there is a need for the creation of alternative global cultural projects so that these can compete with those global cultures brought forward by multinationals like Disney and McDonalds, where the aim is primarily maximising profit. The girl who writes in the blog that ‘hopefully our play will become famous in the worldwide’ seemingly understands the global scale of the project (*Once Upon a Tiger*, Blog, 2009). She is an example of a generation that looks beyond the national borders of the UK and for whom the theatre needs to engage with an interconnected and diverse society.

Traditional and Contemporary Representations in Intercultural Theatre for the Child

This second section will continue the discussion of globalisation and the cultural exchange, however the focus will shift to considering more closely cultural representation on stage and the motivations behind choosing a particular mode of representation: traditional or contemporary. The discussions of *Once Upon A Tiger*

and *The Lion King* briefly touched upon the problematics of the intercultural production and the performance of culture in light of Said's framework of Orientalism. The observations in relation to these performances illustrated that presenting other cultures in a contemporary context rather than embedded in traditional values and practices to some extent avoids stereotypical and essentialised representations. However, this contemporary representation also risks being perceived as an attempt to homogenise and standardise cultural particularity and authenticity, as such relating to the way economic globalisation is perceived as standardising culture for Western consumer society. Indeed, as will be discussed in relation to a seminar that focused on children's theatre in Japan and the UK, cultural tradition and authenticity have become highly valued in the globalised society of the UK as practitioners are concerned about the arts being commodified and standardised and losing their immediacy in an increasingly digital world. This in turn motivates practitioners to seek traditional and authentic cultures to counteract this economic interpretation of globalisation.

By discussing two plays for children which both engage with Japanese culture -- *Tales From Old Japan* (2010) embedded in a traditional representation of Japan and *The Cat Who Ran* (2009) offering a contemporary interpretation -this section will problematise the motivation to engage with Japanese culture to counteract the processes of globalisation as well as illustrate the difficulties evoked by both modes of representation. An intercultural production that refers to Japanese culture might appear to be unproblematic as the UK has had no colonial presence in Japan, and instead Japan is seen as an imperial aggressor in this geographical region of the 'Far

East'.²³ Moreover, Japan is active on the global market, exporting products such as cars and electronic equipment as well as cultural practices and customs such as sushi, karate, manga cartoons, origami and many more.²⁴ However, the assumption that Japan's colonial history and participation on the global market means that the intercultural exchange is unaffected by Said's framework and the processes of globalisation as discussed in relation with *The Lion King* is problematic. Indeed, this section will explore some of Japan's cultural relations in the past and present to understand this country's representation in the UK as well as how the theory of Orientalism is applied to Japan. Focusing predominantly on the criticism by Bharucha, this section will illustrate how intercultural productions need to be aware of how Oriental theatre can be considered a tradition in the West, and which uses cultures such as Japan to satisfy the desire for authentic, native or even primitive cultures.²⁵ However, this section will end with exploring whether the intercultural exchange can also be understood as way of engaging with the globalised society of the child, where through aspects such as immigration, international trade and the media, the opposition of the West and the Rest has become problematic as these cultural influences interpenetrate each other.

Japanese Theatre for Young Audiences in the UK

²³ Said divides the 'Orient' into the Near East, the Middle East, and the Far East, the latter being Japan, Korea, China and India.

²⁴ Titles on the subject of Japan and globalisation include: Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto (eds.) *Popular Culture, Globalization and Japan* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2006); Harumi Befu and Sylvie Guichard-Anguis (eds.) *Globalizing Japan: Ethnography of the Japanese Presence in Asia, Europe, and America* (London: Routledge, 2002).

²⁵ Here I am suggesting that this desire is problematic and I am not implying that West is necessarily a threat to Japanese culture. Indeed as Antony Tatlow writes: "what has been termed "intercultural angst" in respect of orientalizing, can sometimes constitute the most refined form of condescension, if it assumes a "weaker" Eastern cannot easily withstand the invasions or appropriation by a "stronger" Western culture and should therefore be protected against it" (2001: 6).

On the 8th of September 2010, the organisation Action for Children's Art²⁶ together with the Japan Foundation organised a seminar with the title: 'How Can Drama & Theatre Offer a Place for Children and Young People? Japan and UK Perspectives.' Despite its promising name the seminar did not directly affirm the relationship between Japanese and British theatre makers or explore the way the UK performs Japanese culture for children. Instead the discussion focused mainly on the new theatre for children opened in Tokyo and the initiatives of Hisashi Shimoyama, a renowned producer and artistic director of the International Theatre Festival OKINAWA, who wants to establish an international theatre group for young audiences. In her keynote, Professor Yuriko Kobayashi from Tokyo City University highlighted her research on children and place, explaining that her vision was to offer theatre as a third space in the local community, with the first being taken by the home and the second by the school.

The only keynote contributing the UK perspective²⁷ was that of dramaturge Cecily O'Neill,²⁸ who discussed the importance of adaptations and 'transformations'²⁹ by which she seemingly implied the transformations within traditional tales, such as ugly ducks into beautiful swans and innocence into experience, as well as transformations of traditional tales by adapting and staging these tales for contemporary audiences. This importance of the traditional versus the contemporary

²⁶ Action for Children's Art is a charity organisation funded by membership contributions, established in 1998 by Vicky Ireland to campaign "for children's rights to the arts on equal terms with everyone else" (see <http://www.childrensarts.org.uk/>). It also aims to connect the various artists, professionals and other individuals who are "committed to the importance of arts in children's lives" (Ibid).

²⁷ During the seminar the panel discussion was moderated by Tony Graham from the Unicorn Theatre and also Allan Owens from the University of Chester contributed.

²⁸ Cecily O'Neill is an academic and dramaturge who pioneered 'process drama', a practice "characterised by transformatory outcomes that bring together the worlds of drama education and theatre practice." See Philip Taylor and Christine D. Warner (eds.) *Structure and Spontaneity: the process drama of Cecily O'Neill* (Stoke on Trent: Trentham, 2006).

²⁹ 'Transformations' was also the title of O'Neill's Keynote.

cultural experience was arguably one of the underlying themes of the seminar. Shimoyama reformulated this contradiction as the question of identity, located between the traditional but also the 'new', or in other words, the contemporary experience. During a panel discussion, it was interesting to note that the discussants from the UK, O'Neill, Tony Graham (at the time Artistic Director at the Unicorn Theatre) and Allan Owens (University of Chester) spoke mainly of a loss of tradition in a contemporary interconnected (globalised) world; O'Neill argued that young people are bombarded by media through which no experience is direct and as such children rarely engage in imaginative play and do not interact with the natural world. Owens highlighted research that revealed that many 18 to 20 year olds do not know traditional stories.³⁰ And in addition Graham offered an example of young people in South Korea who spoke to him about a desire to create a show to combat American culture.

Arguably the guests from the UK (and those from Japan to a certain extent) are exemplary of the fear shared by many other theatre practitioners; namely the disappearance of cultural tradition in the wake of an increasingly economically globalising world where the power of multinationals, the global market as well as the digitalisation of society threaten the existence and creation of traditional and local cultural practices, as exemplified by Joost Smiers as discussed in the introduction to this chapter. One of the responses to economic globalisation or the digitalisation of society is a return to cultures perceived as traditional or authentic. This practice relates to primitivism, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, or nativism, "a term for the desire to return to indigenous practices and cultural forms as they existed in pre-colonial society" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1998: 159).

³⁰ Attempts at locating this research have proved unsuccessful.

Critics such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have defended such attempts of ‘strategic essentialism’ by post-colonial societies as it is seen to prevent the negation of cultural difference by the powers of economic globalisation.³¹ However, as will be discussed using the play which was performed during the seminar, *Tales From Old Japan*, such attempts of returning to traditional and authentic cultures are different when this practice is attempted in countries with a colonial past such as Britain and Japan.

As the performance of *Tales From Old Japan* was steeped in traditional Japanese culture but performed in an ‘international’ and global context (as this was a international conference in the UK about a global relationship between the UK and Japan), it could be seen to represent an interesting contradiction. On the one hand the play could be said to be a ‘global product’ because it brings together two cultures while bridging the geographical distance and thus contributing to the interconnectedness of the world. At the same time the play uses the fact that this cultural production can find the resources and means (think of the global flow of money, transport and knowledge) in order to be performed in a different country with a different culture than that of its origins. However, on the other hand, the play tries to represent a traditional culture that relates to a time before global interconnectedness, before the global flow of money, transport and knowledge and before Western consumerism, influences and standardisation. Perhaps most importantly, the play returns to a time before it was deemed useful and beneficial that a child would learn to appreciate and value the cultural differences it finds in its daily environment. In other words, while the play aims to return to a culture before globalisation, it wholly

³¹ See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

uses globalisation in its creative process, while it is also relevant to the child because of globalisation.

Tales From Old Japan

The performance during the seminar was a short play taken from the production *Tales From Old Japan* by the British theatre company A Thousand Cranes Theatre.³² This UK based theatre company founded by Vicky Ireland³³ and Kumiko Mendl³⁴ is an example of Japanese storytelling, created and performed for a predominately British audience, as such establishing and contributing to an intercultural dialogue. The play is traditional in the sense that it stages an old Japanese tale and that the performative elements all enforce the cultural origin of the story such as traditional Japanese music, traditional clothing such as kimonos and a Japanese type of blouse called a *Jinbei*, a *Sugegasia* or Japanese straw hat³⁵ and Japanese hand held fans. The story follows Mount Iwate, a powerful manly volcano, who falls in love with another mountain named (princess) Kamiyama (Ireland, *Tales From Old Japan*, Unpublished play script). Iwate asks Kamiyama to marry him and she happily agrees (Ibid). However, after a very long engagement, Iwate is drawn to another mountain in the West named Mount Hayachine (Ibid). Iwate breaks his engagement with Kamiyana who, in great

³² Founded by Vicky Ireland and Kumiko Mendl, this theatre company exclusively focuses on creating performances with Japanese influences for young audiences in the UK. As their website reads: "From West to East from East to West, A Thousand Cranes aims to create visual, vibrant, physical theatre inspired by stories from Japan and Europe which celebrate and unite the two differing cultures and is committed to work that promotes intercultural dialogue and exchange" (see <http://athousandcranes.org.uk/>).

³³ Vicky Ireland has worked in children's theatre as an actress, writer and director. She was the Artistic Director of Polka Theatre from 1989 to 2002 and currently works as a freelance writer and director. She is also one of the founding members of Action for Children's Art (Harman, 2009:56).

³⁴ Kumiko Mendl was one of the founding members of Yellow Earth, a British East Asian theatre company. Born in Japan, Mendl trained at Jacques Lecoq Theatre School in Paris and currently is active as an actress, teacher, movement director and director (Harman, 2009:56).

³⁵ These hats are recognisable in many Asian cultures and are referred to as conical Asian hats.

distress, retaliates by throwing her own hair (which turns into a forest) and rocks at her -ex- fiancée (Ibid). Therefore, Iwate demands his helper Mount Okuri (which is a much smaller mountain) to move Kamiyana out of the way, threatening to chop off his head if he refuses (Ibid). The helper does his utmost to move the mountain; however he fails to meet Mount Iwate's demands (Ibid). The story ends with the explanation that this is why the small mountain looks like it has lost his head and why it is said to be bad luck to climb both Mount Iwate and Kamiyama in one day (ibid).



Illustration 3.12 - *Tales From Old Japan*. Mount Okuri with his *Sugegasia* tries to move Mount Kamiyana with her showy peak. (Photographer: John Reading ©)

The story was told using limited resources but with colourful fabrics and imaginative staging, for example using movements from *Kabuki* the classical Japanese dance-drama.³⁶ Therefore, the performance was visually interesting and did not solely rely on its narrative content. The actress Kumiko Mendl performed all the roles using minor costume changes; for example by using the Japanese hat she

³⁶ As stated in the script of the performance (Ireland, *Tales From Old Japan*. Unpublished play script) these movements were in the style of Kabuki, and not actually the practice of Kabuki itself. Kabuki as a performance is underlined with traditions and important characteristics such as the stylised movement and elaborate stage make-up, but also the principles such as “virtuosity of the actor” and “individuality beneath the unchanging conventions” are important (Scott, 1999: 17). For more titles on Kabuki see: Ronald Cavaye, *Kabuki: A Pocket Guide* (North Clarendon: Tuttle Publishing, 1993); Earle Ernst, *The Kabuki Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956); James R. Brandon, *Kabuki's Forgotten War: 1931–1945* (Manoa: University of Hawaii Press, 2009).

performed the role of the helper, trying to shift the mountains in their new places. Kimonos were draped around some ladders positioned in the performance space to represent the mountains, complete with a white fan as a snowy peak and a red fan for Iwata's crater. The tears shed by mount Kamiyama were blue shawls. As the performance was so firmly set in Japanese tradition and featured so many performance elements referring to Japanese culture in a historical context rather than a contemporary, it would have been very interesting to see what the Japanese guests of the seminar thought about this performance. Because the play's director Vicky Ireland was also the organiser of this particular event, it was clear why it had been chosen. However, it was surprising that the seminar did not discuss the play and its traditional representation, nor did it deal with the history between the countries in any way, debating cultural relations present or past.



Illustration 3.13 - *Tales From Old Japan*. Mount Iwata with and Mount Kamiyana are both staged using colourful kimonos draped over ladders. Iwate has a red hand-held fan to represent his crater, whereas Mount Kamiyana has a snowy peak. (Photographer: John Reading ©)

Japanese History: From cultural isolation to imperial ambitions

The missing discussion of the performance and the avoidance of the subject of the cultural exchange and its political implications seemed to suggest that here the discussion was affected by a hidden taboo: both countries have an uncomfortable past ruled by (cultural) imperialism. Although Britain has never been an occupier of Japanese territory, Western imperialism with its political and militaristic pressures has always been noted and felt in Japan and as such Japanese culture has resisted as well as embraced these powerful influences throughout its history (Nishihara, 2005: 242). Japan's first acquaintance with the Western world was in 1543, and at these early stages it was a positive engagement where both sides admired each other's force and violence (Martin, 2000: 83). However, warlord Hideyoshi became increasingly suspicious of Christianity and its missionaries that had come with the Western trade and the import of guns. Hideyoshi ordered them to leave Japan in 1587, and with increased paranoia crucified 26 missionaries in 1597 (Jansen, 2002: 67-68). From this moment, the foreign influences in terms of religion but also culture were increasingly perceived as negative and from 1630 Japan actively pursued a policy of isolation (Cullen, 2003: 1). For a long period Japanese culture developed without foreign influence, thus fostering "a process of cultural involution which made Japan more intensely Japanese" (Tames, 2002: 83). This cultural involution, preservation and the construction of Japanese uniqueness are essential in contextualising both the plays and the forum addressed in this section, mainly as in this historical period the Western perception of Japan as a more authentic culture with traditional values was also cultivated.

The period of Japanese isolation was broken following a period of political unrest, cumulating in the establishment of The Meiji State in 1868 (see Totman, 2005: 289-296). In the subsequent period, the process of Japanese involution was replaced

by modernisation and industrialisation, and instead of being warded off, Westernisation was considered to be a necessity in order to compete with or even surpass- Western powers (Henshall, 1999: 75). Japan showed itself as able to adapt and integrate the various Western influences with ease, illustrating its determination to be recognised as a major world power (Ibid.: 102). The imperial ambitions of the West also surfaced in the modernised Japan and the attention focused on Korea, a country that had previously responded favourably to Japanese involvement (Cullen, 2003: 230-232). The idea that Korea on its own would not resist the dominating imperial powers and that if it would eventually fall into the hands of the West it would become a vulnerability for Japan encouraged an increasing presence and effort by the Japanese to strengthen and modernise Korea in terms of its education, economy and political structure (Goto-Jones, 2009: 64). However, Korean resistance against the involvement of Japan also increased, causing social unrest and violence, and when, to the great offence to the Japanese, China was asked to help in restoring the order, the first Sino-Japanese War of modern times followed (Ibid.: 65). The victory and the acquirement of Japan's first colony did not create a problem in terms of other powers; however the growing imperial ambitions and the enthusiastic support from the citizens of Japan which led to further expansion and interest in mainland Asia then evoked tensions with other world powers (Cullen, 2003: 233).

This brief discussion of Japanese history aims to provide a context for the discussion of the Japanese plays and forum, and as such can only reflect very briefly on a hugely complex field of research. Indeed, the nineteenth century that saw further imperial expansion,³⁷ the Second World War during which the country built a

³⁷ More titles on the subject of Japanese imperialism include: Donald Calman, *The Nature and Origins of Japanese Imperialism: a Reinterpretation of the Great Crisis of 1873* (London: Routledge, 1992); William G. Beasley, *Japanese imperialism, 1894-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987);

reputation in the West as a ruthless aggressor,³⁸ and eventually its defeat and resulting social upheaval,³⁹ can only be addressed to increase awareness of how the construction of a world power as well as the destruction of this image of Japanese strength and pride, is integral to understand Japanese culture and thus the cultural exchange with Britain which is attempted in both plays and forum. Indeed, the developments of cultural involution, modernisation, imperial expansion, the Second World War and its aftermath, makes the case studies of these two Japanese plays more complex. This is also because currently Japan is as a nation ambivalent towards its own past, especially in terms of the Second World War which many of its citizens would rather forget (Jansen, 2002: 751). The Japanese past was mentioned only by one participant during the conference: the aforementioned Hisashi Shimoyama, the producer and artistic director of the international theatre festival Okinawa.⁴⁰ Shimoyama explained in the seminar that his desire to establish an international theatre group was partly motivated by the fact that companies consisting of only Japanese actors, can be perceived as culturally aggressive in other Asian Countries.

Japanese Orientalism

Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999).

³⁸ More titles on the subject of Japan during the Second World War include: Werner Gruhl, *Imperial Japan's World War Two: 1931-1945* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publisher, 2010).

³⁹ More titles on the subject of Japan in the wake of Second World War include: Jane W. Yamazaki, *Japanese Apologies for World War II: a Rhetorical Study* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2006); Franziska Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006); Philip A. Seaton, *Japan's Contested War Memories: the 'Memory Rifts' in Historical Consciousness of World War II* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2007).

⁴⁰ Okinawa, an island chain that historically was a separate kingdom in relation to Japan, has itself a complex history. Being colonized by both Japan and the US, the people of the islands have been the victims of "oppression, domination, dispossession, discrimination and episodic violence" (Tanji, 2006: 1). This position as the victim of imperial violence rather than aggressor could be interpreted as a reason for Hisashi Shimoyama being able to address the Japanese past during the seminar.

As previously mentioned, the imperial past of Japan and the absence of Western colonialism might suggest that intercultural performances that stage Japanese culture are not affected by Said's framework of Orientalism. However, just as Orientalism was relevant in the discussion of *Once Upon A Tiger* which featured South Korean cultural references, it is equally important for the discussion of *Tales From Old Japan* and *The Cat Who Ran*. Nevertheless Japan has a wholly unique position in relation to Said's framework as its culture is not only appropriated and represented in a stereotypical way by the West, but Japanese and other cultures in the 'Far East' are also represented in an essentialised and stereotypical manner within this country. Theorists such as Richard H. Minear and Wang Ning who deal with Said's theory in relation to Japan highlight where the West has subsumed and represented Oriental countries, cultures and people as a series of negative judgements such as: stupid, lazy (Ning, 1997: 58) childlike, undeveloped, irrational, different, depraved, aberrant, inferior (Minear, 1980: 507).

However, on the other hand, Western Orientalism has allocated Japan some positive and romantic qualities such as being 'mysterious', as recognised by Ning (1997: 58) or 'spiritual' as illustrated by Yako Kickuchi (1997: 344). However, as previously mentioned, Said points out that these 'positive' qualities seemed to the Europeans to be disappearing in a more contemporary context. Said illustrated this through the Orientalists' high valuation of the classical Middle East and its low valuation of the contemporary Middle East. As such it was the Orientalist's role to "rescue some portion of a lost, past classical Oriental grandeur in order to 'facilitate ameliorations' in the present Orient" (Minear quoting Said, 1980: 507). This selective valuation of the 'other' culture can also be recognised in terms of Japan, as Minear illustrates in his discussion of three Japanese scholars from the west: Basil Hall

Chamberlain, George B. Sansom and Edwin O. Reischauer (1980). What all three scholars have in common is that they appreciate only selective aspects of Japan's past, mainly that of aesthetic achievements, and not intellectual qualities relating to politics and philosophy (Minear, 1980: 511). At the same time the scholars reaffirm the Orientalist's constant search for the cultural essence of the other, which is then compared with the standard (idealised) westerner, as Minear writes: "Like Chamberlain and Sansom, Reischauer isolates a Japanese essence, an essential Japan, which coincides (at least occasionally) with an Oriental essence, an essential Orient" (Ibid: 511). This quote certainly suggests that Said's Orientalism is also relevant to Japan as the methods applied during studying (and representing) a different culture are usually underlined by a binary opposition between East and West, and within this opposition there is only room for essentialised images of the different cultures as this makes them much easier to compare and contrast.

The processes of globalisation as well as its own capitalist consumer culture nevertheless disturb this concept of an 'essential' Japan. Although Japan attempts to maintain a culturally homogeneous national identity (as will be discussed in more detail in relation to the second play *The Cat Who Ran*), it is possible to argue that as this nation celebrates its status of non-western modernity, with a capitalist economy and a relatively good position in the international market, a global influence on its traditional cultural practices is only inevitable (Iwabuchi, 2008: 543). Moreover, as illustrated in the discussion of Japanese history, Japan itself had once the status of colonizer and ruled a large empire ranging from Taiwan, Korea, Micronesia, Manchuria and, in the latter stages of its empire, occupied large parts of mainland China (Nishihara, 2005: 243). As such there are various cultural influences from these ex-colonies and the way Japan engaged with this empire had been theorised in a

similar manner to that which in the West exploited the East.⁴¹ Indeed Saisuke Nishihara points out that Said's theory of Orientalism has also been applied to "the history of the Japanese Empire that possessed colonies for over fifty years" (Nishihara, 2005: 241).

Yuko Kikuchi points out that Orientalism in modern Japan has become a complex circular mechanism influencing its own national cultural identity. As he writes:

First, 'Orientalism' influenced Japan's views as to how to define its own art. Second, Japan in turn applied this 'Orientalism' not only to its own art but also to the art of other 'Oriental' countries, a phenomenon I have termed 'Oriental Orientalism'. Finally, 'Oriental Orientalism' was projected back to the Occident by Japan thereby reinforcing 'Orientalism' in the Occident. (Kikuchi, 1997: 344)

Kikuchi argues that through this circular mechanism, Japanese culture has itself become a 'hybrid' form, incorporating and creating a cultural identity that is both 'Occidental' and 'Oriental' at the same time (Ibid). This is certainly the case in terms of the current theatre practice in Japan which reflects this 'hybrid' cultural identity by representing an 'open practice' which contains the traditional forms or those based on religious performance practices, and the more modern, commercial theatre clearly influenced by the West.⁴² The theatre influenced by the West can be

⁴¹ For titles on the subject of Japanese imperialism and cultural influence see: Gennifer Weisenfeld (ed.) *Visual Cultures of Japanese Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Faye Yuan Kleeman, *Under an Imperial Sun: Japanese Colonial Literature of Taiwan and the South* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003); Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999).

⁴² Publications that discuss Japanese theatre and its contemporary and traditional influences, include: Ronald Cavaye, Paul Griffith, Akihiko Senda, *A Guide to the Japanese Stage: From Traditional to Cutting Edge* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2004); Brian Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre: a Century of Change and Continuity* (London: Japan Library, 2002); Benito Ortolani, *The Japanese*

recognised in *Shingeki* (new theatre), often based on texts such as Shakespeare, Ibsen and Chekhov⁴³ or hybrid forms in which the Western practice is wholly adapted and ‘made Japanese’ such as the dance form *Butoh* based on German expressionist dance.⁴⁴ Moreover, adding to the cultural hybridity, it is important to point out the huge amount of influence China had on Japan and various other Asian cultures before the West had started its colonial conquest. Indeed as Brandon writes in his guide to Asian theatre, that in the seventh and tenth centuries the admiration for Chinese and Korean culture led to the Japanese introduction of *Bugaku*, a form of dance entertainment, originating in China and imported via Korea (Brandon, 1993: 144). Although changed from its original form (as both the storytelling elements and song lyrics have been removed) these performances are still staged in modern Japan (Ibid.). As *Bugaku* is established as an amalgamation of different cultural traditions it is an example of the intercultural exchange as well as a hybrid form of performance art. The hybridity, interculturalism and the circular mechanism of ‘Oriental Orientalism’ that Kikuchi describes challenges the way theorists, including Bharucha, understand Oriental theatre and how they ascribe the intercultural exchange to a wholly Western tradition.

Oriental Theatre and Japan

Theatre: From Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

⁴³ *Shingeki*, translated as new theatre, was developed during the Meiji restoration and beside the introduction of realism, the emulation went much further including actors building up their noses and wearing blond wigs for performances (Martin, 2000: 83). Although some recognise this theatre as ‘emblematic of Japanese self-hatred’, its influence is also accredited for “the reintroduction of women to the stage, the translation of many foreign plays into Japanese, and the beginning of modern Japanese spoken drama” (Ibid). See also: David Jortner, Keiko McDonald, Kevin J. Wetmore (eds), *Modern Japanese Theatre and Performance* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007); Takashi Sasayama, J. R. Mulryne, Margaret Shewring (eds) *Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁴⁴ For more titles on the subject of *Butoh* see: Sondra Horton Fraleigh, *Dancing Into Darkness: Butoh, Zen, and Japan* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999); Sondra Horton Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Jean Viala and Nourit Masson-Sékiné, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness* (Shufunotomo, 1988).

In his chapter 'Collision of cultures: some western interpretations and uses of the Indian theatre' Bharucha examines the three main advocates of intercultural theatre: Edward Gordon Craig, Jerzy Grotowski, Richard Schechner and importantly explores the legacy of Antonin Artaud (1993). Starting with Artaud, Bharucha argues that his fascination with 'Oriental Theatre' could be seen as 'his almost pathological need to escape the strictures of 'Logical Europe' (Bharucha, 1993: 14). Artaud (1896-1948), a French surrealist artist active within various disciplines, acting both on stage and on the cinema screen, as well as being a writer and a poet, is mainly considered as a 'failed' practitioner of theatre, as the artistic work he created during his lifetime received neither commercial nor critical appreciation (Scheer, 2003: 1-2; Schumacher, 1989: xiii). Nevertheless Artaud's writing about theatre has proven to be hugely influential and he is best known for conceptualising 'The Theatre of Cruelty' which has made him a "seminal force" in theatre after the 1960s (Knapp, 1980: xiii). Although Schumacher argues that Artaud on the one hand "loathed theatre", at the same time Artaud valued its power and saw its purpose, as "through theatre he wanted to reform life, to attain some kind of salvation, not only for himself but for all mankind" (Schumacher, 1989: xiii). This 'salvation' appears in his theories mainly in the mystical and spiritual powers of theatre and rituals, as is evident in his writing in *Le Theatre et son double* (*The Theatre and Its Double*) first published in 1938 (Scheer, 2004: 3). For example in his essay on 'Oriental and Western Theatre' he clearly sets Oriental theatre in direct opposition with Western theatrical forms which he criticises for being solely concerned with the physical reflection of the play script. In contrast to Western forms, oriental theatre can express something more profound:

In Oriental theatre with its metaphysical tendencies, as compared with Western theatre with its psychological tendencies, forms assume their meaning and significance on all possible levels. Or if you like, their pulsating results are not inferred merely on one level but on all mental levels at once. (Artaud, translated by Victor Corti, [1970] 1993: 54)

Artaud seems to be respectful of and to value Oriental theatre above the practices of Western drama and theatre, and as such does not reflect a negative Orientalism as suggested by Said. However, ultimately, by conforming to the opposition between Occident and Orient, as well as studying and ‘inscribing’ the Orient with particular qualities, such as metaphysical, magical and universal mesmerism (Ibid: 54), Artaud does indeed contribute to what Said would argue is Orientalist discourse. This is despite whatever value he may have for advocates of the need for a ‘sacred theatre’ or as Christopher Innes suggested, his central status in creating the ‘Holy Theatre’ of the avant-garde (see Innes 1981).

The above mentioned escape from ‘Logical Europe’ (itself implying an irrational non-Europe) was typified by the belief that this ‘oriental theatre’ reached beyond the immediate realm to something more spiritual, or as Bharucha puts it:

The ‘otherness’ he inextricably associated with ‘oriental theatre’ was enhanced by his misreading of ‘cosmic’, ‘metaphysical’ and ‘supernatural’ elements in Balinese and Cambodian dances. (Ibid)

Bharucha argues that Artaud’s perception of ‘oriental theatre practices’ were an amalgamation and a misrepresentation of a very diverse and complex set of theatre traditions and that by popularising the term ‘oriental theatre’ Artaud left a lasting legacy of ‘blurring’ and simplifying this cultural heritage (Ibid: 15). In Bharucha’s critique of orientalist discourse in theatre, he is making a valid argument about

Artaud's evident desire for a 'primitivist' view of the East that is similar to many other modernists;⁴⁵ although it should be noted that the critic Karoline Gritzner has recently suggested (following in the wake of Jacques Derrida's own account of Artaud) that the actual theoretical mechanics of Artaud's arguments and practice cannot simply be described as a reductive preference for 'metaphysics' over the 'materiality' of theatre (Gritzner, 2011).

Bharucha continues to assert how Artaud's ideas about the 'oriental theatre' have been echoed in Edward Gordon Craig,⁴⁶ Jerzy Grotowski⁴⁷ and Richard Schechner's⁴⁸ work (the avant-garde tradition first identified as such in Innes's

⁴⁵ For titles exploring the relationship between modernism and primitivism see: Elizabeth Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890-1915* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Carole Sweeney, *From Fetish to Subject: Race, Modernism, and Primitivism, 1919-1935* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004); Gina M. Rossetti, *Imagining the Primitive in Naturalist and Modernist Literature* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006).

⁴⁶ Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966) 'discovered' the use of the African mask (Knowles, 2010: 11), but also was particularly interested in Japanese *Noh* theatre. However, he was quite different in his approach towards the Orient in comparison with Artaud. As Olga Taxidou writes in *The Mask: A Periodical Performance by Edward Gordon Craig* (1998), although Craig arguably identified "the potential the Orient presents for reviving theatrical art much earlier than his European counterparts" (82), he failed to see "Oriental theatrical modes as particular techniques" (89). Like Artaud he saw the "Orient in idealistic awe, but unlike him Craig is too conscious of himself, his identity and history, to take the risks that Artaud took" (103). See Edward Gordon Craig, *On the Art of The Theatre* (ed.) Franc Chamberlain (Abingdon: Routledge, [1911] [1957] 2009). See also Denis Bablet, *The Theatre of Edward Gordon Craig* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1981); Christopher Innes, *Edward Gordon Craig: a Vision of Theatre* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998); Jeffrey Akard, Nancy Isakson, *Edward Gordon Craig* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁴⁷ The Polish theatre practitioner and theorist, Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) explored various cultures to find elements of performance which 'transcended' the culture of the performer to find an 'objective' bases for ritual (Knowles, 2010: 17). He was particularly interested in Indian Kathakali dance drama and classical Chinese theatre. When he was young his mother gave him a book by Paul Brunton about an "English journalist's contact with the mysteries of India" entitled *A Search in Secret India* (Słowiak and Cuesta, 2007: 3). This book arguably started a lifelong interest in India and Hinduism (4). Grotowski's article 'He Wasn't Entirely Himself' is dedicated to Artaud's work. Although Grotowski is critical of Artaud as a practitioner, he highlights the importance of his theoretical work. See James Słowiak and Jairo Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007); Jennifer Kumiega, *The Theatre of Grotowski* (London: Routledge, 1985); Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford (eds.) *The Grotowski Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Eugenio Barba, *Land of Ashes and Diamonds: My Apprenticeship in Poland, Followed by 26 Letters from Jerzy Grotowski* (Aberystwyth: Black Mountain Press, 1999). Texts written by Grotowski include: 'Performer' in *The Grotowski Sourcebook* (eds.) Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford (New York: Routledge, 2001); *Towards a Poor Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2002 [1968]); 'Orient/Occident' in *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (ed.) Patrice Pavis (New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁴⁸ Richard Schechner (1934-) is one of the founders of the Performance Studies Department of the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. He was responsible for promoting Grotowski's work in the English-speaking world (Słowiak and Cuesta, 2007: 22). His publications include *Performance Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2003); *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* (London:

account above),⁴⁹ and indeed in the intercultural practices and exchanges that take place today. Schechner, however, would disagree with this tradition, illustrating in his publication *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* (1993) that within the avant-garde movement, five different kinds of practices can be recognised; separating his own ‘intercultural avant-garde’ from the ‘tradition-seeking avant-garde’ of the likes of Grotowski (1993, 5).⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the perceived opposition between the Occident and the Orient, or East and West, has played and continues to play a major role in theatre studies and practice (Tillis, 2003). Also in terms of the study of Japanese theatre, this division has informed many of the studies in the past. For example, A.C. Scott (1958) writes that a form such as *Kabuki* is far removed from the West’s naturalistic entertainments (1958, 5). As he writes: “Perhaps its disregard for reality, and emphasis on imagination and make-believe, appeals to instincts deep

Routledge, 1993); *Performance Studies: an Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002); *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985) *By means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual*, edited with Willa Appel (Cambridge: Press Syndicate, 1990).

⁴⁹ Missing from this line of key figures of the Avant Garde movement is Eugenio Barba, who was Grotowski’s student and continued much of his work in terms of exploring the “source of the actor’s power, energy and presence” by studying cultural performances (Knowles, 2010: 18). Responsible for founding the International School of Theatre Anthropology and developing the concept of the ‘third theatre’, a term to describe the work made by independent (often not professionally trained) practitioners who are not commercially driven but make their work from what they consider important (Turner, 2004: 159). Ian Watson writes in *Negotiating cultures: Eugenio Barba and the Intercultural Debate* (2002) that “Eugenio Barba is often thought of as synonymous with interculturalism” and calls him “a product of the 1960s avant-garde” describing this movement as a period of “innovation and revolt” in which “many leading theatre artists turned to cultures other than their own in order to break with the hegemony of 1950s’ post-war nationalism, as a means of expanding their knowledge of theatre beyond the borders of a common language or shared history” (1). Criticism aimed at Barba’s work focuses on his practice of removing cultural elements while privileging sameness as that which is ‘of the essence.’ However these can be “too easily recognised with what is culturally dominant, particularly under the leadership of a powerful and charismatic western director such as Barba” (Knowles, 2010: 19). For more titles by Barba see: *The Paper Canoe: a Guide to Theatre* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995); *On Directing and Dramaturgy: Burning the House* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010). For titles on the work of Barba see: Jane Turner, *Eugenio Barba* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004); Ian Watson, *Towards a Third Theatre: Eugenio Barba and the Odin Teatret* (London: Routledge, 1995).

⁵⁰ Not only does Schechner distinguish his avant-garde from the likes of Artaud and Grotowski, he also argues that his practice of interculturalism is not similar to artists such as Brook who seeks to elide cultural difference and unite humans through performance (Schechner, 1993:17). As Schechner writes: “Engaging intercultural fractures, philosophical difficulties, ideological contradictions, and crumbling national myths does not necessarily lead to avant-garde performances... What is avant-garde is when the performance does not try to heal over rifts or fractures but further opens these for exploration” (Ibid: 17).

within every man, but forgotten in the mechanical entertainments of an industrial civilization” (Ibid). As such, Scott argues, once again, that the qualities of ‘Eastern’ or ‘Oriental’ theatre lie in its disregard of reality and emphasis on imagination and make-believe, achieved via fantastical and irrational representation, or even child-like primitivism, and that this appeals to something deep in the rational and civilized man. Although probably with honourable intentions, by creating the binary opposition of Western theatre equals rationality and Eastern theatre equals irrationality, Scott indirectly claims that Japan is backwards and primitive. Again, it is this valuation of tradition, of the historic values of a culture, that recalls Said’s theory. Similarly Peter D. Arnott admits in his preface of *The Theatres of Japan* in 1969 that he is not pleased with all that is Japanese and believes that the discovery of Western industrialism has produced an over-enthusiastic response and a platitude in “stained-glass attitudes” (9). He argues that some of the Western influences have resulted in “limp imitations, parrot-productions by actors incapable of adjusting to the style the text demands” (Ibid). For Arnott, and Scott, it is better if Japan retains its traditional values.

Indeed, as Kenneth Rea reflects on the continuing attraction of Western artists to ‘Eastern forms’ of theatre in *The Continuum Companion to Twentieth Century Theatre* (2002), this traditionalism forms a central part of the appeal (234). He argues that unlike, Western forms, Eastern theatre:

can claim continuous acting traditions stretching back over several centuries, during which the precise details of the acting have been codified and passed on from master to pupil with very little change. Because these traditions have been so well preserved - usually through direct links with religious or court life -

performances have an authority and technical precision that often defy criticism. (Ibid)

This traditional value of the 'Eastern' theatre and these links with religious or court rituals contribute to the general perception that theatre which originates outside of the 'West' is necessarily more 'authentic'. Therefore, reading the performance of *Tales From Old Japan* in light of Said and Bharucha's criticisms could lead to the understanding that this play is an example of Oriental Theatre. The desire for traditionalism is found within this 'ancient' tale which is ultimately reinforcing a stereotypical representation of the 'Orient' through its use of the obvious cultural products such as kimonos. Upholding Japanese culture as exemplary and an answer to the loss of traditional value in British culture due to the forces of globalisation could be construed as 'offensive' as it relates to the aforementioned Orientalist's intentions to only validate cultural elements from the past located in the culture of the other. Moreover, by staging a traditional story for a contemporary audience, the traditional values are also reinstated and perhaps contribute to an unfair representation of Japan. Is the story of the mountain's domination over the female representation an indication that sexism and patriarchy is tolerated in Japan (as opposed to Europe)? Is the decapitation of the helper in the story a suggestion that capital punishment is still adhered to in Japanese society or perhaps that Japanese people are stereotypically cruel and like stories with violence?⁵¹ By returning to and representing the cultural heritage of any nation (Western or Eastern), the traditional values, which were often shaped by patriarchal societal structures, might also be revived. As such these values have to be considered and renegotiated when performed for a contemporary young

⁵¹ Stereotypical representations of the Japanese as cruel people or obsessed with honour and death are often generated by its Samurai past or reputation during the Second World War. See for example Eiko Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1995).

audience, or risk alienating children, parents and educators and possibly misrepresenting a nation and as such implying that it is old fashioned and underdeveloped in comparison to Western society.⁵²

As such the 'return' to traditional and authentic cultural practices and ritual might seem an antidote to capitalism and the economic interpretation of globalisation because it seems that these global forces erode as well as commercialise and commodify cultural difference. This desire could be seen to be articulated by the aforementioned conference participants such as O'Neill, Graham and Owen. However, this 'return' recaptures the central contradiction that underlines this chapter: if practitioners aim to engage with traditional and authentic cultures, especially those from these 'Eastern' theatrical traditions because these have much 'older', un-influenced and un-interrupted 'roots', ultimately they are not only involved in the processes of globalisation by using the world's interconnectedness (for example the possibilities of travel to visit other countries and the international exchange of information to learn about a certain practice or ritual), at the same time they are active in re-negotiating these rituals and traditions through which they become less authentic and more 'global'. As such a resistance to globalisation ultimately leads to the embrace of globalisation and its processes.

The Cat Who Ran

⁵² Returning to the earlier mentioned concept of 'nativism,' which similarly to primitivism involves a restoration of indigenous practices; this practice evokes criticism for also restoring the traditional values in which these practices originate. As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin write: "The reconstruction of traditions based on supposed nativist models that enshrine a male, patriarchal vision of the pre-colonial, indigenous culture as authentic has necessarily aroused the resistance of women" (1998: 160).

Considering that the engagement with and the performance of a traditional Japan appears to be problematic, it would be helpful to look at a second play which places Japanese culture in a contemporary context. *The Cat Who Ran* (2009), performed by the Unicorn Ensemble, was originally a production adapted by Toyoko Nishida from the popular Japanese children's story written by Naoko Kudo. On the initiative of the director Tony Graham, the play was 'transferred' to the UK where it was translated by Yuriko Kobayashi. The story, which follows the unlikely but close friendship between a cat and a fish, was also originally a Japanese folk story; however, Graham did not choose to affirm the 'authenticity' of the text by using traditional elements in its staging. Instead, the Japan recognisable on stage was created with many contemporary cultural influences.

The story and subject matter of the play could be recognised as culturally 'different' as it deals with an agonising dilemma, honour and death; dark issues that challenge the concept of the child as an innocent audience which needs to be protected against the harsh realities of the adult world.⁵³ For example, in the magnificent resolution of the story, Ran (the cat) has to kill and eat his dear fish friend in a bid to save his honour and in order to facilitate an extraordinary merging of the two animal friends (in which their two bodies become one). Ran's own mother and siblings are aware of his secret 'love' for this fish, and force him to be a 'real' cat (reminiscent of the cultural concept of a 'real' man), proving this by catching the fish that lives in the pond where Ran spends all his time. Ran is left with no choice as it is

⁵³ Although it is often argued that children's theatre 'protects' the child against the harsh realities of adult life because the child is culturally constructed as innocent and pure, it is difficult to find this avoidance of dark issues as one of the dominating characteristics of the work of practitioners in the UK. Looking at the history of children's theatre as discussed in the previous chapter, early children's theatre such as *Peter Pan* and the Punch and Judy show were certainly censored to suit the expectations of middle-class parents. The TiE movement however completely changed this sensitive attitude and instead created radical theatre that dealt with social and political issues for audiences from 5 years old onwards. Currently both attitudes can be recognised: on the one hand commercial theatre tends to maintain the idea of the innocent child, but there are also examples of theatre pieces that deal with death (such as *Upstairs in the Sky* as discussed in the previous chapter).

made clear that, if he does not eat the fish, his sisters, brothers or mother certainly will. When Ran finally reveals his dilemma to his best friend, the fish begs him to do the impossible and to eat him. The death is proposed as a gesture of real friendship and the fact that the fish wants to be eaten by his friend and not his mother or siblings relates to honour and pride.

In *The Cat Who Ran* death takes centre stage. In fact it is the climax of the play and it is presented as a very exciting moment. The actors narrate with much detail how Ran manages to make a water spout by running round and round the little pond, lifting his friend out of the water in the air and the sun, to disappear gracefully in the mouth of Ran in one big gulp. The vigour, pace and tension the actors use to work towards this amazing climax has great effect on the young audience who move closer and closer to the action on stage, some listening and watching with open mouths and some gasping when the fish disappears into Ran's mouth. After the play the child audience is in general excited and happy, noticeable through the laughter and tumultuous noise that rises from the auditorium, challenging this misconception of suitable subject matter in children's theatre.

The story's origins and the setting of the play in Japan were not affirmed with traditional cultural representations as found in *Tales from Old Japan*. Instead it was possible to recognise modern Japanese influences in the scenery and staging. The cast was representative of the UK's multicultural society in the sense that the group of actors were multi-racial. The language of the play was English with some interpolated Japanese words. The costumes were all made out of denim fabric and plain grey fabrics. The set, described as 'Zen' in a review (*The Stage*, 23 February 2010), displayed a contemporary Japanese interpretation. With a minimal display of natural materials such as bamboo and wood, a paper screen against the wall and two wooden

square lanterns, the performance space was recognisable as Japanese for adults who are familiar with contemporary Japanese design as found in MUJI shops on the high street. The music ranged from live accordion to blues and acapello singing, none of which are generally associated with Japanese culture.



Illustration 3.14 - *A Cat Who Ran*. This image shows the production's use of contemporary Japanese design with paper screens and natural materials. At the same time it illustrates the costumes of the actors which can be understood as 'Western' with denim and plain grey fabrics. (Photo: Alastair Muir)

For children without a Japanese background, the stage was perhaps difficult to recognise as Japanese as it was lacking traditional or obvious cultural elements, such as Japanese looking houses or temples (perhaps in the background), fabrics associated with kimonos, and perhaps the modern influence of the Manga cartoon style (which children might recognise through Pokamon and Hello Kitty merchandise).⁵⁴ The origin of the story was more obviously addressed in the beginning of the performance that started in the foyer of the Unicorn Theatre. Here the children had a chance to

⁵⁴ Arguably Manga cartoons are the most obvious and frequent Japanese influence children in the UK encounter. For more titles on the subject of Manga cartoons see: Mark W. Macwilliams, *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime* (London and New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2008); Wilson Brent, 'Becoming Japanese: Manga children's drawing and the construction of national character' in *The Arts in Children's Lives: Context, Culture, and Curriculum* (eds.) Liora Bresler, Christine Marmé Thompson (Dordrecht: Springer, 2002); Frederik L. Schodt, *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1996); Toni Johnson-Woods (ed.) *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010).

engage in an informal chat with the actors who were handing out little paper lanterns (consisting of white folded paper balls carried on a small wooden stick and a electric light within), after which they were taken into the auditorium in procession accompanied by a Japanese song. After the children were seated around the stage on the floor, the lanterns were collected in a big fishing net and as the children were invited to make a wish, each light coming to represent a child's wish. It could be argued that these lanterns play into the idea of the 'Orient' as they evoke mysticism, make-believe and fantasy, qualities that have previously been discussed as used to describe the West, in opposition, as 'rational'. An element of the performance that was incredibly popular with the young audience was the martial arts movements the actors occasionally used in their telling of the story. These kicks and arm movements were copied by some of the kids directly after the performance was finished. These movements were not 'showcased' as an interlude or sequence and could not be recognised as belonging to a certain tradition.⁵⁵ Instead they were integrated within the storytelling and thus for children who were able to attend classes of karate, judo and jujutsu in their own direct environments, not easily identifiable as culturally Japanese.

⁵⁵ There are thousands of traditions of martial arts that are specific to schools and styles, but forms such as judo are modern, based on older traditions and currently practised throughout the world. For more titles on martial art see Dave Lowry, *Traditions: Essays on the Japanese Martial Arts and Ways* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2002); Frederic P. Miller, Agnes F. Vandome, John McBrewster (eds), *Japanese Martial Arts* (Saarbrücken: VDM Publishing House, 2009); Yoshinobu Hamaguchi, 'Innovation in martial arts' in *Japan, Sport and Society: Tradition and Change in a Globalizing World* (eds.) Joseph A. Maguire, Masayoshi Nakayama (New York: Routledge, 2006).



Illustration 3.15 - *A Cat Who Ran*. The ethnically diverse cast took on multiple roles without costume changes but with simple props and with their highly physical performances. (Photo: Alastair Muir)

Without the traditional cultural references *The Cat Who Ran* could be read as a modern and contemporary theatrical experience for the child. As such the production avoided the recreation of an ‘Oriental’ play to a certain extent. Indeed two of the children who watched the performance responded with a look of great apprehension when asked from which country they thought the play came from.⁵⁶ Confused by such a question, they answered that the play was English (“of course”). When it was explained that the story originally came from a different country they still seemed puzzled and unable to guess the origin of the story. When encouraged the boy and girl (aged 8 and 10) saw no clear reasons why the story came from Japan. They did say they enjoyed watching the play and, in great contrast to their accompanying adult, they felt no sadness about the fish being eaten at the end of the story.

The Cat Who Ran could therefore be interpreted in two different ways: firstly as ‘having ironed out the cultural differences’ so much that it has been completely expropriated by the West and its audience. This expropriation was discussed in the

⁵⁶ These children were related to a friend with whom I attended the theatre.

first section of this chapter in relation to *The Lion King*, where the mixing of cultural references belonging to an entire continent and the creation of an ‘essential’ Africa in the stage production were, according to its creator Julie Taymor, responsible for its universal appeal. However, in this section it was argued that there is a great difference between a hugely profitable musical performance and small subsidised and ‘intimate’ performances such as *A Cat Who Ran*, which is, additionally, based on Japanese traditional tale and not a Western story set in the ‘African continent’. Moreover, it was argued that a theatrical performance cannot be understood as a standardised experience devoid of cultural difference, as the Western audience, which is culturally diverse, will still interpret a performance according to a personal frame of reference. Indeed, a young audience member with a Japanese background might have a much clearer idea about the cultural origin of the play and interpret the performance in a completely different manner.

The second interpretation is therefore more useful: the performance is intercultural in the sense that the cultural references are mixed in such a way that they contribute to a new cultural hybrid form that is, as with the two children, not recognised to belonging to any one culture in particular but rather a communication between multiple cultures whereby the place and audience of the performance take an important role. Instead of being motivated by the depiction of the traditional culture of Japan, *The Cat Who Ran* seems to have put a greater emphasis on the play’s relevance to the contemporary audience. In other words, instead of teaching the young audience about the differences of Japanese culture (as arguably was the intention with *Tales From Old Japan* with its clear and distinguishable Japanese cultural signifiers), the play has allowed the young audience to enjoy and engage with a story which has its cultural origins elsewhere in the world.

The account of Norifumi Hida, a PhD student who participated in this production, explains that the director Tony Graham aimed at encouraging the children to construct the “world of the story” in their mind, as active participants and not a passive audience (Hida, 2009). Therefore Graham used the principle of storytelling rather than presenting a realistic set design and using realistic acting. This is why the set was kept to a minimum and the actors wore “everyday clothes” (Ibid). Also the sound effects were improvised and created by the actors. Most importantly, the actors detached themselves from the characters, describing them rather than becoming them, and as such keeping an emotional distance. Hida compares this approach with that of Brecht’s ‘*Verfremdungseffekt*’ (‘Alienation’ or the ‘V-effect’) a strategy used to encourage the audience to approach a play intellectually and ultimately to stimulate action.⁵⁷ Indeed as discussed in the previous chapter, Brecht’s influence in theatre for young audiences can be traced back to the early development of the TiE movement. Here Brecht’s ‘*Verfremdungseffekt*’ was used to encourage the young audience to look objectively at the (social) problems presented in the plays, to draw their own conclusions and decide what was the correct response. As was argued previously, Brecht’s style suited the largely socialist and communist movement, with its focus on the working classes, and their challenge to the authoritative educational institutes and, just like Graham, it encourages the audience to be active participants not passive audiences. Graham, who himself started at the Inner London Education Authority Drama Advisory Team,⁵⁸ has in a sense returned to the TiE movement by using

⁵⁷ Interestingly Brecht developed his idea of the ‘*Verfremdungseffekt*’ (‘Alienation’ or the ‘V-effect’) by observing Chinese acting and thus relates to the previous described tradition of Oriental theatre or Brecht’s work can be theorised as an example of an early intercultural project. See ‘Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting,’ in *Brecht on Theatre* (ed. and translated by) John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964); Antony Tatlow, *Shakespeare, Brecht, and the Intercultural Sign* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

⁵⁸ Tony Graham also worked for eight years at TAG Theatre in Glasgow, which is the part of Citizens Theatre dedicated to producing professional productions and creative learning projects for children and young people. He also taught drama at two London secondary schools before joining Unicorn theatre

Brecht but without the educational value and with a story of fantastical anthropomorphism.

What is interesting in Hida's account is that it does not deal with or touch upon the Japanese links of the story, even though the article was written for the 'Asian Networking Newsletter' (2009). Although the director employed the socially conscious style of Brecht, he did not seem to place great importance on the cultural representation and the conditions of this global exchange, but rather concentrated on the way in which the young audience perceived the story. The minimal and contemporary setting was used to encourage the children's imagination, not as an intercultural statement where Eastern and Western influences come together. Although it was argued in the previous section that the child and their experience should have a central position in the intercultural production, it is nevertheless important that the engagement with the cultural 'other' is approached with due consideration and that cultural participation and a willingness to be involved in the global exchange are not just taken for granted.

Japan and Globalisation

Although Japan is considered a modern capitalist society, intercultural performances such as *The Cat Who Ran* that present contemporary Japanese culture could still receive criticism for engaging in a global exchange. To use the criticism aimed at another 'global product' featuring Japanese culture, the popular American film *Lost in Translation* was said to be offensive to Japanese culture exactly because it used the

(see <http://thefutureplayground.com/profile/TonyGraham>). In 2011, Graham stepped down from his position as artistic director after 13 years and is currently working as an independent director, see 'Tony Graham to Step down from Unicorn in 2011' (December, 2010) Available at: <http://www.whatsonstage.com/news/theatre/london/E8831293205661/Tony+Graham+to+Step+Down+from+Unicorn+in+2011.html>.

capital Tokyo in such a way that as a setting it could be anywhere else in the world. The film will not be discussed in too much detail, as only the criticism it received is relevant here, but in short the story follows two Americans who start a complex relationship when they find each other 'lost' in the commercial metropolis. As well as the criticism the director received for representing the Japanese in the classical Western Orientalist way (in other words the Japanese culture is represented as 'weird' whereas the two main Western characters are logical and intellectual), she also received criticism for using Japan merely as a backdrop, a site where the two main characters experience a sense of loss in an unfamiliar surrounding which happens to be Tokyo, but could have also been New York, London or Shanghai (Iwabuchi, 2008: 544-545). Iwabuchi explains that this perceived indifference is fuelled by the "consumerist common difference" in which many places (and thus modern cultures) have become interchangeable (Ibid). He argues, perhaps unsurprisingly, that this is driven by the interconnected forces of globalisation (Ibid). This globalisation is according to Iwabuchi especially difficult for a nation that is "infamous for being excessively preoccupied with its own cultural uniqueness" (Ibid: 547).

Iwabuchi mentions, just like Kikuchi whose theory of the circular mechanism of Orientalism was discussed previously, the effects of self-Orientalizing discourses which often essentialise what it means to be 'Japanese' and in which Japan often represents itself as culturally and racially homogeneous (Ibid: 547). Although Japan has become an economic international player and has embraced "consumer enjoyment," Iwabuchi uses a survey to show that people in Japan are more anxious about globalisation than other global powerful nations (such as France, Germany, the US and the UK). He therefore argues that in relation to, and perhaps even because of

this fear, nationalism in Japan is still relentless and there is a strong desire to reinforce this national identity:

In Japan today, there is nostalgia for past glory as well as the reactive discourses that aim to revise history textbooks and, thus, to counter the ‘self-tormenting’ view of Japan’s modern history of imperialism and colonialism in Asia. The state has encouraged the education system to place a greater emphasis on Japanese traditions and on instilling in Japanese children a host of patriotic sentiments. (Ibid: 548-549)

In light of this attempt to restore traditional values and to ‘serve’ this idea of Japanese cultural uniqueness, it seems that *Tales From Old Japan* is perhaps a more ‘appropriate’ theatrical representation because it represents a traditional Japan. This traditional Japan arguably appears more culturally unique or even more ‘authentic’ in a global context. Moreover, the representations of Japan are those that children are already familiar with: kimonos, Asian hats and handheld fans. *The Cat Who Ran*, in contrast, challenges the notion of cultural uniqueness by (perhaps unintentionally) illustrating that contemporary Japan cultural elements are present and incorporated in contemporary British and global culture, such as karate, Japanese design and fashion.

Japan: an (im)possible cultural engagement?

This Japanese anxiety around globalisation does however raise additional questions about intercultural productions that engage with this culture. Most importantly, considering that creating such productions ultimately increases the ‘glocalisation’ of Japanese culture, should this country be considered suitable for the intercultural exchange in the first place? In the previous section it was illustrated using the concept

of glocalisation that the audience interpenetrates the global with the local and vice versa, as such any attempts to stage Japanese culture will be deconstructed by the young audiences and even traditional representations will become contemporary in their exchange. It is therefore the motivation to engage with and perform the intercultural exchange that becomes questionable, rather than the intercultural production itself. The pursuit of authentic and primitive traditions to satisfy the West's perceived loss of its own traditional culture in light of globalisation is a form of cultural appropriation as it involves a selection and a re-positioning of the other culture. Moreover, classifying an 'other' culture, such as Japanese culture, as necessarily more traditional, authentic and primitive as those cultures located in the West falls within the Orientalist tradition, as illustrated in the previous discussion. This is especially true if these qualities are valued in contrast to those of the contemporary culture of this society.

Instead the motivation should come from a need to represent and engage with the child's globalised society. As argued throughout this section, Japan is a country that has a presence in the UK. Not only are there cultural practices found there such as Manga, origami, martial arts and food such as sushi, but also the media gives events in Japan, such as the recent tsunami and its aftermath, a presence within the UK. Moreover, there are children living in the UK that have a Japanese background, who contribute to a further disruption of the local and the global, and indeed of the opposition between East and West as proposed in the Orientalist framework. Practitioners such as Kumiko Mendl who have a Japanese or other cultural background should, of course, be able to perform their cultural identity. Indeed, as Steve Barfield suggests in his chapter "'Jewel in the crown.co.uk': Orientalism's Strange Persistence in British South Asian Writing,' practitioners might use the

stereotypes and essentialist representations associated with Orientalism in their staging methods as a positive affirmation of a ‘multicultural’ identity that challenges the inside/outside position (2006: 117). Although the framework of Orientalism is still considered relevant in the theoretical approaches towards cultural expressions, the child’s contemporary experience of a globalised society disrupts the clear binary oppositions between East and West; in the same manner it disrupts the divisions between the global and the local, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter.

Also the opposition between traditional and contemporary cultural experiences are challenged by a child’s experience of a globalised society. In recognition that the arts plays an “important part in establishing and maintaining an individual’s sense of cultural identity,” but also that “all cultures are dynamic and organic,” Maggie Semple asks in her chapter ‘Arts Education and Cultural Diversity’ the important question: “whose arts should be presented? (1996: 40). Semple proposes a “cultural pluralism”, that is sensitive to “the competing and sometimes conflicting tension between cultural conservation and cultural development and synthesis” which do not need “be mutually exclusive” (Ibid). She proposes “a constantly shifting file of cultural languages and ideas, relating one to another, sometimes complementarily and sometime oppositionally. In a dialectic of dissonance and convergence that allows no single terms either monopoly or domination” (Ibid).

In this sense Japanese culture, which has already internalised these oppositions, can also be used as a starting point to reconsider theatre practice. The hybrid Japanese theatre scene which incorporates various traditional as well as contemporary forms should be explored as exemplary in terms of seeking the grounds between new and old, West and East, to address cultural engagement in a global world. This theatrical hybridity opens up the possibility of acknowledging both the

contemporary cultural influence of Japan as well as the traditional cultural heritage. In the UK this requires a careful negotiation between an Orientalist legacy, the desires in terms of Japanese uniqueness and the standardising forces of capitalism and consumer culture.

Hisashi Shimoyama's argument made during the seminar, that identity is located between the traditional and contemporary experience, is useful in understanding Japanese processes of the construction of cultural identity. A performance in the UK which stages Japanese cultural influences also stages the dialogue between the ideas of a contemporary, global Japan and a traditional, unique Japan. *Tales From Old Japan* can therefore be understood as creating a dialogue between the traditional Japanese elements as presented on stage and the contemporary experience of the young audience in the UK. *The Cat Who Ran* makes the dialogue more complex by involving the contemporary interpretation of a traditional Japanese tale. The seminar's promising title, 'How Can Drama & Theatre Offer a Place for Children and Young People? Japan and UK Perspectives', can perhaps be reinterpreted as the search for a place for children's theatre between traditional and contemporary representations, Eastern and Western cultural influences and the experience of the local and global scales; A reinterpretation that highlights contestation but also a much-needed place that can be recognised in the intercultural performance.

Knowles' description of intercultural performances as "sites of negotiation" that evoke "the possibility of interaction across a multiplicity of cultural positioning, avoiding binary codings," has certainly been relevant to this chapter (2010: 4). This chapter has dealt with the oppositions of the local and the global, East and West and traditional and contemporary representations to explore how the child in the diverse

globalised society challenges these oppositions by their active spectatorship. However, this chapter has also illustrated how the motives of the adult practitioner to initiate and engage with intercultural projects can damage the intercultural production.

In the first section the appropriation of cultures to generate profit was examined to highlight how these kinds of intercultural productions can be exploitative and often modes of one-way transport of capital rather than a cultural exchange. Indeed, the production of *The Lion King* illustrated how the use of cultural difference to appeal to an international market can be understood as negative exploitation. Also the interaction between culture and commerce has been shown to be problematic as it attempts to reduce cultural participation into mere consumerism and the theatrical production into advertisement to sell merchandise. However, as was argued, the audience remains active in their interpretation and as this interpretation happens through a diverse frame of reference. The standardised ‘global’ culture on stage still needs to be interpreted on a local level, indeed a local level which is interpreted by the global. By placing the child central to their theatrical experience both in the creative process as well as by maintaining intimacy during performance, *Once Upon A Tiger* makes this interaction or ‘glocalisation’ more dynamic, disrupting the opposition between the local and the global and challenging the way the global is simply perceived as necessarily oppressive to the local. Moreover this production was an example of how children’s theatre is not often made purely for profit and as such challenges considering intercultural productions solely as commercial activities.

The second section has illustrated that although it could be assumed that staging Japanese culture is straightforward and uncomplicated, due to its imperial past and the current status of Japan on the global market, the intercultural dialogue remains moot because of Said’s framework of Orientalism. However, Japan has a

wholly unique position within this framework, as it is presented by the West in an Oriental manner, but it also applies notions of Orientalism towards itself, to maintain and project a Japanese essence which is perceived fundamental to its national identity. As such a paradox is created in terms of cultural representation. Choosing a traditional representation, enforced by obvious cultural signifiers such as kimonos, handheld fans and conical straw hats, can be seen to relate to the tradition of Orientalism. Choosing to represent Japan in a more contemporary context, seeking and staging the modern cultural influences that can be found in the globalised society of the UK, can be seen to challenge the cultural particularity and uniqueness of Japan.

It is therefore naive if a practitioner in the UK who creates an intercultural production is unaware of these frictions between traditional and contemporary representations of Japanese culture. Indeed, the assumption that cultures can simply be uprooted to be restaged in the West is, as Bharucha points out,⁵⁹ part of cultural appropriation and a form of Orientalism. However, it is important to recognise that these companies and theatre productions do not simply uproot Japanese culture to stage these in the West, as Japanese culture is already present in the UK. In an increasingly interconnected world with international trade, multi-media and a global workforce, it is not only the boundaries between the global and the local which have become more complex, but also the clear oppositions between East and West are challenged. Steve Tilles questions if it is still useful to discuss Eastern and Western theatrical form as opposites when this dichotomy is based on assumptions that are factually untrue and Eurocentric:

first, that East and West are coherent cultural entities; second, that East and West are roughly of the same magnitude and, between them, comprehend the

⁵⁹ Bharucha writes this in relation to Schechner's theatrical practice which is in turn based on the view that "Any ritual can be lifted from its original setting and performed as theatre -- just as any everyday event can be" (Schechner, 1983:150, as quoted in Bharucha, 1993: 33).

world; and third, that Eastern and Western theatre forms make up two fundamentally distinct kinds of theatre.” (2003: 71)

In the discussion of Japan it was illustrated how the theatre scene in this country is hybrid and much more than an embodiment of Western and Eastern traditions. Theatre styles such as *Shingeki*, *Butoh* and *Bugaku* are the result of the merging and the adaptation of traditions into new forms. Also in the UK, intercultural productions as featured in this chapter illustrate that in a Western nation the forms of theatre that are considered to belong to the East are not simply imported. Instead, this theatre is an expression of those people that have their cultural roots throughout the world but now live in the UK, and are as such part of this nation’s identity.

The next chapter will continue this discussion to see how these disruptions and the diversification of society can be recognised as a contribution, rather than a challenge, to the national culture of the UK. Whereas in this chapter the emphasis was on the possibilities of the audience in deconstructing and interpenetrating the theatrical experience in order to add to the intercultural dialogue, the next chapter will explore the responsibility of the adult theatre practitioner in representing the diversity of cultural identities within the national borders of the UK. Indeed, to end with the observation of Maggie Semple, artists and teachers do not need to represent non-Western art as “quaint, primitive, confused or unworthy of serious critical attention” and are able to contextualise the interaction and mixing of cultures, aesthetics, religions and ideas (1996: 41). The intercultural production can construct a dynamic space in order to represent a diverse and globalised society.

Chapter 4

Staging and Re-Staging Children's Cultural Identities in the UK: Exploring Theatre for Young Audiences and the Re-Negotiation of Cultural Identities in a Diverse Society

We live in one of the most diverse societies the world has ever seen, yet this is not reflected in the culture we produce, or in who is producing it. Out of this society, the greatest culture could grow...culture can only be excellent when it is relevant, and thus nothing can be excellent without reflecting the society which produces and experiences it.

(Brian McMaster, *Supporting Excellence in the Arts: From Measurement to Judgement*. Report commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 2008: 11)

This chapter will look at children's theatre and the young audience in relation to the processes and constructions of cultural identities within the UK. The UK (or Britain) as a nation, or in other words as "an imagined community" (Anderson, 1991: 6),¹ is not a culturally homogeneous space but is rather distinguished by cultural heterogeneity. As has been discussed in all the chapters of this thesis, because of a colonial past, consequent large-scale immigration and through the processes of globalisation, cultures and identities that are deemed to originate in other nations, religions and ethnicities have been (and indeed still are) coming together within the

¹ In recognition of the multiple definitions of the nation (see Hutchinson and Smith, 1994; Gellner, 1990; Hobsbawm, 1994), I have chosen Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation as an "imagined political community" because it proposes a continuous (cultural) process rather than a fixed universal and essentialist notion unchanged over time (Anderson, 1991: 3-7).

UK and have created a common culture of hybridity.² The hybrid nature of the culture in the UK suggests that it is not possible to recognise a “neat inside/outside division” because within the multiple cultural boundaries there is “impurity and mixing” (Sharp, 2009: 121). The work of Homi Bhabha is fundamental to this concept which is used by him as a postcolonial attempt to challenge the binary logic of Orientalism (see *The Location of Culture*, 1994). In relation to Anderson’s description of the nation as an “imagined community” rather than a fixed universal or ‘natural’ construct, a ‘hybrid’ nation can also be considered as opposing the communities’ desire to construct itself as homogeneous unit, authentic and unique in comparison to other nationalities. A desire that can exclude minority identities living within the UK and, moreover, one that is historically inaccurate, as any modern society is shaped by certain levels of human interaction thus cultural mixing (see Nederveen Pieterse, 2004). ‘Adult’ practitioners and ‘adult’ audiences use theatre as an expression or confirmation of cultural identity,³ and as such theatre made and enjoyed by adults encompasses and to some extent represents the cultural diversity of the UK.⁴ For

² Concepts of hybridity will be discussed throughout this chapter, especially in relation to hybrid identities. There is, of course, literature critical of concepts of hybridity. For example Robert J. C. Young argues in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995) that the use of this term was also integral to colonial projects especially in relation to sexuality and the ‘union’ of people from different ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, the use of the term hybridity is not an antidote to ‘Orientalism’ but simply an extension of it. For additional titles on hybridity see: Virinder S. Kalra, Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk, *Diaspora & Hybridity* (London: Sage, 2005); Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

³ The opportunity for adults to ‘choose’ theatre according to their perceived cultural identity can be recognised in London where the ‘consumer’ can find ‘general or commercial’ theatre in the West End, such as a musical or a production with internationally famed (Hollywood) stars, something ‘traditional’ at the Globe or RSC, something ‘radical’ at the Royal Court or in one of London’s many fringe theatres, something ‘young’ in the Lyric Hammersmith or the Young Vic and something ‘ethnic’ at the Tara Studio or the Tricycle.

⁴ The idea of theatre reproducing and representing national identity has recently been discussed by Michael Billington in *State of the Nation: British Theatre Since 1945* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), Jen Harvie in *Staging The UK* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005) and Aleks Sierz in *Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today* (London: A&C Black, 2011); in addition there is a tradition of critical exploration on both British South Asian theatre and theatre connected to the African-Caribbean Diaspora which explores the issue of identity where a minority contests the dominance of mainstream versions of national identity that would seem to exclude or misrepresent that majority. For example: Graham Ley and Sarah Dadswell (eds.), *Critical Essays on British South Asian Theatre* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2012); Graham Ley and Sarah Dadswell (eds.) *British*

example, Dominic Hingorani argues that because British South Asian theatre “is a product of the syncretic notion of a ‘culture of Hybridity’ ... it contests the construction of the nation as a culturally homogeneous space” (2010: 7).

However, this active representation of cultural diversity is much more problematic within children’s theatre because children do not create their own theatre and have a limited freedom in choosing and attending theatre. Therefore the child is not often able to access theatre that necessarily corresponds to their sense of identity and instead the adult practitioner presumes and prescribes this cultural expression for them. As has been explained in chapter 2, the engagement with the child’s ethnically, racially and culturally diverse society has long been considered important within the practice of children’s theatre, mainly due to the socially and politically conscious work conducted by the TiE movement and current arts funding that encourages diversity.⁵ However, as also explained in chapter 2, the creation of this work has been problematic since the early initiatives because it proved difficult to cast actors/teachers from minority backgrounds; multicultural initiatives were not considered to address institutionalised racism; anti-racist plays were considered to be too divisive in the class-room and a recent multicultural backlash has added an additional (political) complexity to representing diversity. Also chapter 3, which discussed children’s theatre and ‘glocalisation’, illustrated how performances aiming

South Asian Theatres: a Documented History (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2011); Dominic Hingorani, *British Asian Theatre: Dramaturgy, Process and Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Colin Chambers, *Black and Asian Theatre in Britain: A History* (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 2010); Gabriele Griffin, *Contemporary Black and Asian Women Playwrights in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Dimple Godiwala (ed.) *Alternatives Within the Mainstream: British Black and Asian Theatres* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006); Claire Cochrane, *Twentieth-Century British Theatre: Industry, Art and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁵ As mentioned in chapter 2, the recent report by Brian McMaster commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, entitled: *Supporting Excellence in the Arts: From Measurement to Judgement* (2008), argues that the “diverse nature of 21st century Britain” needs to be “reflected in the culture we produce” (McMaster, 2008: 11). These findings are also reflected in the Arts Council report *Achieving Great Art for Everyone* where it is argued that “the art itself must be enriched by the contribution of the whole of England’s vibrant and changing society” (Arts Council England, 2010: 3).

to represent global cultural references present in the UK are fraught with difficulties concerning the creative processes and cultural representations.

However, as I have mentioned at various stages in this thesis, despite these difficulties in terms of the representation of cultural diversity, the necessity of representing the nation as diverse and hybrid is something I strongly support. Certainly the cynicism with which multicultural initiatives are often received in the Netherlands, a country that I left nearly a decade ago, is something I hope is not adopted in the UK. I am not suggesting that the need to protect the traditional Dutch culture and values purported by political figures such as Geert Wilders which have made their way to popular culture (for example, TV programmes such as ‘I Love Holland,’ radio channel 100% NL and the popularity of the Delfs Blue pattern printed on a range of plastic items) is present within the world of theatre. As in the UK, theatre in the Netherlands is often subsidised and not-for-profit as well as being predominantly on the political left. However, as is argued in *Commotie: Kosmopolitische Podiumkunsten in Debat 2009- 2012* (2012), the political climate certainly has an influence on what is funded and staged. Indeed, this publication aims to explore the societal changes and their influence on art and its representation of cultural diversity by highlighting the different debates. This ‘need’ of debating multiculturalism is arguably very characteristic of the Netherlands, as the Dutch in general see themselves as ‘open’ and ‘progressive’ and a subject such as growing racist attitudes and tensions between *autochtone* and *allochtone* groups should not be shunned. In *Commotie* it is suggested that voting behaviour in the Netherlands and Belgium illustrates that the positive multi-culti ideology can no longer be sustained, and that “building bridges” and “working together” is not enough in the negotiation of the cultural diversity in a “new world” (Kleijn, 2012: 6).

However the idea that in the Netherlands culturally diverse theatre was previously created without careful consideration of the intricacies of such work is arguably a misconception. For example publications such as *Cultuur en Migratie in Nederland: Kunsten in Beweging* edited by Rosemarie Buikema and Maaïke Meijer (2004) and *Multicultureel Drama?* edited by Maaïke Bleeker, Lucia van Heteren, Chiel Kattenbeld and Kees Vuyk (2005) illustrate that since the 1980's there has been a constant development within practice. Indeed, Dragan Klaic writes about the development of intercultural theatre for the young which he follows from the first intercultural festival in 1989 until 2000 (2004). He illustrates how the intercultural practice has been developed to be a valuable platform where, through artistic power, original methods and the use of fantasy, theatre can convince children and young people that cultural differences are no threat (ibid: 152). He argues that the more the discourse on immigration in Dutch society hardens and the criticism of failing multiculturalism grows, the more valuable theatre will be to promote the positions of interculturalism (ibid: 151-152). Nevertheless what has happened to this practice in the last ten years since the rise of Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders, is an area to be explored in more detail. Looking at what will be performed from September 2012 until June 2013 at de Krakeling,⁶ the main theatre for young in Amsterdam, there is noticeably little work for children that can be described as intercultural.⁷ Indeed a Dutch report of cultural diversity and the performing arts observes that the cultural

⁶ See <http://www.krakeling.nl/Programma.aspx>

⁷ There are two productions for children that could be described as intercultural: *Memorabele Momenten* by Memo which is an interdisciplinary production with music, dance and theatre with one musician from Italy and one from Japan (<http://www.krakeling.nl/ProgrammaDetail.aspx?id=160630>). And *Boomwhakalaa* by Kit 4 Kids and Roel Calister which is a interactive performance featuring drums and shakers from 'all over the world' and sketches and Caribbean songs (<http://www.krakeling.nl/ProgrammaDetail.aspx?id=160599>). Interestingly there are six productions that can be described as intercultural or multicultural created for teenage audiences (from 13 years old). An example is the performance *Mijnheer Ibrahim en de bloemen van de Koran* by De Nieuw Amsterdam, which focuses on a friendship between a Jewish boy and a Muslim grocer and is created for an audience of 15 and older (<http://www.krakeling.nl/ProgrammaDetail.aspx?id=160551>).

diversity found within society has a limited presence in the performance arts (Reijs, 2010: 3). What is also interesting is the presence of plays about *Zwarte Piet*,⁸ a blacked up figure that accompanies *Sinterklaas* on the fifth of December to deliver presents to children. Indeed the issue of *Zwarte Piet* is very significant here as it represents the contradiction between cultural tradition and the values of multicultural society. Whereas *Zwarte Piet* would be recognised as a racist representation in most of the world, in the Netherlands people across the political spectrum defend him. The main defence is that *Zwarte Piet* is black because he crawls through chimneys to deliver presents. Nevertheless, his depiction with afro textured hair, golden earring and exaggerated thick red lips, has clear colonial roots. However even the suggestion that this might not be suitable in a diverse contemporary society is perceived as a fake and a petty multicultural concern. Even attempts to introduce multi-coloured *Pieten* are received with a certain level of aggression.

I suggest that this aggression is due to the feeling that immigration and cultural influences that originate throughout the world, are threatening notions of cultural purity and homogeneity, or in other words the ‘real Dutch’. This is not just found in the Netherlands, but as will be discussed in this chapter, it is also possible to find in the UK a tendency to present nationality as a homogenous construct that needs to be protected against ‘other’ influences. I believe that this tendency is dangerous, especially for children, as denying the cultural diversity of a society can lead to discrimination and an exclusion of those that are deemed to disrupt the cultural homogeneity. For example, in the Netherlands the terms *Marokkanen* (Moroccans) and *Turken* (Turks) are not just reserved for boys and girls that visit the country

⁸ See for example theatre company Kijk Haar Nou which tours three different Sinterklaas productions in 2012 (<http://www.kijkhaarnou.nl/pages/speellijst2012.html>); theatre company De Toverknol has two Sinterklaas productions (<http://www.detoverknol.nl/>); and Christian children’s theatre company tours: *Op Zoek Naar Super Piet* (<http://www.christelijkkindertheater.nl/kindertheater/op-zoek-naar-de-superpiet.aspx>)

temporarily, they are also used for children whose families have been present in the country for the last three generations. Leaving the argument that it was the multicultural policy of previous governments that have kept these cultures separate from the Dutch to one side, the current focus on integration in which these young people are told to adopt Dutch cultures, suggests that they have never been considered to belong to the country in the first place. The constant focus in both media and politics on these children and young people in terms of levels of crime and school performance ensures that they are re-affirmed as the troubled margin of society.

Perhaps this could be the reason why in Dutch children's theatre intercultural work is currently limited or even in decline, as it is deemed to resonate the current integration policies where cultures need to be assimilated and immigrants are meant to adopt a Dutch cultural identity. However, without this type of work, even the theatrical recognition denies that *allochtone* children and their culture are part of Dutch society. I believe that this exclusion is detrimental, especially as theatre can find ways to stage a cultural communication that "evokes the possibility of interaction across a multiplicity of cultural positionings" (Knowles, 2010: 4). For example, in the previous chapter it was illustrated how the child engages with 'global' theatre on a local level and how this local level, in turn influenced by the forces of 'glocalisation,' disrupts the clear divisions between East and West. Thus the child's theatrical experience interpenetrates the global and local scales which to some extent contradicts the way globalisation is considered as a homogeneous and standardising force. Therefore the intercultural production for the child can be considered as staging this theatrical dialogue that moves beyond the binary oppositions of the global and the local, East and West and traditional and contemporary experiences. This chapter seeks to continue this debate; however it will focus less on the child's agency to disrupt

boundaries (as in global, national, local and those within the theatrical experience itself) and more about the responsibility of the adult practitioner to offer the child theatre in which the cultural identities of the young audience are represented and the cultural hybridity of the UK is established on stage.

In the UK, there is certainly a motivation and encouragement to represent diversity within the arts despite the aforementioned difficulties. Nevertheless, because children's theatre cannot escape the 'educational prism,' the cultural expression of theatre is indirectly influenced by governments that continuously change educational aims and outcomes, and have attempted to shape the child's national identity by imposing a single National Curriculum. Although many teachers and educational theorists resist these political agendas, Alistar Ross points out that through these guidelines, and especially the National Curriculum, the government often attempts to construct national identity as if it were homogeneous category that absorbs individual cultural differences and denies the negotiation of hybrid identities (see Ross, 2000: 150). This is in sharp contrast to what Hingorani (above) identifies as a drive of ethnic theatre in the UK (in this case British South Asian theatre) towards heterogeneity.

Indeed, these homogenising tendencies, which attempt to shape the shared culture and consequent identity relating to the UK, are arguably superseding the plurality, hybridity and difference its 'citizens' experience on a daily basis. This problem is also paralleled in the way the audience and the child is constructed as homogeneous and as a member of a collective in the form of an audience, as discussed in the introduction. Theatre is often approached as a communal experience in which the audience is represented as a homogeneous unity, which "risks obscuring the multiple contingencies of subjective response, context and environment"

(Freshwater, 2009: 5). This singular entity is also recognised by Rose in terms of the way the adult constructs the generalised ‘child’ which is devoid of cultural difference (Rose, 1994: 143). It is therefore important to focus on theatrical presentations of cultural identities for a young audience, and how these performances can engage and include audiences rather than exclude and differentiate ‘other’ cultures which are not considered to align with those that define the UK as a homogeneous construct. I will suggest that the intercultural performance can, in principle, provide sites of cultural negotiation and identification where there is an ‘inclusive’ approach to cultural difference, considering various cultural references and practices (including languages) are presented in relation to each other.⁹

One of the central points within this debate is the child’s construction of identity, a site where the concept and experience of ‘difference’ plays a central role (Hall, 1996: 8; Woodward, 1997: 29). Again, the engagement of children’s theatre with the subject of identity was initiated by the TiE movement to address racism and discrimination without causing division within the classroom or associating children with minority background with negative issues. Moreover multicultural initiatives and organisations such as the Working Group Against Racism in Children’s Resources¹⁰

⁹ In the previous chapter Maggie Semple’s discussion of the intercultural practice in ‘Arts Education and Cultural Diversity’ illustrated how theatre practitioners can provide and ensure a context in which different cultures, aesthetics and spiritual beliefs can create a “dialectic of dissonance and convergence that allows no single terms either monopoly or domination” (1996: 40-41).

¹⁰ The Working Group Against Racism in Children’s Resources was established in 1984 in recognition of the way “racist stereotypes and Eurocentric attitudes dating from the days of colonialism” are “often transmitted through toys and learning materials” (2008: 3). Its members include “parents, librarians, publishers, toy manufacturers, teachers, nursery and playgroup workers, social workers and other professionals working with children” (Ibid). The principles of the group rests on the notion that children “need to have a positive self image in order to respect and value themselves and other people” and therefore they need to see themselves reflected positively in the world around them” (7). Therefore the group, in its publication *Guidelines for the evaluation and selection of toys* (2008) written for schools, playgroups and nurseries, evaluates different toys such as dolls (10-18), books (18), items in the home corner (20), jigsaws (21) and musical instruments (22) to argue how these can reflect classroom diversity and what should be considered when acquiring these items (Ibid). A guide written by Shelly Newstead titled *The Buskers Guide to Anti-Discriminatory Practice* (2006) challenges this approach of reflecting diversity within educational resources for the same target group. Here Newstead

recognise the representation of cultural diversity in educational material, but also in toys and literature, as having a positive effect on the identity construction of the child.¹¹ However, in many discussions of children and their development and perception of cultural identity, difference is often seen to play a negative role as it motivates children to essentialise, stereotype, exclude, bully or discriminate against perceived ‘others’ who are different in terms of culture, race, ethnicity, (dis)ability or any other minor or major physical appearances.¹² This negative role and effect of difference would then suggest that theatrical productions for the child should avoid such representations which can be recognised as (culturally) different and as such lead to a negative experience, excluding the culturally different character within the play, or the culturally different audience member from the play.¹³ This might explain why often in children’s theatre the casting is ‘colour-blind’ or multicultural¹⁴ featuring

argues that including equipment that reflects diversity is actually creating and perpetuating stereotypes (52).

¹¹ The recognition of the need to reflect cultural diversity originates from the studies by Kenneth and Mamie Clark in the late 1930s into how young children identified themselves, what identity they preferred and their perception of ethnic differences (Troyna and Hatcher, 1992: 19). Their research, and many other studies since, illustrated a strong trend amongst children from ethnic minorities to misidentify and show a preference for white identities rather than their own (Ibid). See also Gerald E. Markowitz and David Rosner, *Children, Race, and Power: Kenneth and Mamie Clark's Northside Center* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

¹² For example Allison James (1993) discusses in her work *Childhood Identities*, that ‘difference’ is mostly a negative aspect in child-relationships that sets children apart from social groups. As such she gives examples of children who mostly search to fit in and strive for ‘sameness’. But in also in relation to postcolonial theory, for example, R Radhakrishnan argues in his publication *Diasporic Meditations: Between Home and Locations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) that although ‘difference’ might be celebrated as a theoretical construct (especially in multicultural education as discussed in the second chapter of this thesis) the experience of ‘difference’ for diasporic people might be at odds with this positive interpretation (174).

¹³ For example Wolfgang Schneider, the previous president of ASSITEJ International, writes in relation to the 17th ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival for Young Audiences with the theme ‘Building Bridges -- Crossing Borders’, that in times of globalisation differences should be ‘overcome’ (Schneider, 2011: 7). During the ITYARN conference titled ‘TYA, Culture and Society’ as part of this Congress, it was also repeatedly affirmed that cultural difference as presented on stage should be avoided as it could exclude the child or represent and enforce essentialised identities.

¹⁴ ‘Colour-blind’ casting has become a contested term and is often replaced with multicultural casting (although the practice arguably remains the same). In education the ‘colour-blind’ approach seemed to suggest that there is no discernable difference between people with different ethnic backgrounds, therefore it was considered anti-racist. However as *The Swann Report* (1982) suggested, rejecting the importance of acknowledging “people with a different skin colour” can also be negative as it “denies the validity of an important aspect of a person’s identity” (26). Indeed, Babette Brown suggests in her publication *Unlearning Discrimination in the Early Years* (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham, 1998) that the

actors from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, sometimes playing members in the same family; however, the characters these actors play are not often culturally diverse.

This avoidance of cultural diversity seems to be unjust and problematic in a society which is constructed of multiple cultures and where through the interconnected processes of globalisation, the child's encounter with (cultural) difference is a contemporary daily reality and as such we might argue an inevitable fact (Madge, 2001: 1). Moreover, for theorists such as William E. Connolly, difference is essential in the construction of our identity, as he writes in his seminal book *Identity/Difference*:

“My personal identity is defined through the collective constituencies with which I identify or am identified by others; it is further specified by comparison to a variety of things I am not. Identity then, is always connected to a series of differences that help it be what it is” (Connolly, 1991: xiv).

This principle of difference as an essential element of our identity construction as presented by Connolly will be very important to the discussion within this chapter. This thesis does not only agree with difference being essential in our identity formation, but argues that at the same time a theatrical encounter, confrontation or negotiation with cultural difference (and sameness) is essential in children's theatre. Moreover, the way in which the child is a 'captive' audience as they are brought and do not choose to come of their own accord (see Levy quoted in Schonmann, 2006: 20-21; Reason, 2010: 17) adds to the adult's responsibility to create theatre that is able to include audience members from all cultural backgrounds. Or to specify even further,

'colour-blind' approach denies the life experiences of Black children (54). This could also be said about the use of 'colour-blind' casting: on the one hand it seems to suggest equality and a representation of the multicultural society, on the other, solely representing ethnic diversity and not cultural diversity can lead to a denial of associated (cultural) identities and the problems faced in society, ultimately denying the child audience a meaningful theatrical engagement.

taking into consideration that it appears impossible to create productions that could include references to all of Britain's cultural influences, it is essential to think about how productions for young audiences can create theatrical experiences in which all young audience members feel actively included but not assimilated by a homogeneous version of 'Britishness', and importantly, can establish a feeling of ownership over the cultural expressions.

The first part of this chapter will look specifically at the way in which theatre engages with the process of identity. The notion of 'identification' will be discussed, whereby the spectator relates to and identifies with the character(s) on stage. The audience research of Jeanne Klein (1994), Matthew Reason (2007; 2010) and Roger Deldime and Jeanne Pigeon (2000) will be used to illustrate that the child has a highly personal way of interpreting and relating to what is presented on stage and what this active engagement means in terms of the practitioners' responsibility will be explored. After this, the section will focus on Harvie's conceptualisation of the staging of memories and how this contributes to national identities (2005: 40). Although Harvie's observations are very useful for the focus of this chapter they need to be qualified in terms of the child audience as questions regarding the ownership of national memories and the importance of a social historical contextual understanding need to be explored from the point of view of the child. The discussion will then move to explore the child's construction of identity in relation to the play *My Name is Savitri* (2002) by Bournemouth Theatre in Education. The play, which follows a girl's difficult struggle between British and Indian cultural identities, will introduce the challenges theatre practitioners face when they want young audiences to engage with

‘difference’ positively in an attempt to use theatre to educate against racism and discrimination.

The second part of this chapter provides an examination of how theatre contributes to the construction of national identities. Here, starting with the work produced by the National Theatre in London, this discussion will examine the possibility of producing theatre for the nation which reflects cultural diversity and includes cultural difference. Using Harvie’s concept of staging memories, it will be illustrated how historic narratives such as the First and Second World Wars are used to allow the young audience to share a collective memory of suffering, sacrifice and winning for the nation. However, as these plays mainly deal with history (and as such do not use intercultural performative elements), they do not represent current cultural diversity and propose a national identity that excludes a proportion of its audience. As the UK also encompasses nationalities such as Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish, there is a need to also understand these cultures within the argument for cultural inclusiveness in children’s theatre. The Welsh play *The Voyage* (2007) is examined to see if staging memories can be empowering for a young audience and whether the exclusion of cultural differences to present a homogenised cultural identity is justifiable in this context. It will also focus on the play *Nation* (2009) by the National Theatre, which was adapted by Mark Ravenhill from Terry Pratchett’s similarly titled book and directed by Melly Still.

After this discussion about theatre representing nationality, the chapter will continue to examine the role of the state in constructing these national identities and how it influences theatre through education. I will discuss the play *Ghosts in the Galleries* (2008) by Polka Theatre in relation to the subject of citizenship. I will argue that although this play intends to be racially inclusive, it is culturally exclusive, and

its good intentions are compromised by the educational focus it maintains. The final play of this chapter will be *The Mysteries* (2011) by Tara Arts, which reproduces the stories of the Old Testament and tours schools as part of the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible (the Authorised Edition). Once again, the play's intention by staging a historical British text (in this case the King James Bible) is to explore an important part of Britain's history, while simultaneously showing the connections with the texts of other faiths and using Tara's performance techniques to tell the stories through 'eastern eyes'. As such this text challenges the construction of British nationality as a very particular version of Protestant Christianity and contests the paradigm of religious education as dominated by such an ethos.

Children's Theatre, Identity and Ownership

In an interview with Geoffrey Davis, Kully Thiarai, the current director of Leicester Haymarket Theatre, recounts her first personal experience of live professional theatre seeing *The Winter's Tale* at the RSC. She describes this performance as "looking sumptuous and beautiful", but it "had no black people in it at all. It was a stunning experience to look at but felt very dislocated and disconnected from whom I was, where I was and my experience of the world" (Davis, 2006: 294). Although there have been many changes within British theatre since Thiarai's first experience, and currently Shakespeare is often adapted for young audiences with a multicultural cast and contemporary setting,¹⁵ it is still important to take note of her remark as it

¹⁵ See for example numerous publications which focus on contemporary productions of Shakespeare and/or intercultural practices: Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare: a Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Dennis Kennedy, *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, *Adaptations of Shakespeare: A Critical Anthology of Plays from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2000); Pascale Aebischer, Edward J. Esche

encapsulates the main issue of this chapter. Thiarai articulates the difficulty of engaging with the identity of the young audience, of moving beyond the theatre as a visual display (however ‘sumptuous and beautiful’ it looks) to create a “mutual engagement” between theatre maker and young audience member, using “substance, importance and relevance to enable spectators to feel addressed” (Schneider, 2007: 8). In other words, in the eyes of practitioners, critics and those with funding, the theatrical experience should not just function as a projection of adult values and concerns, but through relevance and recognition, the child should establish a feeling of ‘ownership’. In this case it could be concluded that for Thiarai the production of Shakespeare had no connection to her sense of identity, not only because she did not feel represented in terms of the cast but also because culturally she had no point of reference. As the research by Tom Wozniak illustrates, this is a common problem when introducing young people to the works of Shakespeare, especially when there is a clear educational context (Wozniak, Forthcoming). Moreover, as Shakespeare has a very important place in British history and is currently often used within the construction of a national identity (Storry and Child, 2001: 9-10), it could be said that Thiarai was not only disconnected from the performance, but was additionally excluded from the performance of nationality.¹⁶

Kully Thairai continues her interview by alluding to a much more positive experience with theatre when involved in a drama group at her university. Here she

and Nigel Wheale (eds.) *Remaking Shakespeare: Performance Across Media, Genres, and Cultures* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

¹⁶ For titles on Shakespeare and national/ cultural identities see: John J. Joughin, *Shakespeare and National Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); Marcia Pointon, ‘National Identity and the Afterlife of Shakespeare’s Portraits’ in *Searching for Shakespeare* (ed.) Tarnya Cooper (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Margaret Tudeau-Clayton, Willy Maley, *This England, That Shakespeare: New Angles on Englishness and the Bard* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010); Willy Maley, Andrew Murphy (eds.) *Shakespeare and Scotland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Willy Maley, Philip Schwyzer (eds.) *Shakespeare and Wales: From the Marches to the Assembly* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010)

worked on a political play about young people in Bradford and the racism and failure of institutions and systems that young people encounter (Davis, 2006: 294). This was an important moment. As she explains this theatre “echoed some of where I had come from, not least the fact that I had not seen work before that emotionally connected with me” (Ibid). It seems that this experience was much more positive for her because she felt she could identify with the issues in the play and felt a connection to her own sense of identity. Whereas the Shakespeare play underlined the difference between her identity and what happened on stage, the play about the Bradford youth was a confirmation of her perceived identity and background, therefore making her feel more involved and connected. This experience also illustrates the differences in theatre for children and adults in terms of accessibility and the freedom to choose; when Thairai had the opportunity to choose what kind of theatre she would like to be involved in, she was able to choose something that reflected her cultural identity.

It is expected that theatre engages with either the identity of the theatre practitioner or the individual audience member. The theatre practitioner David Harradine,¹⁷ who creates innovative work for children points out in a ‘blog-post’¹⁸ relating to the event ‘Acting Like Children’¹⁹ that the concept of ‘identification’ is

¹⁷ David Harradine is the Artistic Director of the company Fevered Sleep which creates “design-focused” performances, installations for both children and adults “that encourage audiences to see the world in new and unexpected ways” (see ‘About Fevered Sleep’ available at <http://www.feveredsleep.co.uk/about-us/>). The innovative style of the company comes from research and the collaborative process as well as the way the company explores digital formats and visual displays (Ibid). The company explores everyday childhood rituals (Trueman, 2011), such as *And the Rain Falls Down* (2006) a celebration of both bad weather and bath time water and *Brilliant* (2009) about going to bed (Harman, 2009: 30-31). Their recent project *The Forest* (2009) is part of a series that explores “different kinds of landscape”, as such the forest is a place of “transformation and change” and a place where “scale distance and time are confused” (<http://www.feveredsleep.co.uk/current-projects/the-forest/>). This piece received very positive reviews from the press, lauding the artistic quality and respect shown towards the young audience (Ibid).

¹⁸ Harradine’s blog-post ‘Thoughts on “Acting Like Children”’ (April 2011) is available at: http://thefutureplayground.com/profiles/blogs/some-thoughts-on-acting-like?xg_source=activity

¹⁹ ‘Acting Like Children’ was a series of 3 day events in 2011 predominantly aimed at practitioners working in the field of theatre for the young organised by Polka Theatre, Travelling Light and Action Transport Theatre. The workshops and discussions mainly focused on representing children in theatre for children. (See:

applicable when understanding the relationship between performance and audience member. This term, drawn from psychoanalysis, is used to describe the psychological relationship between reader or spectator and a character in a book or film, and in terms of live performance the character on stage.²⁰ Harradine argues that in all cases the readers and spectators see themselves represented in the fictional character. As he writes:

We accept that in watching theatre, or indeed in engaging with any kind of art, we search for ourselves in the mirror that it holds up to us. This may not be a conscious process- theories of identification suggest that it's largely unconscious- but in watching others perform, whilst seeing outside ourselves, we are also able to see ourselves, and see ourselves better. (2011)

Harradine continues to suggest that this process of identification is different for children, especially those below five who are not fully self conscious “as an individual moving through the world,” but for whom the theatrical experience is instead underlined by an “extraordinary slipperiness where the real world as you understand it transforms into a real world, the absolutely real pretend world of performance” (Ibid). For this reason Harradine does not understand why theatre for children focuses so much on staging child characters and wonders if this phenomena is present in practice because adults think children can only understand and identify experience of other children and not those of adults (Ibid). Harradine suggests reasons for this assumption: the influence of children’s literature and the many books in which

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=explorer&chrome=true&srcid=0BzkNbQVdK382MDM3ZmVhNjYtOGQ2Yy00YjYwLTg1NjEtNWVjYWw3ODQ2ZTlk&hl=en&authkey=CNXt3Uk>.

²⁰ Peter Hunt discusses identification and children’s literature in his publication *Literature for children: contemporary criticism*. Here he writes about the various kinds of models through which the processes of identification are theorised, and argues that critics in the field of children’s literature “believe that two of those modalities are of special interest for the realm of children’s literature: ‘admiring’ identification and ‘sympathetic’ identification. You may admire Pippi Longstocking just as any demi-god in traditional drama, and you may sympathize with Peter Rabbit just as with any pitiable creature in a naturalistic play” (1992: 119).

the child often takes a central role, a fear of disengagement by the young audience or even the projection of the adult's disinterest in children's lives, suggesting that as adults fail to engage with the experiences of a child, they expect this also to be true for the child in terms of the adult experience (Ibid).

Harradine makes an important point; however it could be argued that it is not the presumption that children cannot identify with adults that drives practitioners, but the hope that staging child characters encourages the young audience to feel that the play is made for them, addressing issues that they would also find interesting and importantly presented from their own perspective. Although extensive audience research relating to child's processes of identification is missing, it is possible to look at the children who created *Once Upon a Tiger* with Peter Wynne-Willson, as discussed in the previous chapter. The children chose to focus their story on the experience of other children but interestingly also chose to write about a grumpy old lady and about the friendship between the children and this adult. Indeed, the participating children developed the character of this old lady with great care, and in the narration an understanding is developed as to why this lady became grumpy. This play created by children suggests that children can engage with both adults and children. Additionally, it illustrated the children's personalised approach in creating the play and their characters, which was rooted in their experience of the world.

The participating children in *Once Upon A Tiger* were, however, integral to the creative process because they 'helped' to develop the story and therefore developed a sense of ownership. When a play is only performed for a child audience, it becomes much more difficult to establish whether children can identify with the characters on stage and feel a connection between the subjects of the performance and their own individual experiences of the world. Researchers such as Roger Deldime

and Jeanne Pigeon assert that a young audience member “clings to the fiction, to the plot and seeks to identify with the central character” (2000: 83). However, the extent to which the young audience identifies with characters as well as interprets and applies the messages of the play to their own experiences is debated. Deldime and Pigeon found in their research based on the memory of audiences that “80% to 90% of spectators remember the central character or those seen as such by audiences” (Ibid: 76). This high percentage of remembrance relates to identification but also to the audience’s personal interests, ability to organise the “dramatic characteristics” and understand the story, and the way the actors perform the characters (for example, physical performances create strong memories). Indeed, Paul Harman warns that “research has shown that children respond most positively to the most powerful performers” even when they perform characters which are meant to be ‘bad’ (2005).

Research by Jeanne Klein presented in an article titled ‘Reading Empathy in A Québécois Play: *Crying to Laugh*’ (1994) asserts that:

Girls and older children empathized and sympathized by feeling and thinking from female characters’ perspectives more than boys and young children. Boys distanced themselves more than girls by focusing on their personal desires and expectations. Theatrical signs of presentational plays may interfere with empathy by distracting young children from identifying intended themes. (1994)²¹

Klein has not developed these findings when observing the audience during the performance of *Crying to Laugh*. During these observations she noticed that the children were attentive and quiet during sad moments, angry arguments and moments of suspense. The audience would giggle and laugh during moments that were intended

²¹ This journal article is available at: <http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/TRIC/article/view/7214/8273>

to be funny or when kissing was mentioned, become restless during transitions and explanatory conversations and showed enthusiasm and applauded spontaneously when the main character had “exuberant emotional relief” (Ibid). In other words, the children appeared to react to the play ‘correctly’ and connected with the main character and the themes. However, Klein discovered that the “children’s verbal responses in subsequent interviews” challenged her “intuitive interpretations of the extent to which “everyone” empathized.”²² These interviews, which took place a day after the performance, were scored “by the number of various physical, behavioral, emotional, and social traits mentioned” (Ibid). These traits were then categorised as empathy or sympathy if the children presented reasoning from “inside the characters’ perspectives,” or “outside the play’s fiction” when the children made remarks simply stating the situation or the child could not “verbalize reasons for his or her feelings” (Ibid).

However, Klein’s findings are complicated by several factors; one of the difficulties is assuming that when children cannot verbalize reasons for their feelings, they do not feel empathy or sympathy for a character in the play. A remark such as “I felt sad when my pet died” is described by Klein as a “personal association or experience” and as such shows distancing or reasons “outside the play’s fiction” (Ibid). However, such a remark does also show that the child is drawing connections between the play and their own experience or that she recognises the play as dealing with an issue familiar to her, links that can be considered as establishing ‘ownership’ of the play. In his research findings in 2007, Matthew Reason also suggests that

²² Klein puts great importance on the objectivity of her research and employs a rigorous process of collecting data involving: an interview one day after the performance; using specific questions rather than a ‘child-led’ or ‘conversational’ interview in which the interviewer can adapt questions to collect as much information as possible but risk influencing answers; employing pictures or miniature sets through which the audience’s memory can be ‘tested’; interviewing only one person in a private space so there is minimal influence on the answers of the child and no peer-pressure; and finally answers are analysed and coded by herself and at least two others to assure reliability (Klein, Forthcoming).

children rarely extract and apply a play's thematic content to their own personal experience, and they rather respond by "recounting the experiences undergone by the characters in the production" (Reason, 2007).²³ However, Reason points out that even though this inability to respond to the thematic content limits "the ability of drama to construct new thematic or moral understandings, it is also possible to see theatre as providing valuable external models that affirm children's own perceptions and experiences" (Ibid). In his book *The Young Audience: Exploring and Enhancing Children's Experiences of Theatre*, Reason continues to use the medium of drawing to understand how children perceive performances, but also asserts how drawing as a way of "reflection and representation" is an active process in which what is presented on stage is given meaning and as such can "instil a kind of ownership of the experience" (Reason, 2010: 133). He provides an example of two boys who, after watching a performance named *Them With Tales*, focused on a Sumo wrestler and drew this character using their imagination and interpretation to complete and add to the theatrical representation (Ibid: 135). As such the relationship with the performance "was evolved through the process of drawing" and the drawing itself became part of the theatrical experience (Ibid).

Reason importantly argues that this sense of ownership is essential in cultural participation. Indeed this is where identity and theatre for the young comes together, not necessarily within the identification with the characters on stage, but the possibility of offering young people the "skills in spectatorship, the confidence and the knowledge" to take possession of the theatrical experience through which "the participation in cultural life becomes fundamental to an individual's self-identity and truly inalienable" (Ibid: 30). Reason's chapter 'From Audience Development to

²³ Matthew Reason report titled: 'Sponsored Research: Drawing the Theatrical Experience: An Investigation into Children's Theatre' is available from The Scottish Government 'Publication' website at: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/09/SpR-DTTE/Q/Page/1

Cultural Rights' looks at the meaning of ownership and cultural participation. Here he illustrates that in the UK, the young audience is believed not only to have the right to be able to access the culture (recognisable in the low theatre ticket prices for young people and free admission to museums) but also the "right to ownership of the theatre and of the culture being presented" (Reason, 2010: 26). However, the issues involved within the realisation of cultural rights are complex and do not only involve encouraging young audiences (especially teenagers) to actually attend and participate in these cultural activities. For example, the realisation of cultural rights becomes problematic when the young audience has not developed an appreciation of art, if they feel that cultural activities are not based on their own culture, or the experience of their daily lives (Ibid: 28-29).

Reason rightly ends his publication by expressing hope that his research encourages practitioners, those working with children, parents and carers to "facilitate children in becoming empowered and self-reflective audience members" (Ibid: 172). Indeed, empowering children to be active spectators with the ability to establish ownership of cultural expressions is essential. Nevertheless, the practitioner's responsibility to create theatre that is accessible and reflective of all young audience members is also an important aspect in recognising the child as an active spectator who is seeking to internalise and 'own' the theatrical experience. By creating the cultural expressions for the child, practitioners ultimately construct the culture the child internalises. Therefore, once again asserting children's theatre as a dialogue and not a monologue, it is not just the adult's but also the child's culture that should inform the work. As the quote by Brian McMaster at the beginning of this chapter importantly states, "culture can only be excellent when it is relevant, and thus nothing can be excellent without reflecting the society which produces and experiences it"

(2008: 11). As in the UK the audience is compromised and representative of a culturally and ethnically diverse society, theatre for the child should be able to include this cultural diversity.

The importance of staging diversity also goes beyond the immediate relation between practitioner and the child; it also relates to the responsibility of constructing and staging cultural identities within the UK.²⁴ As previously alluded to in terms of Thiarai's experience of watching Shakespeare; Shakespeare does not just represent a playwright but also a 'British icon', a cultural signifier in terms of national identity (see Storry and Child, 2001: 9-10). Indeed, theatre has a position in the ways in "which individual members of a nation identify with a nation," and as such constructs an engagement with national culture which starts at a very young age (Holdsworth, 2010: 18). Therefore when a nation is as culturally diverse as the UK, children's theatre has a 'responsibility' to reflect this diversity and to highlight the hybridity of this 'shared' national identity. This hybrid mode of representation that stresses the interpenetrative and impure cultural aspects can to some extent prevent both essentialism and the erasure of the cultural other (Nozaki, 2011: 150-151).²⁵ Children's theatre should be able to recognise that the child audience which embodies a wide range of cultures, religions and histories, interacts and shapes the national

²⁴ Matt Omasta correctly highlights in his article 'The TYA Contract: A Social Contractarian Approach to Obligations Between Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) Companies and Their Constituents' that companies are involved in a 'social contract' through which they are not just expected to create artistic performances but satisfy a range of other expectations such as providing work with educational values, encouraging social development and to reflecting on diversity (2009: 103). In return companies expect investment (financially and in terms of future audiences), the young audiences to be educated before and after the performance as well as managed during the performance (Ibid). These expectations are not always equally understood and fulfilled, but nevertheless affect and underline work created for young audiences. As illustrated in chapter two, theatre for the child in the UK is also developed and shaped by societal expectations similar to this 'social contract', and this includes the expectation that companies reflect the UK as a culturally diverse nation.

²⁵ Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) is important as he argues that "counter-narratives" of the nation challenge the totalising notions through which "imagined communities" receive essentialist identities (300). But also in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds.) *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996) it is argued that rather than complete cultural identities, these are never fixed but are involved in a continuous process of interaction with other cultures, history and power, as such the idea of a totalising, essentialist national identity is impossible.

culture they inhabit (Hall, 1992), even when there are tensions within this community and within the theatrical representation.²⁶

Jen Harvie writes in her publication *Staging the UK* (2005) that theatre functions in the process of remembrance, and remembrance, in turn, functions in constructing identities (41). Indeed, the performance of the past is considered central to the construction of national culture.²⁷ As Harvie writes: “The act of remembering constitutes and produces identity, providing narratives or performance of events and times that are understood to define an individual or a community” (Ibid). Harvie continues to highlight that this act of remembering can have both positive and negative outcomes:

Positively, memories may validate identities that have been historically marginalised or oppressed, and they may revise potential imbalances in power dynamics between communities. Less positively, memories may define other communities as inherently inferior and omit or forget features that trouble the image of itself a community is striving to create. (Ibid)

In terms of children’s theatre and in relation to the discussion of the construction of the identity of the child, Harvie’s observation of the performance of memories as part of constructing individual and communal identity is important. However, as mentioned, children’s theatre is much more restricted in terms of theatre as an expression of identity. Firstly, children do not buy their own tickets and often do not choose to attend the theatre or which production to see. As such “the participation in

²⁶ Within the notion of hybridity it is important to note that there is still tension and struggle between cultural identities that are not fixed but fluent and transformable.

²⁷ The study of the construction of nationality by the performance of the past, history and memories is not restricted to theatre but covers a large area of political theory in which activities such as war remembrance ceremonies and education are considered to perform nationality. For more titles on this subject see: Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay Winter (eds.) *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010); Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (eds.) *Memory, History, Nation: contested pasts* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2005).

shared cultural practices” through which people will “imagine their communities”, practices which include performances (Ibid: 2-3), are not those that the child initiates but which are offered to the child.

As children’s theatre is always considered in relation to education and needs to lean on the perceived benefits for the young audience for funding reasons, the cultural practices which children are offered are much more strongly influenced by the government’s targets, policies and desires. As such the state uses educational subjects such as citizenship, history (see Figueroa, 1993: 18), religious education (see Carrington and Short, 1995: 219) and cultural education²⁸ to further those influences, subjects that might deny cultural difference and enforce national identity as a homogeneous identity.²⁹ James Donald and Ali Rattansi recognise that the National Curriculum was introduced in the wake of the Education Reform Act in 1988 with various objectives but one clearly identifiable desire was “to reassert a largely factitious national identity -- the ‘imagined community’ of nationhood that is supposed to transcend all inequalities, oppressions and exploitations” (1995: 4-5). Indeed, a very important difference is between describing national identity in the UK as one that *supersedes cultural difference as a collective union* and one that is *heterogeneous in nature*. The idealistic homogeneous identity risks covering up the internal ‘racial’, ethnic and cultural collisions and tensions, whereas claiming that

²⁸ The paper by Ton Bevers ‘Cultural Education and the Canon: a Comparative Analysis of the Content of Secondary School Exams for Music and Art in England, France, Germany, and the Netherlands, 1990-200’ (2005), shows how cultural education plays an important part in enforcing a particular perception of national culture. The results of his research, which focused on music and art classes, illustrates that “Germany, France and England give the most attention to their own culture, to the culture of the past, and to high culture” (Bevers, 2005: 408). It should, however, be mentioned that in comparison to Germany and France, England focuses on its own culture to a lesser extent (Ibid).

²⁹ As discussed in chapter two, since the Education Reform Act of 1988 and the introduction of the National Curriculum, the government has tried in various ways to use the child’s education to enforce an “anachronistic and sentimental conception of ‘British culture’-- as monolithic and ethnically undifferentiated” (Carrington and Short, 1995: 218). Although with a different emphasis, the Labour governments have continued these attempts to enforce an “inclusive twenty-first century Britishness” (Ibid).

being British (or indeed any other nation such as Scottish or Welsh) is having a plural identity means that ultimately this national identity is constructed from these collisions, tensions, and on a more positive note, from the meeting of people. Educators and practitioners have arguably the best intentions when they strive to assert that those living in the UK have a homogeneous identity that incorporates different cultures. The National Curriculum is an example of such tolerant and liberal nationalism. However, by focusing on “a standard language, a definitive canon of English literature and a single, shared narrative of the nation’s history” it still constructs a singular national identity (Donald and Rattansi, 1995: 5).³⁰ As children’s theatre links itself with the subjects on the curriculum, it inevitably incorporates some of these ideologies, something which will be discussed in relation to the plays in this chapter.

Jen Harvie also recognises the positive power of staging memories to validate identities that have been historically marginalised or oppressed. The difficulty in terms of children’s theatre is that the empowerment through staging memories rests on a social and historical understanding in which these plays can be contextualised, an understanding which children develop according to age, social background and cultural heritage. This, once again, asserts that the child audience cannot be approached as a homogeneous group that interprets what is presented on stage in a singular manner. In contrast, it is not only differences in age which are responsible for the variety of different interpretations. A young child with an Afro-Caribbean background is arguably much more aware of the history of slavery than an older child

³⁰ The National Curriculum in this sense becomes the site for hegemonic power struggles, and proposes a form of domination by the way “it represents peoples, histories, cultures and so forth” and as such has an active role in the formation of “people’s consciousness, or identities, in particular ways” (Nozaki, 2009: 142). Although it acknowledges the cultural diversity in society, it still proposes a national identity that dominate this diversity and ultimately suggests that there is only one true way of being British.

with a Polish background attending a predominantly white school in the countryside. This contextual understanding is hugely important: for example a child that watches a scene in which a slave is racially abused without access to contextual background knowledge simply observes hate and violence. Instead of empowering the child through these memories, the staging of racism can become very negative and counter productive, something that will be discussed in relation to *My Name is Savitri*.

Moreover, in understanding the staging of memories as part of the construction of identities of individuals and communities, it is important to ask the question to whom these memories belong; do they belong to the child as audience member, or solely to the government, adult theatre maker, teacher or parent? Harvie writes that, in terms of national communities, these memories are often performed “specifically for an audience that makes up at least part of the community that is remembered” (Harvie, 2005: 41). This suggests that the community not only constructs and stages its memories and as such affirms its identity, but that it also needs to construct who belongs to what is remembered, or in other words, it needs to construct a identity before it is performed (see Fortier, 1999: 43). The danger within children’s theatre is that performances can work divisively, and when performed in educational context (within a school or as an school trip) can cause undesired tensions. Indeed, as discussed in chapter 2, Jantinder Verma observed this divisive nature when Tara’s TiE company started to perform in inner city London schools. For example, his performance *Crawl*, that focused on a colonial ruling making all Indians crawl past a spot where a missionary was assaulted, was accused by both white and Asian children of causing tension and conflict. Although dealing with racist attitudes is hugely important, a remark such as “why remind us ... after all, it’s not our fault” or an Asian student observing that what is presented is a “biased history” illustrate

that not all young audiences appreciate the association of a specific collective memory (*New Voices*, Issue 16)

My Name is Savitri

To continue the discussion of cultural identity within theatre for children it would be useful to examine a play that has an obvious discussion of identity and a very clear message on bullying and racism. The play, *My Name is Savitri*, created and performed by Bournemouth Theatre in Education,³¹ followed the standard format of the TiE movement and as such presented its theatrical production followed by a drama session that explored the issues raised in the performance. On the one hand this enables the company to ensure the children have understood the message of the play, on the other hand it ensures the aforementioned essential historical and social context of the play is accessible for all young audience members. The play can be described as intercultural, mixing cultural elements and performance practices including Indian music, costumes and puppetry. It is a play illustrative of the manner in which the TiE movement focused on issues of identity to address racism and discrimination as it shows how the main character Savitri needs to deal with bullying and exclusion because of her cultural difference. The play's writer and director Tony Horitz explains that the project, funded by the Local Education Authority, was devised by running

³¹ Bournemouth Theatre in Education (BTiE) is one of few companies that continued to create educational work for children and performed these in schools in the TiE format as discussed in chapter two. This chapter also discussed how changes in the political climate, leading to a reduction in funding and stronger censorship for TiE companies but also internal conflict and negative association the TiE movement created, brought many TiE initiatives to a halt. BTiE, however, continued to exist by being funded by Bournemouth Council rather than Local Education Authorities, which lost their ability to fund work during the Thatcher government. The company continued to create work up until 2009 when their funding was discontinued by the council, despite an online petition to save the "high quality work: in extending empathy, exploring different perspectives, and educating heart and mind" (see <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/bournemouth-theatre.html>). The former company's co-directors Sharon Muiruri and Tony Horitz currently work for the community theatre organisation State of Play (see <http://www.stateofplayarts.co.uk/about-us/sharon-muiruri.html>).

consultation sessions with local students aged 12 and above, asking these students to advise the company on “creating a new show for younger children” (Personal communication, April 2012). The students were asked question such as:

What issues did they think should be raised? Had they had negative experiences of racism or stereotyping? In what ways did they feel these could have been avoided? What sort of story did they think would work best with young children? (Horitz, Personal communication, April 2012)

Through this collaboration with students, the company met Katie, a local drama student who could relate with the themes of the programme and felt herself confused about her identity (Ibid). She was invited to perform the plays’ protagonist, Savitri, a young girl called Savitri who lives in a ‘special’ family. Her mother is white and her father is from an Indian background (although played by an Afro-Caribbean actor with dreadlocks), but as they proclaim holding their arms together and thus showing the audience the difference of their skin colour: “They were all different, so they were all the same” (Horitz, 2002) After this opening the play shows Savitri practicing classical ballet in her pyjamas. Her mother joins her and also starts dancing while telling Savitri that she used to enjoy ballet when she was younger. Savitri then asks her mother a painful question: “Do Chinese people mind being called names?” (Ibid) The play shows that Savitri has to endure name calling; while she is crying with her head on a pillow, a simple stereo placed on the centre of the stage is repeating the offensive word ‘Paki’ over and over again. Then, as in a feverish nightmare, a bully -- played by the actress who is also in the role of her mother -- steps out of Savitri’s cupboard and continues the insults of the recording and ridiculing Savitri’s name. The bully wears a simple papier-mâché mask emphasising the girl’s cheeks, a prop which also plays an important role in the workshop after the play in which the children are

involved in a dialogue with ‘the bully’. Savitri is so upset by these taunts that she shouts that she never wants to do ballet again.

To comfort Savitri, her father offers her a book named *Seasons of Splendour*, which he also read when he was younger.³² In the book she finds the ‘story of Savitri,’ a discovery which makes her really happy. Savitri starts reading and two actors appear behind her to enact the story for the young audience. The characters have a clear Indian origin, as they are wearing Indian clothing such as a sari and the very basic papier-mâché masks they are wearing have dark skin colour. At a certain point Savitri also uses Indian puppets to tell the story herself. The story has a very positive influence on Savitri who finds inspiration in the heroine “who never gave up” (Ibid). Savitri dances with an Indian Sari to the music of Nitin Sawhney, a British Asian artist who is well known for creating intercultural music by using Indian songs, instruments and rhythms within the urban dance scene.³³ Savitri displays her newfound confidence and pride in her Indian roots by stating for the young audience: “Yes, I am Savitri -- I want to be strong, brave, true and wise -- like in the story. And I don’t care what anyone says about me -- because I am English and Indian too” (Ibid). In the final moment of the play, Savitri holds up her sari and puts it around her

³² *Seasons of Splendour: Tales, Myths and Legends of India* (New York: Atheneum Books, 1985) by Madhur Jaffrey and illustrated by Michael Foreman was first published in 1985, so perhaps the father’s suggestion that he read this book when he was younger is in relation to the content of the book which are based on those stories integral to Hindu culture such as Ram and Sita (see: <http://www.exoticindia.com/book/details/seasons-of-splendour-tales-myths-and-legends-of-india-IHL283/>) Interestingly, the author of the book, Madhur Jaffrey is predominantly known for being an actress and a bestselling expert of Indian food (see: <http://www.madhur-jaffrey.com/index.php/aboutmadhur/>).

³³ Nitin Sawhney is an award-winning musician (with 2 BBC Radio 3 awards, a MOBO and a Mercury Music prize) and has 9 studio albums to his name (‘Nitin Sawhney’ available at: <http://www.nitinsawhney.com/nitinsawhney/Home.html>). He has also composed extensively for the dancer Akram Khan well known for his work inspired by both contemporary dance and the Indian dance form Kathak, as well as Cirque Du Soleil and for theatre company Complicite, but also many musicians including Paul McCartney, Jeff Beck and Sting (Ibid). Interestingly in relation to *My Name is Savitri*, in an interview with Ashanti OMKar, Sawhney explains that he turned to music to deal with bullying at school, and fuelled by his regular visits to India and early piano lessons he immersed himself in music “to weather the storm”, refusing to change himself to “their mould” (see <http://sl2uk.com/content/nitinsawhney.shtml>).

head, then she holds out her hand and says: “My name is Savitri and I am proud of it” (Ibid). She then puts her hands together and bows.

The play is very clear in its message; Savitri does not only learn to be strong in the sense that she will no longer be affected by the taunts of the bullies, she also learns to be proud of her Indian background and accepts the name she has been given by her parents. However, in the drama workshop after the performance there is much more attention paid to the prevention of bullying and it is clear that the main aim is for the children to identify and empathise with the main character.³⁴ For example, the actor asks the young children to imagine how Savitri feels when she is being called names. The children respond with angry, upset and lonely. One child shows, perhaps incidentally or perhaps informed by a personal experience, a deeper understanding of being bullied or discriminated against and calls out “different”. Indeed, many elements within the play have led the young children in the audience to understand Savitri as being different; she has an Asian sounding name, her parents have a different colour, and ultimately she listens to an Indian story and dances to different music. Moreover, Savitri’s interaction with the bully reaffirms her ‘difference’ in relation to the wider social environment: throughout the play Savitri needs to assert that she too is ‘British’, suggesting that this is *despite* the fact that her name, skin colour and cultural background might suggest otherwise. As such the young audience needs to negotiate the complex message of the play; first, Savitri needs to be understood as different, to give the bully a reason to taunt Savitri, exclude her from the ballet class and make fun of her name. The audience also needs to understand that Savitri is different but, because in Britain, as is articulated in the beginning of the

³⁴ In a document titled ‘Diversity in the National Curriculum-Drama: Surya’s Story: Having a voice’ (2008) written by Sharon Muiruri to support *Surya’s Story*, another performance by Bournemouth Theatre in Education, the company writes that they believe that “theatre has the power to engage young people, to help them empathise with others and to offer glimpses into other cultures” (1).

play, we are all different, we are therefore all the same. Savitri is British, just as the bully is British, but she is Indian too. Although this proposal of a hybrid national identity does not cover up the cultural collision and tension within society, because the play focuses on the difficulty of having a hybrid identity, perhaps it is difficult for a young audience to fully comprehend. We might all be the same in Britain because we are all different, but Savitri is the one who is bullied and excluded, so her difference is more different than the difference of the bully.

In one of the ‘hot seat’ exercises a girl is invited to speak Savitri’s mind while ‘feeding’ the lines to the actress who sits next to her. The girl decides to make Savitri say under a deep sigh: “I wish I could change my name.” The girl seemed to have understood the root of Savitri’s problem very literally; Savitri is bullied because she has a different name. Even though the resolution of the story has shown Savitri to come to terms with her difference and embrace her name, the girl of the exercise still suggests that Savitri desires to overcome her difference, to change her name and not to stand out anymore.³⁵ As mentioned in the introduction, this negative experience of difference is often described in theoretical approaches to childhood identity formation. For example, the aforementioned Allison James is in her work *Childhood Identities* (1993) particularly interested in the ideas around difference in child identity, asking the question: “How are the boundaries between normality and difference understood, experienced and used by children and, for those so placed between these extremes what problems does this position of ambiguity bring with it?” (James, 1993: 97). In order to look at this question she uses the concept of ‘outsiderhood’, which is described by Victor Turner as:

³⁵ This desire to overcome difference and assimilate to a particular notion of national culture can be recognised as an important theme in Paul Gilroy’s *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack: The Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

The condition of being either permanently and by ascription set outside the structural arrangements of a given social system, or being situationally or temporarily set apart or voluntarily setting oneself apart from the behaviour of status-occupying, role-playing members of that system. (Turner quoted in James, Ibid)

In the case of Savitri, her Indian background is the cause of her 'outsiderhood' and the bully from her ballet class is the status-occupying member who represents the 'white' system in which Savitri is deemed not to belong. According to James all children necessarily have to negotiate the boundaries between a state of 'outsiderhood' and the membership of a certain group (Ibid: 98). Through classifying and identifying, children mark out who can and who cannot be accepted into the social group they find themselves in (Ibid). It is a process in which relationships between people create the state of 'outsiderhood' through locating difference. James also looks at how children attempt to become accepted and aim to achieve 'sameness'. Behaviours such as imitation and copying are great examples of such attempts to fit in and be accepted by others (Ibid: 141).

Although James mostly looks at children who fall into the category of 'outsiderhood', because they are for some reason classified as different since they have disabilities or special needs, it is useful to apply this argument to the context of cultural identity. So instead of differences in physical appearances such as wearing glasses, being overweight or using a wheelchair, the difference children are using to specify social groups and 'outsiders' are located in cultural signifiers such as wearing a headscarf, bringing foreign food in your lunchbox or, like Savitri, having a name which has not originated in the English language. Here the boundaries of ethnic and religious differences become merged, as these differences often also signify cultural

backgrounds and are often central to identity construction. As Robyn M. Holmes (1995) explains in her research concerning young children and their perception of race, it seems for many children skin colour is not simply an overt and recognizable characteristic; it is one that plays an important role in personal and group identity (1995: 51). Holmes points out that children acquire this cultural knowledge at an early age (Ibid: 52).

Indeed, where in the second chapter David Hollman's play *Billy the Kid* was discussed as a play for very young audiences about race, but only tangible, with the possibility of racism only implied in order to reinforce "the natural lack of prejudice in the very young" (Baker, 1984), research shows that racial and cultural identity as well as related racist attitudes towards others can developed very early on in life and that therefore it is considered 'useful' to start with anti-racist strategies as early as possible.³⁶ For example, Paul Connolly, in his book *Racism, Gender Identities and Young children* (1998), provides a completely candid and at times shocking account of how children as young as five and six negotiate racial and gender identities within the boundaries of an multi-ethnic and inner-city primary school. He shows through various case studies how the children are continuously excluding as well as including each other using the ideas of who belongs to the dominant cultural identity.³⁷ Of course, the extent of these negotiations and which cultural identities are considered dominant is wholly related to where a school is located (city, countryside and suburb

³⁶ See for example Iram Siraj-Blatchford, *The Early Years: Laying the Foundations for Racial Equality* (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books, 1994); Babette Brown, *Unlearning Discrimination in the Early Years* (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books, 1998); Iram Siraj-Blatchford and Priscilla Clarke, *Supporting Identity, Diversity, and Language in the Early Years* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2000); Susan Grieshaber and Gaile Sloan Cannella (eds.) *Embracing Identities in Early Childhood Education: Diversity and Possibilities* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001).

³⁷ This negotiation of the dominant cultural identity within Britain is recognisable in Connolly's publication *Racism, Gender Identities and Young children* (1998) within the interaction of the children, deciding who is included and who is excluded in terms of joining games on the playground (128-9; 132; 149) and 'who fancies who?' (106-108; 144-145; 147; 148; 175-176). A recurrent reason for being excluded is being a 'Paki,' as the children term and identify this minority group (109-10; 123-4; 128-9; 135; 173-4; 178-9), much more so than having the wrong skin colour (113; 147).

as well as the economic status of a particular neighbourhood) and the status of the school (public, private, boarding school, academy, religion and its position on the league tables). However, assumptions that bullying and racism are absent from, for example, a predominantly middle class school, high on the league table and in an affluent neighbourhood, are incorrect.

In Allison James' work (1993) 'difference' is mostly a negative aspect in child-relationships that sets children apart from social groups, and therefore she gives examples of children who mostly search to fit in and strive for 'sameness'. However, in cultural identity 'difference' does not always have to be experienced as something negative. Not being part of one group because of cultural difference could mean that the particular 'difference' that sets one apart in the first place might in fact form a link to acceptance by another group.³⁸ This 'difference' might even form a component of pride in a child's identity and, as Victor Turner points out in his description of 'outsiderhood', a child might even voluntarily categorise itself as separate from the social group. However, Savitri refuses to withdraw her position within both and proudly states in the end of the play that she is "British and Indian as well" (Horitz, 2002) In a sense Savitri connects herself to a broader sense of identity, one that spans both British and Indian nationalities. Indeed, this adoption of a hybrid identity is common for many children living in the UK, as will be discussed in more detail below.

What needs to be considered, however, is Savitri's autonomy in developing her identity. Although this chapter has so far described the child's use of difference to exclude outsiders and form social bonds, it is important to realise that this differentiation to construct identities and affiliation is not only located on the level of

³⁸ This process of negotiating difference and sameness is similar to the way national identities are constructed, as will be discussed in more detail in the second part of this chapter.

the child and thus isolated from the 'adult's society'.³⁹ In contrast the child's identity construction is completely dependent on their experience in both domestic and local environments while these in turn are shaped by the discourses of national and international politics (Connolly, 1998: 28). In terms of *My Name is Savitri*, this influence of the domestic sphere is quite obvious through the parental interaction. Although Savitri is born in the UK, her parents have chosen a name which is connected to her Indian heritage and is embedded in Indian culture. This is, of course, a common practice in the UK and a typical London classroom is evident of how many parents make a similar decision in picking a name for their son or daughter which is embedded in their cultural heritage or religion.⁴⁰ It is therefore interesting that in *My Name is Savitri* it is this name that attracts the bullies' attention and is the reason for her exclusion. It illustrates the important position of parents and family within the development of the child's cultural identity. Savitri's father takes an active role, helping his daughter come to terms with her 'difference' by giving her the book *Seasons of Splendour* and telling her that he also read this book when he was a child

³⁹ A useful model that demonstrates the full extent of the child's national and ethnic enculturation is provided by Martyn Barrett's publication *Children's Knowledge, Beliefs and Feelings about Nations and National Groups* (2007). Although Barrett's work mainly concerns children's attitudes towards other national groups and not those towards the child's own nation, his work is still useful in illustrating that the child's discourse and actions are related to a wide network of different factors and elements which contextualise the child's interaction. For example, the economic, historical and economic circumstances of the child's own national and ethnic group; the beliefs and attitudes of individual members of these groups; parental discourses and practices which includes access to mass media, choice of schools, choice of residence, holidays and contact with family members; teacher discourse and practices; peer pressure; and the representation of 'other' ethnic and national groups in the mass media, school textbooks to which the child is exposed (Barrett, 2007). All of the factors are in a highly complex relation to each other. Additionally the way the child engages with these factors is in turn dependent on elements specific to the child as an individual such as their perceptual and attentional process (i.e. their level of awareness) and the level of national and ethnic identification (Ibid).

⁴⁰ For example Muhammed came second to Jack as one of the most popular names in 2007 (see BBC, June 2007 available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6727101.stm>); in 2008 Mohammed was in top position in London (see <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/6194354/Mohammed-is-most-popular-name-for-baby-boys-in-London.html>) and since then it is repeatedly claimed by the tabloids that the name is in the top position (even when the different spellings are not counted as one) but this fact is 'covered-up' by officials (see Tim Ross, 'Mohammed, the nation's (secret) favourite name' October 2010 available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/8091798/Mohammed-the-nations-secret-favourite-name.html>).

(therefore indicating that this is ‘handed down’ to her as part of a family tradition). As such, the journey of Savitri is hugely relevant in a society such as the UK where immigrant children, whether first, second or further generations, have to negotiate their identities according to their parents’ cultural heritage and the environment in which they find themselves.

The hybrid identities of Britain’s children

Parents play an influential part in the child’s cultural identity, especially when this identity, as with Savitri, connects different nationalities, cultures, ethnicities and religions and thus creates a hybrid identity. For example, Steve Vertovec shows with his idea of the ‘bifocality’ of outlooks, which underpins the immigrant’s daily life with a dual orientation split between the here-and-there (in other words country of origin and new country),⁴¹ that for generations to come children are influenced by the cultures with which their parents or other ‘migrant forebears’ are associated with (Vertovec, 2004: 992). Another term is biculturalism, which represents the “comfort and proficiency with both one’s heritage culture and the culture of the country or region in which one has settled” (Schwartz and Unger, 2010: 26). This term, which is mainly used in America, can be used for the children of immigrants when in their home, family life is still embedded in a heritage culture (Ibid). Such children balance the two cultures side by side or blend the cultural influences into a unique cultural identity. This biculturalism is integral to the children’s lives and happens on a daily

⁴¹ See Steve Vertovec ‘Migrant Transnationalism and Modes of Transformation’ *International Migration Review* Vol. 38, No. 3 (2004) pp. 970-1001. For more texts by Vertovec see: ‘Super-diversity and its implications’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 6 (2007) pp.1024-54; *The Hindu Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2000).

basis by, for example, the use of two languages, making friends with those from both cultural backgrounds, and accessing forms of entertainment (television or magazines) from both cultural contexts (Ibid: 27). Savitri's biculturality is recognisable in her statement that she is both British and Indian, and the suggestion that she can enjoy classical ballet and Indian dance.

This biculturality or belonging and negotiation between various cultures can also be encompassed by the term cultural hybridity. The term cultural hybridity has been used in many different disciplines and because each placed the term in a different context and used different metaphors to describe the phenomena its meaning has become somewhat 'hybrid' itself (Burke, 2009: 34). Burke is right in illustrating that different kinds of interpretations are necessary to incorporate both the assertion of having a hybrid identity or the negotiation of such an identity, thus referring to "human agency (as in the case of 'appropriation' or 'cultural translation')"; but also the way cultures become more hybrid, not through an active agency but influences and "changes of which the agents are unaware (as in the case of 'hybridization' or 'crealization')" (Ibid: 65). This chapter chooses the usage of the term in the work of Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha,⁴² which suggests that hybridity is a process in which there is individual agency (indeed, both theorists choose to describe their identity as hybrid) but also one which is integral to culture and as such underlines many societies and nations. Also *Globalization and Culture* (2004) by Jan Nederveen Pieterse is important, as he matches globalisation and hybridity as one process that has a long history, and recognises that cultural mixing across continents and regions dates back

⁴² Homi Bhabha connects the concept of hybridity with the previously discussed subjects of difference and identity as he uses the idea of a stairwell: "The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white... This interstitial passage between fixed identification opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha, 1994:4)..

many centuries and as such is part of the human condition. Civilizations are products of human integration and interaction, and are shaped by the encounters between cultures (Ibid). I would argue that many children live hybrid lives because they have to negotiate their identities between cultural differences on a daily basis (and not just children from cultural minorities but also children with ‘white’ English/British backgrounds as they encounter cultural difference through the processes of globalisation and interact with children from cultural minorities in school context), and also because they contribute to the creation of a hybrid society and nation, within the wider processes of globalisation as discussed in the previous chapter.

The number of children who speak languages other than English illustrate the presence of children who, like Savitri, lead ‘hybrid’ lives within the UK. Research published in 2000 found that in London children of school age speak, in total, more than 300 different languages (Baker and Eversley, 2000). Although it was expected that integration would mean that the variety of languages in the UK would fall, figures suggest that instead the number is increasing (Lamb, 2003). This rise of ‘multilingualism’ is not solely restricted to London. Lamb points out that in Sheffield the number of ‘bilinguals’ had doubled between 1994 and 2002, with 8.1% of primary school children speaking more than one language (Ibid). In 2010, in an article for the Economic & Social Research Council, Johanna Mitterhofer claims that “one fourth of children in the UK speak a language other than English at home.”⁴³

Despite this rich presence and affirmation of cultural hybridity in the lives of children, hybridity is not always considered part of the national identity. Hybridity is often considered in a negative light. As Nederveen Pietersen writes:

⁴³ Mitterhofer’s article ‘Speaking With Two Tongues’ is available at: http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/about/CI/CP/Our_Society_Today/News_Articles_2010/SpeakingWithTwoTongues.aspx.

Hybridity, it is argued, is inauthentic, without roots, for the elite only, does not reflect social realities on the ground. It is multiculturalism lite, highlights superficial confetti culture and glosses over deep cleavages that exist on the ground. (Nederveen Pietersen, 2001: 221)

Considering the number of children living with cultural difference within the UK, the idea that hybridity does not reflect the social realities on the ground seems to be completely unfounded. The claim that hybridity is inauthentic or part of a superficial confetti culture is very similar to the criticism of the intercultural productions that engage in the global exchange, which have been discussed in the previous chapter in detail. Indeed, the idea that hybrid cultures are inauthentic because they seem to exist parallel to those relating to a homogeneous ‘authentic’ national identity is very important. As was discussed in chapter three, ‘authenticity’ has become valued in a society which, due to capitalist market structures, interconnected forces of ‘glocalisation’ (that interpenetrate the local with the global and vice versa) and the increasing use of multi media, threatens notions of cultural uniqueness and purity, and so stimulates a revival of traditional values, ‘ancient’ traditions and a sense of nostalgia. However, the idea that British nationality is authentic disregards the fact that Britain, as a nation, is a recent construct not more than 300 years old (Higgins, Smith and Storey, 2010: 12-13). The construction of this nation does not relate to ‘indigenous’ people or ‘natural’ borders, but the unity has been imposed and constructed by its various rulers to maintain power. Moreover, many traditions that are recognised as ‘typically’ British, such as fish and chips, a cup of tea and even the pantomime tradition, in fact have Jewish, Chinese and Italian roots respectively. Indeed, much of what is considered traditional and authentic is in fact part of a long history of Britain’s global interconnectedness and the international market.

Challenging the idea of the British nation as authentic and homogeneous while illustrating the existence of cultural hybridity can aid those who are positioned as ‘outsiders’ to claim their rights inside society, exactly as is illustrated in *My Name is Savitri*. In light of postcolonial theory it is important that, instead of encouraging an exclusion or assimilation of minority identities, it is necessary to validate those maintaining an inside/outside position in relation to national frameworks by revising those discourses that construct nations and national identities (see Huddart, 2007: 26-27). The child’s own perceptions of nationality, place and belonging are at this stage a field which is underdeveloped in terms of academic research. Studies such as ‘The significance of place in middle childhood: qualitative research from Wales’ tentatively suggest that children aged 8-11 have not yet fully grasped the meaning of belonging to culturally constructed places such as the nation and are much more sensitive to socially constructed places that can be recognised in the family and school context (Scourfield, Dicks, Holland, Drakeford and Davies, 2006: 577).

Research such as ‘What makes a person British? Children’s conceptions of their national culture and identity’ (1995) illustrates that predominantly white children have to some extent adopted notions such as national superiority and have a monolithic view of culture (Carrington and Short, 1995: 12). Children from ethnic minorities on the other hand described themselves as having hyphenated identities which, according to the researchers, could suggest both a pride in their ethnicity but also a fear of rejection in assuming a British identity in relation to their ‘white’ peers. However, the research is positive in terms of the possibilities of addressing this perception of British identity and suggest “a clear majority of our sample said that being British was important to them”, but that “many were receptive to the idea of a bifurcated identity; a conception of ‘Britishness’ comprising an amalgam of strengths

and weaknesses” (Ibid). Indeed, this relates to the aforementioned responsibility to ensure that theatre created for young audiences reflects the child’s society of cultural hybridity, to validate those identities that might be excluded because they appear inauthentic and impure.

Savitri’s problem

The play *My Name is Savitri* can be understood as challenging the notion of the nation as a single homogeneous identity. The play responds to a culturally diverse society where children engage with multiple identities on a daily basis. It allows children that live in a ‘hybrid’ society to engage with identity formation, and explore the way that ‘other’ children can be different as well as the same. However, while illustrating the diversity in society, by focusing on the difficulties Savitiri faces in negotiating her identity and the bullying by the white girl, it escapes the previously mentioned criticism of multiculturalism and the way the government tries to assert “Britishness” as an identity superior to others or one that transcends inequalities, oppressions and exploitation (Donald and Rattansi, 1992: 5). However, this is where *My Name is Savitri* could attract criticism. As mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis, anti-racist plays which focus on negative issues might cause division rather than cohesion in the classroom, by making ‘white’ children feel bad about their position, by making them feel threatened by a perceived attempt at domination by the cultural ‘other’ or by drawing unwanted attention to the ‘difference’ of children from ethnic minorities (Troyna and Hatcher, 1992: 192). The negative terms that were used in the play, which would certainly not appear in anything aimed at a young audience today, can only work if the educational context makes clear that these comments are painful and

hurtful, rather than funny, inspiring or simply 'normal'. Because *Savitri* is performed in the TiE format, it can be made clear that the social and historical context of the issues in the play is accessible for all audience members, that the white children are also encouraged to empathise with *Savitri* rather than simply considering racism a problem of 'others,' and most importantly it can be suggested that 'difference' can be both a negative as well as a positive experience. Indeed, the responses of the children in the workshop after the performance illustrate that there is a need to take the issues beyond the performance of the play.

However, as explained in chapter two, TiE's structure is no longer popular, either with a majority of practitioners or with the government, which has since the introduction of the National Curriculum more power over education within schools. This makes *My Name is Savitri* a rather exceptional theatrical experience, especially in terms of the young age of the audience. Similarly, the educational nature of the play is no longer seen favourably; instead it is believed that performances need to have aesthetic values rather than educational and political messages. In terms of these aesthetic values, it is clear that *My Name is Savitri* was made on a low budget, with only three actors, a simple sound system and minimal décor (just a cupboard is placed on stage). Indeed, this emphasis on educational values, rather than the artistic experience of the child, were exactly those criticisms aimed at TiE in general as discussed in chapter two. It thus leaves open the question whether plays outside the TiE tradition can challenge the idea of Britain as a homogeneous nation and represent cultural diversity on stage while negotiating the challenges of such representations.

Children's Theatre and National Identity

To continue the discussion of children's theatre and cultural identity, it is useful to examine the question of whether it is possible to represent heterogenic and hybrid national identities within the UK. Whereas the British or English nationalities⁴⁴ are often perceived as suppressive, presenting themselves as superior and as firmly rooted in its colonial past, Scottish and Welsh nationalities⁴⁵ are perceived to be suppressed identities and victims of the British colonial past. As such, protecting their national identity and cultural heritage seems to be justifiable, even if this is problematic in relation to ethnic minorities, as will be discussed. Jen Harvie mainly uses Benedict Anderson's description of national identity as 'imagined communities' in her study of performance in the UK. She argues that this terms emphasises that "people's sense of community is produced through cultural practices that are creative and artistic", while at the same "that we each have individual agency to pursue the creative practices we want to in order to produce the national identities we want" (2005: 16). Harvie addresses these 'optimistic' claims in more detail and illustrates the ways in which cultural practices are limited by 'non-artistic' contexts and structures such as financial restraints and government policies. Largely, however, she approaches the construction of national identities as constructed by -- and not for -- people (Ibid). However, within the context of this chapter I would like to argue that in terms of children's theatre, national identities need to be approached with more caution, not just because children lack "individual agency over their artistic practice" (Ibid), but because pursuing

⁴⁴ For more titles on British and English national identities see: Mike Storry and Peter Childs, *British cultural identities* (London: Routledge, 2007); Vron Ware, *Who Cares About Britishness? A global view of the national identity debate* (London: Arcadia Books, 2007); Jeremy Paxman, *The English* (London: Penguin, 2007); Kate Fox, *Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour* (Boston and London: Nicholas Brealey, 2008)

⁴⁵ For more titles on Scottish and Welsh national identities see: Ralph Fevre and Andrew Thompson (eds.) *Nation, identity and social theory: perspectives from Wales* (University of Wales Press, 1999); Harold Carter, *Against the odds: the survival of Welsh identity* (Cardiff: Institute of Welsh Affairs, 2010); William Ferguson, *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: An Historic Quest* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998); Thomas Martin Devine and Paddy Logue (eds.) *Being Scottish: Personal Reflections on Scottish Identity Today* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002)

certain notions of national identities within theatrical productions can risk excluding ‘other’ cultural identities within the community.

Harvie writes her book fully recognising that “UK identities are hybrid, multiple and produced in diverse ways” and she explores the complexity of these cultural identities and practices to highlight the power dynamics involved (Ibid). However, this recognition of the complexity and hybridity of national identity is not embraced by all those engaged in constructing the UK’s national identity. Indeed, the second chapter of this thesis discussed the backlash against the idea of multicultural society, exemplified by Prime Minister David Cameron’s speech in which he stated that multiculturalism, as in the separation of cultural communities, has failed (2011). Chapter two explained that multiculturalism moved from a meaning relating to the existence of multiple cultures within a society to being associated with a political strategy of allowing communities to maintain their cultural identity without having to assimilate or integrate within wider notions of “Britishness” (see Modood, 2007: 2). Moreover, due to the growing number of people from the Muslim faith living within Western Europe, the failure of multiculturalism and the weakening of the UK’s “collective identity” (Cameron, 2011) was mainly considered due to this particular group who were no longer deemed ‘racially’ but rather culturally incompatible and/or inferior. Tariq Modood’s aptly titled book, *Still Not Easy Being British: Struggles for a Multicultural Citizenship* (2010), also points out that among the changes that can be associated with this backlash is a change from the way in which previous discussions of British nationalism were deemed “the property not of the British people but of right-wing ideologues” or simply “reactionary and racist” (1). Indeed ‘Britishness’ has become a common word, still used by the right in relation to nationalism and the attempt to (re-)establish the British cultural heritage as natural and often superior, but

also by the left to suggest an inclusive identity relating to citizenship and even to respect and tolerant attitudes towards cultural diversity.⁴⁶

Perhaps it is accurate to suggest that currently national identities are as relevant as they ever have been since the construction of such a concept. This is evident not only in the continuing existence of right-wing parties and organisations such as the British National Party, the UK Independence Party and the English Defence League. But it is also evident in the emphasis of nationalities in television programmes (for example the talent show Britain's Got Talent and That's Britain, a BBC programme which looks at what 'annoys' people in modern Britain). In advertisements (British/UK call centres and British/English/Welsh/Scottish sourced produce), and events such as the Royal Wedding in 2011, the upcoming Diamond Jubilee and Olympics in 2012 of which the relevance to the whole of the British nation is consistently reaffirmed by media and politicians.⁴⁷ The prevailing and dominating presence of the British national construct seems to be untouched by

⁴⁶ Chris Rojek writes in *Brit-myth: Who Do the British Think They Are?* that after Thatcher and Major, whose governments were "founded upon the principle of rule by the supposed dyed-in-the-wool Anglo-Saxon/Celtic silent majority," Tony Blair recognised that many felt alienated and divided from the Conservative versions of national identity (2007: 26). Therefore, New Labour attempted to re-establish 'Britishness' as an inclusive identity which recognised and celebrated cultural difference (Ibid: 26- 27). Additionally, Blair promoted "social responsibility, social inclusion, transparency and efficiency as the modern alternative to the society of self-interest" (Ibid: 27).

⁴⁷ Laurence Green, from the free creative (marketing) company 101 writes in an article for *The Telegraph* (May 2011) that the Royal Wedding was especially successful in promoting British brands, not just within Britain but all around the world (see 'Think Tank: British brands receive a shot in the arm from royal wedding' Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/comment/8500117/Think-Tank-British-brands-receive-a-shot-in-the-arm-from-royal-wedding.html>). What is interesting in terms of the Olympics is that this event oscillates between being a London-based event (the official website is named 'London 2012' and makes no obvious references to it being a British event, see <http://www.london2012.com/>) and the event being promoted as important for the whole nation. Indeed in January 2012 David Cameron stressed the importance of the Olympics and the Diamond Jubilee in his New Year message, stating: "This will be the year Britain sees the world and the world sees Britain. It must be the year we go for it – the year the coalition government I lead does everything it takes to get our country up to strength" (see Nicholas Watt, 'David Cameron: we are not immune from eurozone crisis' in *The Guardian* Available from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/jan/02/david-cameron-new-year-message>). However in a separate on-line poll, *The Guardian* illustrated that 82.9% of those who participated did not think that the Olympics and Diamond Jubilee would help Britain to get up to strength (see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/poll/2012/jan/02/olympics-diamond-jubilee-david-cameron>).

developments in the interconnected processes of globalisation which is generally considered to erode boundaries, cultural traditions and uniqueness.⁴⁸ On the contrary, Mary Kaldor recognises a current wave of nationalism which she understands as a response to globalisation, relating to the changes in terms of communication, the division of labour and war (2004: 4).

Although the reason for the prevalence of the idea of nationalism can be debated on several different grounds, there seems a partial consensus in terms of what drives the construction of these identities, as will be discussed. As it is interesting to understand how this concept is presented to children in light of the subject of this thesis, the definition given by Richard Tames in his introduction to *Nationalism*, seems appropriate. He writes:

Nationalism is the feeling that the people of a country all belong together and are different from the peoples of other countries.... A nation is a group of people whose members believe that the culture they share -- expressed through language, religion, history, customs or lifestyle -- binds them together in a way that makes them different and distinct from other people. (2003: 4)

This idea of belonging and differentiation is essential to nationality and nationalism and, as Tames shows throughout his work of non-fiction for the young reader, this can lead to positive feelings of national togetherness, but mainly causes conflicts, wars and other atrocities in history. (Tames certainly is not an avid supporter of Labour's attempts to establish 'Britishness' as a positive national

⁴⁸ Interesting here is the promotion of the British or English brand that can be seen as partially driven by a sense of nostalgia. See for example the aforementioned Chris Rojek, *Brit-myth: who do the British think they are?* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007); Floriane Reviron-Piégay, *Englishness revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2009). Also relevant is John Harris, *Britpop!: cool Britannia and the spectacular demise of English rock* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2004) which features a description of the rise and fall of Britpop as part of New Labour's attempt to promote 'Cool Britannia.' For more on national branding see: Keith Dinnie, *Nation branding: concepts, issues, practice* (Burlington: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007).

identity.) Moreover, it appears that the construction of a national identity, in the way it relates to belonging and differentiation, is very similar to the previous discussion of the construction of the child's personal identity. For example, Ross Bond writes in his paper 'Belonging and Becoming: National Identity and Exclusion' that he gives particular attention to the extent in which conceptions of national identity "are likely to include or exclude those characterized by 'difference' in terms of their national or ethnic origins" (2006: 609). Once again, the importance of difference in the process of constructing identity is evident, and as I will continue to discuss, performances for children that construct notions of nationality often risk denying cultural differences and limit possibilities of including the diversity of the audience members in the UK.

The National Theatre

Nadine Holdsworth writes in her short publication *Theatre and Nation* that national theatres "have faced enormous challenges as they respond to and accommodate changing social, cultural and economic conditions" (2010: 38). As factors such as globalisation and multiculturalism have had a "profound impact on the meaning of the nation", the term National Theatre (NT)⁴⁹ has in itself become "a rather arbitrary, almost meaningless label, an anachronistic, exhausted ideological construct" (Klaic quoted in Holdsworth, 2010: 38). However, the NT can also be considered to have an important part in constructing nationality as a hybrid identity, using a variety of performance styles to represent cultural diversity. Moreover with the recent opening

⁴⁹ For titles on the National Theatre see: Tim Goodwin, *Britain's Royal National Theatre: the first 25 years* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1988); Peter Lewis, *The National, A Dream Made Concrete* (London: Methuen, 1990); James F Hunkin, *Changing Faces: A Decade at the Royal National Theatre* (London: Oberon Books, 1997); Jonathan Croall (ed.) *Buzz Buzz: playwrights, actors and directors at the National Theatre* (London: Methuen, 2008).

of a NT in Wales⁵⁰ and the organisational structure in Scotland that is also named the National Theatre,⁵¹ it seems that these theatres have gained in relevance. Nicholas Hytner, director of the National Theatre in London, writes:

It's a great time to be a national theatre, and to rise to the challenge of living up to our name. We want to tell the stories that chart the way the nation is changing. We want to bring front-line reports from new communities and generations, and we want to see the present redefined in the context of the past. (Hytner, 'History of the NT')⁵²

However, in the area of children's theatre the criticism is often that the National Theatre in London produces and funds too little for children, only staging work during the Christmas period, and as such partially fails in representing the nation as a whole. Indeed, the playwright David Wood (coincidentally named the nation's children's playwright) points out that in comparison with the current practice of children's theatre in the UK, the NT seems to ignore the importance of staging quality work for children (Wood, 2010, Personal communication).⁵³ Moreover, when the NT does stage work specifically for the child, for example *Cat in the Hat*, it does not draw on the quality practitioners in the UK dedicated to creating work for children but invites Katie Mitchell, an 'adult' director famed for her dark, intense plays and her insistence on rehearsing only using candlelight (Ibid). Mitchell, to add to insult in the eyes of David Wood, states in a interview with *The Telegraph* that she was driven to

⁵⁰ See: <http://nationaltheatrewales.org/>

⁵¹ See: <http://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/content/>

⁵² Available from: <http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/7083/history-of-the-nt/history-of-the-national.html>

⁵³ Cross-over theatre is, similarly to 'cross-over literature', enjoyed by both adults and children and is at times specifically written and performed to attract and address this dual 'readership'. The popular Harry Potter series and Pullman's trilogy are the most prominent examples.

create children's theatre to be able to share her own work with her four- year-old-daughter, who is part of a 'underserved age group' (Ibid).⁵⁴

At the same time, the NT's commitment to representing cultural diversity is less evident in the work for young audiences. Although Hytner wants the NT to stage stories that reflect a changing nation and bring "reports from new communities and generations" (Hytner, 'History of the NT'), as I will discuss below, it appears to be more difficult to create work for children that relates to these new communities or to the changing nation. The NT's 'Connections' drama festival sees ten professional playwrights each year write plays for young people (aged between 11 and 19) to perform in a series of regional festivals in professional theatre venues as well as a selection of these performances at the NT during the summer (Deeney, 2007: 331). This festival is more 'national' through allowing the whole country and not just London to enjoy the work of the NT, and also, by placing young people at the heart of this theatre experience, their diversity and hybrid identity are represented on stage. However, 'Connections' is an initiative based on drama, and although this thesis argues for the involvement of children in the creation of their theatre, as discussed in the introduction, the focus of this thesis is on those productions performed by professional adults. Therefore it is interesting that next to the Connection festival the NT's work is racially or ethnically diverse, but not often culturally diverse in terms of performance styles and practices.

⁵⁴ For the interview with Katie Mitchell, see Sarah Compton (December 2009) available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-features/6651758/Dr-Seuss-The-Cat-in-The-Hat-Katie-Mitchell-interview.html>. Of course, it can also be recognised that encouraging NT's in-house or critically acclaimed directors to create work for young audiences could be beneficial to the area of children's theatre. However, it is understandable that practitioners such as David Wood, who has been working for young audiences since the 1960s, are somewhat insulted by the dismissal of the work. Moreover the current boom of theatre made for under 5 year olds, and companies such as Oily Cart, Travelling Light and Quicksilver which have created critically acclaimed work for this age group, make Mitchell's observations seem unfounded.

In the last decade the work that the NT has created for children (while at the same time also appealing to adults) used predominantly ‘Western’ performance disciplines, while not including ‘other’ cultural influences that have, for example, originated in Indian, Jamaican and Nigerian cultures and can be found to exist within British society. The exception is the play *Nation* (2009) that uses intercultural performative elements informed by Polynesian culture, as will be discussed in more detail below. For example *His Dark Materials* (2004), *Coram Boy* (2005 and 2006), *War Horse* (2007), *Cat in the Hat* (2009) and *Beauty and the Beast* (2010) all have classical or generic music, Western costumes, classical or contemporary dance and feature Western houses and interiors in their scenery. Interestingly, these stories are set in either a fantastical or parallel world (*HDM*, *Nation*, *Cat in the Hat* and *Beauty and the Beast*) or in historical Britain (*War Horse*, *Coram Boy*), therefore the need to represent contemporary Britain as a diverse cultural society is not integral to these stories. The play *Coram Boy* does however relate to the diversity of society by highlighting the presence of black children in British history as discussed in the introduction to this thesis. The NT’s most popular children’s performance to date, *War Horse*, was based on an anti-war book for young readers⁵⁵ and uses spectacular puppetry by the South African Handspring Puppet Company.⁵⁶ However, the

⁵⁵ In an article ‘Morpurgo: War Horse is a story I had to write’ (March 2009) the author explains how war effected his young life and that writing the novel was born from his own experience and the personal account of a WW1 veteran who drew his attention to the huge suffering and the deaths of so many horses used in the battle. Indeed, this inspired Michael Morpurgo to write the story from the perspective of one of these horses to illustrate the suffering of the animals but also to provide a way to narrate suffering of the human on all sides; as he writes, “the story of the soldiers of both sides at the front, and of the families, and people in France and Belgium, whose villages and farms were turned into battlefields. My horse would witness it all, the pity and the futility and the huge senselessness, and the hope, too.” When Morpurgo witnessed the adaptation at the National Theatre he felt his attempts were successful, stating: “I couldn’t have written a better anthem for peace.” See: <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/showbiz/article-23669235-morpurgo-war-horse-is-a-story-i-had-to-write.do>.

⁵⁶ For more titles on the NT production of *War Horse* see: Adrian Kohler ‘War Horse’ in *Handspring Puppet Company* (ed.) Jane Taylor (Johannesburg: David Krut Publishing, 2009); Mervyn Millar, *The Horse’s Mouth: staging Morpurgo’s War Horse* (London: Oberon, 2007).

performance mainly presents traditional ‘English’ culture and, as will be discussed, the focus on the First World War can be seen as affirming a nationalistic sentiment.

To return to Harvie’s explanation of how the staging of memories constructs a communal national identity, I would suggest that her observations are suitable here, and *Coram Boy* can be understood as a positive use of the performance of collective memories (relating to the shared history of a nation) as it places ethnic diversity within the nation’s history, a perspective that is not often included. *War Horse* is not a negative use, because it certainly does not glorify war or national pride, especially considering that the book from which the play is adapted uses the narrative voice of the horse to encourage an impartial perspective of the war (something that is lost within the stage production).⁵⁷ However, the recurrent theme of the First and Second World Wars recognisable in *War Horse* and also other recent plays for young audiences such as *Billy the Kid*⁵⁸ might be read as part of ‘banal nationalism,’ a term used by Michael Billig to describe the way in which national identities are not just expressed by far right groups but are part of day to day living (1995: 6). Indeed, history, the memory of collective suffering within the context of war, is recognised to be particularly important in terms of strengthening national identity (Renan, 1994:

⁵⁷ In the documentary *Making War Horse* available on DVD, the theatrical collaborators discuss their initial concerns about adapting a story told from a horse’s point of view. In particular, the NT’s director Nicholas Hytner, was adamant that it would be “anathema” to allow the horse to speak. Therefore, the playwright Nick Stafford, adapted the book and changed the narration from the perspective of the horse, to a third person’s narration. Although it can be debated how significant this change is for the anti-war message of the story, the play does lose the impartial narration as represented by the horse, as well as the way such attempts can be read as giving a ‘voice’ to those oppressed or forgotten in the nation’s history.

⁵⁸ *Billy the Kid* was like *War Horse* adapted from a novel by Morpurgo, however this time by Tony Graham who also directed the play staged at the Unicorn in 2007 and revived in 2011. The play certainly has an anti-war message and follows the story of a young man who realises his dream of being signed for Chelsea Football Club but then instead has to fight in the Second World War. The experience of the young soldier certainly highlight the horrors of war. Nevertheless, its subject is fighting against other nations, it stages the communal national memory of WWII and moreover it focuses on football, which encourages other feelings of belonging (your football club or your national football team), competition and victory. This play can then be understood as relating to national cultural identities.

17).⁵⁹ Thus, it is not that the plays above have an overtly nationalistic agenda, but through their historical content, in turn restricting their representation on stage, they often represent a singular national history and a homogeneous national identity by excluding the cultural other, who, it is implied, does not to share this collective memory. The representation of ethnic diversity in the cast would arguably help young audiences with corresponding identities to feel included (moreover chapter three illustrates how the child will always interpenetrate the theatrical dialogue with their own cultural experience). However, to challenge this singular history, the incorporation of ‘other’ voices can increase the multiplicity of the UK’s national history.⁶⁰ For example, Walter Tull, the first Afro-Caribbean/mixed heritage officer in the British army who served during the First World War (as well as being one of the first British ‘Black’ top division football player) could represent these ‘other’ voices of history.⁶¹

As mentioned, the play *Nation* is an exception here, as it did feature an intercultural performance with a multicultural cast. This play was adapted by Mark Ravenhill from Terry Pratchett’s similarly titled book.⁶² It was directed by Melly Still and performed on the National’s Olivier stage. It was staged during the usual Christmas slot which runs from later November to late March and often sees the main Olivier reserved for productions suitable for the whole family, and as such *Nation* was

⁵⁹ Ernest Renan writes in his essay ‘Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?’ that the focus of common suffering is, in terms of constructing the national sentiment, more important than happiness, because these national sorrows “impose obligations and demand a common effort” (Renan, 1994: 17).

⁶⁰ Joanne Tompkins illustrates in her chapter ‘Performing History’s Unsettling’ in *Critical theory and performance* (ed.) Janelle G. Reinelt, Joseph R. Roach (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2007) the importance of history in validating minority identities and the cultural ‘other’. As she writes: “In postcolonial studies, refiguring history remains one of the predominant tropes for the decolonization of texts, bodies, minds, and nations, precisely because imperial agents maintained strict control over the interpretation of history, as a key mechanism for exerting authority over a people” (71).

⁶¹ Although it was very difficult to locate plays for young audiences about the world wars to feature the ‘other voices’ in history, an example within ‘adult’ theatre is *Dusky Warriors* (1995) written by Kulvinder Ghir about Indian regiments in the First World War.

⁶² See Terry Pratchett, *Nation* (New York: Harpercollins Publishers, 2008).

advised as being for an audience of 10 years of age and older.⁶³ The play follows the story of an English girl, named Ermintrude but who prefers to call herself Daphne, and a Polynesian boy, Mau, who after a destructive tsunami end up together on an island and have to find a way to adapt to their new environment, to create a unity among the other survivors that join them and ultimately to lead their new nation. Along the way there are various challenges such as delivering a baby, milking a pig, amputating a leg, religious disputes and violence from some of the English crew stranded from the same ship as Daphne as well as from indigenous cannibalistic ‘Raiders’. Each of these contributes to their development and journey from childhood to adulthood.

Indeed, among many others, this theme of ‘growing up’ is central to the story. At the start of the story Mau is in the middle of a ‘transition’ ritual that sees him leaving his ‘boy soul’. However, just when he is ready to return to his island to receive tattoos and his ‘adult soul,’ the tsunami strikes and destroys the population of his home. He is therefore ‘stuck’ and unable to progress to become a man. Although Mau cannot follow the path of his forbearers, eventually he does find that his ‘man soul’ is present, having established himself as survivor and a leader. The nation that Daphne and Mau create also undergoes the journey from ‘innocence’ to

⁶³ Reviews such as by the ‘West End Whingers’ (November, 2009) describe that the audience for *Nation* was predominantly consistent of teenagers, so those over the age of 13 (see ‘Review-Nation by Terry Pratchett via Mark Ravenhill, National Theatre’ available at: <http://westendwhingers.wordpress.com/2009/11/17/review-nation-by-terry-pratchett-via-mark-ravenhill-national-theatre/>). This could be explained by high schools organising trips for their students recognising that the play can be linked to curricular subjects of citizenship, literature and drama, and to the fact that 15 to 25 year olds could see it for £5 or for free through the A Night Less Ordinary Scheme (see: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/funded-projects/case-studies/a-night-less-ordinary/>). However the younger audience from 10 to 13 was acknowledged and engaged by for example the Make-a-Nation booklet written by Luke Williams that came with the programme. In this booklet it is shown how to make ‘god anchors’ from a cardboard box and grass and leaf capes and skirts (with any kind of material including newspapers and plastic backs). It also encourages children to draw a map, create a language for their new nation and teaches them a Polynesian dance move called kaholo. Additionally the NT created a ‘Nation game page’ where children can play a simple video game in which Daphne or Mau has to make their “way onto the Nation” and collect “the coconuts” (see <http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/microsite/nation/game/>).

‘experience’.⁶⁴ Starting with the religious conflicts between Mau and an old priest called Ataba, the Nation progresses to a harmonious co-existence of the survivors, predominantly formed by the challenges and the dangers they face which bring them closer and creates unity among the people. Moreover, with the discovery of a cave in which maps, star charts and glass is found, the nation turns out to be one of earth’s oldest civilisations. *Nation* is therefore a very interesting play in terms of this chapter; the production implies that nations are not ‘natural’ territories but established by the people because of their desire for unity and the collective struggle that they face together. Moreover, the play illustrates the hybridity that can exist within a nation as Daphne, Mau and those coming from the smaller regions all bring their cultures and create a mix. For example, Daphne wears a grass skirt over her crinoline and Mau has to challenge and adapt his religious beliefs through Daphne’s scientific enquiries. Although at first the story focuses on where the cultures collide, eventually the nation’s identity is based on these cultural collisions and eventually on cultural cohesion.

Indeed, the whole production was staged with an intercultural practice, using masks, music, costumes and dance inspired by Polynesian culture mixed with English elements, musical chorus songs and multimedia. Although cultural inclusion is something for which this thesis argues, the downside is that Polynesian culture is not

⁶⁴ The link between the nation and childhood or approaching the nation as a child, is not uncommon. See for example: Ala A. Alryyes, *Original subjects: the child, the novel, and the nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) who argues that the image of the child or the ‘parent-child dynamic’ is emblematic of the description of West European nations and their relation to colonial territories. See also: Barbara Ann Young, *The child as emblem of the nation in twentieth-century Irish literature* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006). It should also be mentioned that in relation to colonial territories, the image of the child as immature, innocent or in need of parental protection was often used by Britain. See for example Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial encounters: the politics of representation in North-South relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) which has a chapter titled ‘Precocious Children, Adolescent Nations’ which deals with this child imagery (79-98).

one that has a high presence within the UK.⁶⁵ Therefore the hybrid nature of the identity presented *Nation* does indirectly relate to the hybrid national identity of the UK, but at the same time it does not reflect the cultural diversity of the UK because it has only a very small presence in comparison to other minorities. This is possibly the reason that when creating the play, it was not deemed a high priority to include in the creative process a choreographer, designer or actors with a Polynesian background: the island was approached as a fantastical exotic setting rather than an opportunity to engage with the cultural heritage of Polynesia. The previous chapter has discussed in detail this manner of engaging with the cultural ‘other’ in which the other is simply assumed and appropriated by the West, and how this relates to Said’s framework of Orientalism. As such, a well meaning play “about how people tend to be very similar to other people once you get past a few insignificant differences” (Pratchett, *Nation* theatre programme) has underestimated the delicate problem of staging cultural difference in the intercultural dialogue.

The Voyage

The aforementioned problem of representing cultural diversity within performances is also found in theatre for the young relating to national identities within the UK such as Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish. For example, the play *The Voyage* (2007) by

⁶⁵ Although Polynesia was partly colonised by Britain, in comparison with other previous colonies (for example India, Pakistan and Jamaica) it does not have a large ‘settled’ population in contemporary Britain. The first contact between Europe and the Polynesian region was in the sixteenth century, and by the early twentieth century nearly the entire region was colonised not just by the UK but Chile, France, Germany and the United States. The UK was present in the Cook Islands, New Zealand, the Gilbert (now Tokelau) and Ellice Islands (now Tuvalu) and the Pitcairn Islands. See for titles on Polynesia and colonisation: Donald Denoon, *Malama Meleisea*, Stewart Firth, Jocelyn Linnekin, Karen Nero, *The Cambridge History Of The Pacific Islanders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Barrie Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire: Towards a History of Kiribati and Tuvalu* (Suva, Fiji: The University of the South Pacific, 2001); Ian Christopher Campbell *"Gone native" in Polynesia: Captivity Narratives and Experiences from the South Pacific* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1998).

Clwyd Theatr Cymru Theatre for Young People aimed at 7-to-11-year-olds is set in Victorian Britain and follows the arduous journey of four orphaned brothers and sisters who eventually go and seek a better life in America via Liverpool. It has much resemblance to the immigration stories originating from Ireland,⁶⁶ and the storyline offers much opportunity to highlight the suffering under English rule as an English landlord forces the children out of their house. They are then sent to a workhouse run by a very unpleasant man, a character represented by a puppet with English accent, and the family is torn apart by a wealthy English lady who only takes on the eldest girl. At the same time, through a focus on immigration, the play can express a longing for the country of origin and enforce a sense of belonging by illustrating the pain of the characters who are forced to leave their home. As such the play can be seen as a positive attempt to stage a communal memory and as such help to validate an identity that has been “historically marginalised or oppressed” (Harvie, 2005: 41). As Paul Nolan (Inspector/Advisor for Humanities, County Hall) writes about *The Voyage*:

Clwyd Theatr Cymru Theatre for Young People has once again come up with a drama which goes to the heart of the experience of being Welsh in nineteenth century Britain. The play gives a terrific opportunity for pupils to explore issues of identity, culture and social change and also gain insights into the nature of Wales and Britain today. (*‘The Voyage’* Available at: <http://www.ctctyp.co.uk/archive.html>)

However, at the same time the current minority identities within Wales are in a sense marginalised because by staging this communal memory, and as such constructing a specific notion of the Welsh identity, it is difficult to include the current cultural diversity present in the UK. Jeremy Turner, director of the Welsh

⁶⁶ On the subject of immigration and Irish literature see: Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and exiles: Ireland and the Irish exodus to North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Melissa Fegan, *Literature and the Irish famine, 1845-1919* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

company Theatr Arad Goch, writes in his chapter ‘Young People’s Theatre in A Minority Language and Culture’ about the importance of offering young people in Wales work that “enhances young people’s sense of ownership of contemporary theatre presented to them on their terms, and with relevance to their own cultural context” (2005: 35). He gives as an example the occasion when a Welsh-speaking teenager called out to the actors of the company visiting the school “you’re our company aren’t you!” (Ibid). This observation certainly confirms how, for young audiences, theatre and identity are strongly related and how nationality emphasises a feeling of belonging. However, Turner is aware of the dangers of a strong reaffirmation of nationality, as he writes:

As Welsh is a ‘minority language, it is understandable that the bilingual Welsh/English speaking children are in a dilemma about the place of their culture in a wider society. For these children, theatre based on their own heritage (legends, stories and history), is a way to reinforce their own identity. But caution is needed: the use of such material can lead to a perpetuation of sentimental cultural stereotypes. More fruitful is the use of traditional source material -- but within a non-traditional or de-constructed style. (Ibid: 34)

Indeed this warning in terms of creating cultural stereotypes relates to the previous chapter of this thesis in which the essentialisation of cultures was discussed in detail. Turner’s own play *Caneri, Gwylan a Brân* (Canary, Seagull and Crow) from 2004 is an example of how the traditional source material can be used in a non-traditional or deconstructed style, as the play focuses on a girl in the present who learns through historic events to realise her own potential (Ibid: 37). By incorporating multimedia and contemporary music, the performance is intersected by both present and past (Ibid). Interesting is the difference between Welsh theatre and theatre in Scotland and

Northern Ireland. The Welsh language plays an important role in banal constructions of nationality (Jones and Merriman, 2009: 164),⁶⁷ and similarly can be used within productions as a cultural signifier without evoking stereotypical representations. For example, *The Voyage* was mainly in English; however through the interjection of Welsh words such as good night, the Welsh origin was reaffirmed. The Scottish company Tall Stories arguably relies on traditional cultural representations to reaffirm the national roots. For example productions such as *The Emperor's New Kilt* (2007)⁶⁸ uses national symbols and references (such as tartan) to reposition a European folk tale in a Scottish cultural context, something which can either be considered an attempt to reconfirm Scottish stereotypes or, in a more positive light, a celebration of 'Scottishness'.

The difficulties of the representation of Northern-Irish culture in theatre for the young would deserve a thesis in itself.⁶⁹ The number of productions created especially for children is limited in this region (Croxford, 2005:43). Productions here cannot simply reaffirm a Northern Irish national identity because its community is segregated through religion and staging its communal memory would not further a national identity but only affirm how this identity is fissured by internal struggles and religious division. For example, Richard Croxford, from the company Reply, writes that all "productions must be relevant to both sides of the community" because he wants children to relate to the theatrical performances he creates and not "be alienated

⁶⁷ Rhys Jones and Peter Merriman's article 'Hot, banal and every day nationalism: Bilingual road signs in Wales' (2009) illustrates how important language is in the perception of national identity. By focusing on road signs the article shows how English road signs were considered "part of an everyday landscape of oppression". Thus the campaign to replace these with bilingual signs reinforced the authority of the Welsh identity (see 164).

⁶⁸ See 'The Emperor's New Kilt' from Wee Stories Theatre, available at: <http://www.weestoriestheatre.org/past-productions/the-emperors-new-kilt>

⁶⁹ See for titles on Northern Irish theatre: Tom Maguire, *Making Theatre in Northern Ireland: Through and Beyond the Troubles* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2006); Bill McDonnell, *Theatre of the Troubles: Theatre, Resistance and Liberation in Ireland* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008); Sam Hanna Bell, *The Theatre in Ulster* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972).

because they read the symbols, and perceive it to be about people on the other side of the divide” (Ibid). In a sense this company offers a ‘free site’ for young children to negotiate their identity rather than prescribe a Northern Irish identity. However, Reply’s productions are not intercultural, in the sense that they all relate to a Western performance style. Indeed, it would have been useful to discuss an intercultural performance which would also relate to Northern Irish, Welsh or Scottish nationality,⁷⁰ however the fact that these productions are not very common seems to affirm that when representing national identity, it is difficult to assert cultural diversity as a part of this identity.

Using the subject Citizenship in theatre for the child: useful or inherently problematic?

As continuously affirmed throughout this thesis, theatre companies still depend on schools to bring classes to theatre venues, or to invite them to stage a play within schools, to maintain their financial sustainability and to ensure that all children have the right of cultural participation. Moreover, parents are often motivated by the prospect that taking their children to a performance contributes to their development.

Subsequently, government influence in education through the national curriculum and

⁷⁰ One of the few examples of an intercultural Scottish performance is *Swagatam* (2011), a family concert. This production brings together a musician from Scotland, Barnaby Brown, and from India, Parkriti Dutta, and performs songs for an audience from 0-6 years, “throwing venerable musical traditions...into creative fission” (see ‘Swagatam’ available at: <http://swagatam.co.uk/programme/>). This intercultural performance is helped by the fact that the focus is on songs and instruments from both cultures and thus avoids, to some extent, the problems of stereotypical representations. In the performance attended on the 25th of February 2012 at Tara Art’s Theatre both actors appeared on stage in ‘casual’ dress with black and orange details and there were no additional staging techniques or scenery. The roots of the ‘Hindustani and Hebridean’ songs and instruments (such as bagpipes and triplepipes) were explained to the very young audience which was encouraged to participate in both singing and handmovements. This performance as such would be an example of children’s ‘theatre’ that reflects the hybrid cultures of the UK. What could, however, be observed is that the performance features a musician from Kolkata, India, raising the question whether a musician from Scotland from an Indian heritage could not have been approached for this project.

educational objectives and guidelines is present within theatre for the child. One of the subjects that is frequently mentioned by theatre companies as a ‘curricular link’ to a specific production is the subject of citizenship.⁷¹ Indeed, this subject is especially interesting in terms of the government’s interference with the child’s construction of identity and its attempts to place “British values” at the heart of the national identity. Citizenship is generally defined as a form of “socio-political identity” which is “enshrined in the rights conveyed by the state and the duties performed by the individual” (Heater, 2004: 1-2).⁷² As an educational subject it was introduced on the National Curriculum in 1990 by the then Education Secretary Kenneth Baker (‘Citizenship Foundation’). At first it was only a cross-curricular theme, meaning schools had no obligation to teach it. However, in 2002 it became a statutory Foundations Subject in English secondary schools, thus obliging schools to teach 11 to 16 year olds important aspects of active citizenship and civic responsibility, such as democracy, the justice system and human rights (Ibid). In Wales the equivalent is Personal and Social Education, which is compulsory for students from 5 to 16 years old. In Scotland the subject is still cross-curricular, part of the Curriculum for Excellence, thus not a specific subject but incorporated into other lessons. Although in England citizenship is not compulsory for children younger than 11, it is still part of a non-statutory framework for personal, social and health education (Kerr, Smith and Twine, 2008: 254) which aims to teach children to:

- recognise their own worth
- become responsible for their own learning
- work collaboratively with others

⁷¹ See: <http://www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/main/page.php?286>.

⁷² For more titles on the subject of citizenship see: Benjamin Heater, *A Brief History of Citizenship* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Richard Paul Bellamy, *Citizenship: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Keith Faulks, *Citizenship* (London: Routledge, 2000).

- reflect upon their own experiences and learn from them
- explore many spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues
- consider their responsibilities both as individuals and members of communities
- learn to acknowledge and respect differences and similarities between people (Rowland and Woulfe, 2001: 4).⁷³

As such it would seem that the intentions of citizenship as a subject are helpful and beneficial to the child's life. However, the subject has always been controversial. To summarise the main point of criticism: citizenship as a subject within schools is believed to represent a forceful construction of national identity and a denial of the multiplicity of society within the UK by simplifying and universalising the concept and the process of being a citizen. For example, Alistair Ross writes in his work *Curriculum, Construction and Critique*:

The argument... is that the curriculum is being utilized to invent a new form of national identity, in the face of a range of other offerings of identity, and that this identity attempts:

- to define its citizens primarily as individuals owing obligations and duties to the State, and that these duties are prior to and independent of any rights, and
- to minimize alternative identities relating to class, ethnicity or gender-- or regional and supra-national affinities. (2000: 150)

⁷³ These possible learning aims remained broadly the same for children ages 7 to 9 after the reform of the Citizenship subject in 2007. However, the revised aims included some additional points such as developing "their own individual moral framework...an awareness of prejudice and the harm it can cause...to celebrate diversity and know that every individual has similar needs, rights and responsibilities...have a discerning eye for the messages in the media... an awareness and a responsibility towards local and global issues" (Potter, 2008: 4).

Indeed, since the observations of Ross, the subject of citizenship has gone through various developments, primarily due to Labour's interest in the potential of this subject. As discussed in chapter two, in relation to growing criticism towards the concept of multiculturalism and its perceived failings in terms of social cohesion, the Labour governments sought ways to promote the UK as "one nation, one community" and recognised an opportunity to promote British core values such as democracy, tolerance and internationalism through the subject of citizenship (see Andrews and Mycock, 2008: 141; Andrews, McGlynn and Mycock 2010: 300). David Kerr, Alan Smith and Christine Twine write in their chapter 'Citizenship Education in the United Kingdom' (2008) that Labour's "emphasis was on collective 'civic responsibility'" and was an antidote to "the individualist 'civic obligation' promoted by the outgoing Conservative government" (252). However, after the London bombings in July 2005, the government's concerns focused on a re-adjustment of this approach to place "emphasis on creating community cohesion and strengthening shared identity" (Ibid: 253). In 2008 a new strand entitled 'Identity and cultural diversity: living together in the UK' was intended to nurture the student's recognition of the diversity of the UK and the appreciation that identities are complex and can change over time and are "informed by different understandings of what it means to be a citizen in the UK" (Ibid: 255).

Indeed, this addition made the subject of citizenship arguably even more popular within the area of children's theatre, especially (as previously discussed) as theatre is perceived as being able to engage with the child's identity through the processes of identification, but also through the way the child can internalise the theatrical experience and establish ownership through cultural participation. However, caution is also needed when companies want to create work that reflects cultural

diversity; although citizenship as a subject can embrace diversity it needs caution in representing concepts of 'Britishness' to avoid reaffirming this as a homogeneous and superior identity.

Ghosts in the Gallery

An example of the connection between children's theatre and the national curriculum is the play created and performed by Polka Theatre named *Ghosts in the Gallery*, written by Paul Sirett aimed at 8-to-13-year-olds. Performed during the 2008 Black History Month,⁷⁴ it is easy to see how the play relates to issues such as racism and how it links itself to the curriculum in history and citizenship as detailed in the document 'Curriculum Links' (Polka Theatre, 2008). In the story, a teenage girl named B manages to stay in The National Portrait Gallery after closing hours. She has run away from her parents after an argument about her necklace given to her by her recently deceased grandmother. B wanted to go look at the portrait of Ann Boleyn who, perhaps not so coincidentally, wears exactly the same necklace. The problem is that B finds herself in The National Portrait Gallery on Halloween, a night where

⁷⁴ Black History Month, held every year in October, was established in the UK in 1987 by Ghanaian Akyaaba Sebbi who worked for the Greater London Council and was able to stage the event just before the GLC was abolished by Thatcher ('Putting the black into history' available at: http://www.black-history-month.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=215:putting-the-black-into-history&catid=76:our-story&Itemid=131). The event followed the initiatives by black parents "who were no longer prepared for their kids to be fed a Eurocentric version of history" (Ibid). Although now many events such as lectures are staged for adults, children remain the prime 'target' with many schools taking part (Ibid). Indeed, schools are offered various events that are relevant and suitable to celebrate Black British history, and Polka is just one of the many companies that offer plays dealing with issues relating to black history. However, every year there is also much criticism of the event which is regarded as causing divisions within schools as well as 'pigeon holing' black history, raising the question whether history classes should not by definition embrace the black perspective throughout the year (Ibid). See Harry Phibbs 'Teaching separation' (September 2008) Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/sep/15/raceinschools.raceineducation?INTCMP=ILCNETTXT3487>. It is therefore significant that London mayor Boris Johnson slashed funding for the event in 2010 (and similar multicultural events) to invest in a new day to celebrate the USA. See 'Boris Johnson criticised over slashing funding for London events' (February 2010) Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/feb/17/boris-johnson-slashes-events-funding>.

every year all the portraits come to life to have a party. However, Ann Boleyn has different intentions this year. She grabs B and takes her to Dr John Dee and Edward Kelly, who have developed a scientific experiment that can replace those on the paintings with living human beings, allowing the painted characters to once again return to the world outside the museum.



Illustration 4.16 - *Ghosts in the Gallery*. B is grabbed by Ann Boleyn
(Photographer: Robert Workman ©)

B manages to escape, mainly because the culprits face a major dilemma concerning B's skin colour, which makes her a difficult replacement for Ann Boleyn. An exciting chase through the museum starts. In her attempt to find a way out of the museum, B meets many historic figures who have their portraits kept at the gallery, such as King Henry VIII, William Shakespeare and Margaret Thatcher. Some of these are friendly and try to help B, such as Mary Shelley, Granville Sharp (an anti-slavery campaigner in the late eighteenth century), Aphra Behn (one of the first English professional female writers whose book *Oroonoko* discusses slavery), and Beatrix Potter. Others, such as Sir Isaac Newton, Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, are less kind to B, as they cannot accept that B considers herself as British. This is probably B's biggest problem; none of the characters in the gallery can understand that a black girl can be from London and not, as they all assume, from Africa. It turns out that

instead of helping Ann Boleyn, Dr Dee and Edward Kelly have their own plan and need B's blood to escape the gallery. Ann Boleyn, who has grown to like the girl, sacrifices her own plan to clear her name and prove that she was not guilty of adultery when tried by Henry VIII in order to save the young girl and escort her out of the gallery.

Ghosts in the Gallery, in contrast to *My Name is Savitri*, can possibly be described as a multicultural play as the cast is representative of a multicultural society (although the term multi-racial is more suitable as will be explained in more detail). However, the play is certainly not intercultural. Although both plays focus on 'difference' in terms of their young female protagonists, Savitri's cultural identity is established as different through the use of music, dance, masks, puppetry and other Indian references. *Ghosts in the Gallery* has in contrast no references to other cultures. Instead the identity of B as a South London inner city girl is confirmed and highlighted by her strong accent, the language she uses, and her mobile phone and i-pod, which bewilder the historic characters to the great amusement of the audience. The way B is presented on stage as a 'typical British girl' suggests to the audience that the only 'difference' is her skin colour. B is presented as British even though she is not white, something that the historic characters in the play find confusing. As such racism and nationalism become an underlying themes of this play: B can be black and British.

However B can only be black and British in the present and not, as the play affirms through the resistance of the historical characters, in the past. This is where the aims of the play and themes of racism and nationalism become confusing. In contrast to another multicultural play, *Coram Boy*, which was discussed in the introduction, where the writer Gavin set out to affirm the existence of the black child

in history, *Ghosts in the Gallery* achieves the opposite by illustrating how times have changed and how black people can only be accepted within a British national identity in the present. As such this play is different from other attempts to show a more ‘inclusive’ approach to history and race. For example, Gavin’s approach of searching for ‘lost voices’ in history is evident in postcolonial strategies in which performances challenge historical narratives which suppress the cultural or ethnical ‘other’.⁷⁵ As previously discussed, the other approach is seen in casting black actors in historically ‘white’ roles. This representation of a multicultural society through an ethnically diverse cast is seen often in Shakespeare plays for young audiences. These plays are, however, different to the *Ghosts in the Gallery*, as the skin colour of these characters does not relate to the storyline or the context of the play. In *Ghosts in the Gallery*, B’s racial background is the main subject of the play.



Illustration 4.17 - *Ghosts in the Gallery*. While B is kept captive by The Black Prince, Ann Boleyn tries to find a way in which B can take her place in the gallery using the skills of portrait painter Sir Joshua Reynolds (Photographer: Robert Workman ©)

⁷⁵ As previously mentioned Joanne Tompkins writes in her chapter ‘Performing History’s Unsettlement’ that in “postcolonial studies, refiguring history remains one of the predominant tropes for the decolonization” (2007: 71). See also the article by Ian Duffield ‘Black People in Britain: History and the Historians’ which discusses the development of a consciousness in relation to Black history in Britain. Available at: http://www.historytoday.com/ian-duffield/black-people-britain-history-and-historians?ip_login_no_cache=bd9f50922b18cd0b42ca686de2634531.

There is another example of ‘multicultural casting’ in the play as at the final bow the audience finds that the eldest son of Edward III, named The Black Prince, who throughout the play chased B in his full armour to return her to Ann Boleyn, was actually also played by a black actor. Although the inclusion of this actor might contribute to a mixed cast representative of the multicultural society, regrettably the role is mute and the actor is hidden away in full armour. Also the way the play addresses slavery is complicated. The main suggestion is that if B had lived in the time of the some of the characters, she would have been a slave because she is black, as many of the historical characters assume. However, by presenting B as any other young person in the audience, British without any cultural difference, the audience hopefully would have identified with the character and felt the injustice of enslaving a person just because of the colour of their skin. This is arguably the main problem; to establish B as an identifiable ‘British’ girl she needs to be denied cultural difference.⁷⁶ Moreover, after being removed from a possible cultural heritage, it is simultaneously asserted that within the ‘British’ cultural heritage, as represented by the portrait gallery, she -- as a black girl -- has no place.

Therefore *Ghosts in the Gallery* as an anti-racist attempt fails. Although a part of the anti-racist education movement dislikes the implications of a focus on culture within racism, this play does highlight the complex relation between race and culture, and how both need to be considered when a play text is staged. Indeed, the area of children’s theatre needs to remain weary of attempts to assert ‘Britishness’ as inclusive in terms of ethnicity but exclusive in terms of cultural diversity. To reiterate

⁷⁶ Although not all, a majority of black children do have cultural roots of a different origin than the UK and moreover black culture itself has been established and needs to be recognised as an equally valid cultural identity. See Houston A. Baker, Jr., Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg (eds.) *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Holmes' observation concerning young children and their perception of race: children realise at a young age the cultural implication of skin colour in personal and group identity (Holmes, 1995: 51). However, to return to Ross's discussion of teaching citizenship in school it is arguably still the case that the curriculum risks pushing for a unified national identity instead of acknowledging the child's cultural awareness of race and identity. Therefore the child's awareness of difference both racial and cultural is suppressed and replaced by a supposedly 'universal' identity, a practice that is identified not just in schools in the UK but also on a wider level. As Tuula Gordon, Janet Holland and Elina Lahelma write in their publication *Making Spaces, Citizenship and Difference in Schools*: "In European social thought the concept of citizenship is constructed as universal; but it contains tensions between sameness and difference, us and others, centres and margins" (2000:9).

I would suggest that this European thought about citizenship as a universal construct is evident within *Ghosts in the Gallery*. By removing any black historical voices and all performative elements that might suggest that B is British but also has cultural roots that might have originated, geographically, outside the British Isles or in a colonial past, the play indirectly suggests that it is possible to be British and black, but not British and culturally different. Indeed, B can affirm her position in contemporary Britain but through the confrontation with British history, in which it is repeatedly asserted that B is black and therefore it is not possible for her to be British, the play affirms that 'Britishness' is historically, and as such authentically, an exclusively white category. This constructs the contemporary notion of 'Britishness' as an identity to which you can belong *despite* differences in skin colour, not one that includes different ethnicities, different histories and different cultures, a British identity that is wholly hybrid by its experience of daily diversity. Indeed, the question

is why B did not come across the writer and abolitionist Olaudah Equiano who became, as early as 1780, “the most prominent spokesman for the black community living in London” and whose portrait also hangs in the gallery (‘Person - Olaudah Equiano’ from ‘The National Portrait Gallery’ website).⁷⁷ She could also have met the slaves and children that appear on the portraits alongside their masters, such as a little girl that poses with a pearl necklace, a branch of coral reef and a sea shell full of pearls, next to the Duchess of Portsmouth by Pierre Mignard from 1682.⁷⁸ Moreover, the gallery contains the recent portraits of Bonnie Greer, Stuart Hall and Benjamin Zephaniah; if all the portraits come alive during Halloween would these key figures not take the opportunity to confront the rather racist attitudes of the historical characters? The play seems to have dismissed the ‘racial’ and cultural diversity that is an integral part of both history and contemporary life.

The Mysteries

The final play to feature in this chapter, discussed in order to explore religion as a final aspect in the debate of staging a national identity, was written and staged to mark the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible. *The Mysteries* (2011) follows six stories from the Old Testament, told within 55 minutes, using mainly rhyming ‘old English’. As such it is a credit to writers Claudia Mayer and Jantinder Verma, who have ensured that the stories feel connected and have kept the narration flowing. The play starts with Lucifer’s fall from heaven, which is then followed by the story of

⁷⁷ Available at: <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp55206/olaudah-equiano-gustavus-vassa?search=sas&sText=Equiano>.

⁷⁸ This was one of the pictures included in the gallery’s exhibition ‘Portraits People and Abolition: A journey through the National Portrait Gallery’s Collection’ written by cultural geographer Carolin Bressey, in 2007 to mark the 200th anniversary of the official ending of British involvement in the slave trade. See http://www.itzcaribbean.com/national_portrait_gallery.php.

creation, after which Eve is shown to fall for the devil's temptation and is consequently banished with Adam for eating the apple. God's discontent with humanity leads to him ordering Noah to build his ark, this is followed by Moses leading his people to the promised land and the play finishes with Abraham nearly sacrificing his son. As such it is clear how the play which was aimed at 6-to-11-year-olds relates to Religious Education and is funded in relation to the anniversary of the King James Bible. This makes the play especially relevant to the discussion of national identity within theatre for the young, as the staging relates to Britain being principally a Christian nation.

Indeed, the importance of Christianity in the construction of English and British national identities is essential. During its very early history, Alfred the Great (848-99) as the first great ruler of 'England' used the Venerable Bede's work *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (written in AD 731) and its concept of "a single English people" to create "a cultural self-image for the English, placing Christian values at its centre, as the basis for its future survival" (Jones, 2003: 4). Also during the early days of Britain as an union of England, Scotland and Wales, Christianity was used to affirm the new Britain as unity which God, as they were encouraged to believe, perceived as special and "watched over them with a particular concern" as they "had a mission, a distinctive purpose" (Colley, 2005: 20). Indeed, this special purpose and mission is also recognisable in the colonial motivations which ultimately positioned the Christian Britain as superior to any nationality, 'race', culture, religion and ethnicity they encountered and thus legitimated the domination, oppression and conversion of the inferior 'other'. This perceived religious superiority might have left a negative legacy in contemporary society, which is, due to this colonial past, religiously diverse but also has a very high number of people who

describe themselves as of no religion.⁷⁹ However, ‘Britishness’ and Christianity are still promoted as intrinsically connected. As the Department for Education reminds schools why collective worship is so important:

The Department for Education states that all maintained schools in England must provide a daily act of collective worship which must reflect the traditions of this country, which it says are, in the main, broadly Christian. (*BBC News*, 2011)

Indeed in a recent speech at the Vatican, Conservative member Baroness Warsi argued that Europe in general needs to strengthen the Christian roots of its culture and civilisation and fight “intolerant secularism” (Kington, the Guardian, February 2012).⁸⁰ In her argument, only when people realise “that the Other does not jeopardise who you are can you truly accept and not merely tolerate the presence of difference” (Ibid).⁸¹ Although it could be considered as rather contradictory that tolerance comes through affirming that Britain is fundamentally a ‘Christian’ culture, the speech does capture the political Conservative agenda in which Christian values are an important issue.⁸²

However *The Mysteries* cannot be read as simply reaffirming the national identity as Christian. Jantinder Verma, the writer and director of this play, is as

⁷⁹ Although Tom Geoghegan correctly point out in his article ‘Census: How religious is the UK?’ it is difficult to obtain an accurate figure on how religious people in Britain are as in the official census people might acknowledge that they are Christian even though they do not attend church or even believe in God (*BBC News*, 2011). Therefore the British Social Attitudes survey is preferred, where findings in 2011 suggested that currently 51% of those questioned describe themselves as non-religious as opposed to 43% who describe themselves as Christian (Ibid).

⁸⁰ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/feb/14/warsi-reception-vatican-speech-faith>.

⁸¹ This is wholly contradictory to current religious education in Britain where inter-faith knowledge plays an important role. As Chris Wright writes in his educational guide *What Difference Does Religion Make*: “In learning about other religions you will also have the chance to think about your own life. So you will not only learn about the religions you study; you will also learn from the religions.” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002: 2)

⁸² For example, David Cameron’s speech in Oxford in relation to the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible in which he argued that the UK is a Christian country (December 2011). Although Cameron stressed that there are multiple faiths in Britain and that it is not wrong to not be Christian or not be religious at all, nevertheless, he stated: “what I am saying is that the Bible has helped to give Britain a set of values and morals which make Britain what it is today” (Ibid).

discussed in the second chapter of this thesis the founder and artistic director of Tara Arts Theatre, a creative company and theatre venue which was the “first Asian-led theatre company to be formed in the UK” (Tara Arts Website).⁸³ Established after the racist murder of Gurdip Singh Chaggar, a 17-year-old Sikh boy, in 1976, the company’s aims are not only to represent the Asian community in theatrical arts but also to produce “global theatre for local audiences” (Ibid). Much of the work currently staged by Tara Arts can be described as cross-cultural, intercultural and international and the company specialises in staging “vibrant adaptations of European and Asian classics and new work” and bringing “the great stories of the world to children in junior schools” (Ibid).⁸⁴ Indeed, *The Mysteries* also embodies these intended connections between global theatre and the local environment by staging the stories from the King James Bible not just in a Western theatrical style but instead drawing from other performative techniques and cultural references. The play was advertised in the Tara Arts brochure as follows:

This tour uniquely marries Tara Arts' renowned Asian theatre-making sensibility creating the tantalising prospect of experiencing the Old Testament stories through Eastern eyes.... Combining story-telling with dance and evocative props, *The Mysteries* will draw connections with other faith texts

⁸³ For more discussion of Tara Art’s work see Jantinder Verma’s articles ‘Impact of Cultural Diversity on the Arts in the UK’ (2001) Available at: http://tara-arts.net/#/archive/articles_archive/the_impact_of_cultural_diversity_on_the_arts_in_the_uk; ‘Art and Cultural Diversity’ (2003) Available at: http://tara-arts.net/#/archive/articles_archive/arts_and_cultural_diversity; ‘Asian Theatre in Britain’ (2004) Available at: http://tara-arts.net/#/archive/articles_archive/asian_theatre_in_britain; ‘The Challenge of Bilingual’ Available at: http://tara-arts.net/#/archive/articles_archive/the_challenge_of_bilingual; ‘Towards Cultural Literacy’ (2007) Available at: http://tara-arts.net/#/archive/articles_archive/towards_cultural_literacy.

⁸⁴ Steve Barfield illustrates in his chapter on Tara Arts’ work, “‘Jewelinthecrown.co.uk’: Orientalism’s Strange Persistence in British South Asian Writing’ that one of the strategies the company employs is “resetting western texts in Indian settings” thus evoking Said’s framework of Orientalism but using constructs such as colonial inferiority from a South Asian perspective as a “type of multicultural truth that can move outwards to change and hybridize society as a whole” (2006: 117).

including the Quran, Torah and The Mahabharata; with the aim of reflecting modern diversity through one of the founding texts of the country. (Ibid)

This makes *The Mysteries* very interesting in terms of the discussion within this thesis. Although many plays have been discussed in which stories and cultural references have been presented in a hybrid mix of performative elements, none of these have been so directly related to religion as in *The Mysteries*. However, as discussed in the historical chapter of this thesis, racist and ethnic tensions have shifted in the recent years towards culture and religion (Hingorani, 2010: 10), and engagement with religion within children's theatre can be contextualised as such. Far right groups such as the BNP and the EDL focus on the incompatibility of Muslim cultures and Islamic values with the national identities of the UK. Sughra Ahmed writes, however, that many young Muslims are confused about why their religious identity challenges their position as British nationals, when "their faith strongly encourages allegiance to the nation state, so they are governed by the law of the land and are answerable for their actions in the same way as their non-Muslim counterparts are" (2009: 49). As such it can be argued that religion is simply used by the 'white British' to marginalise and exclude 'threats' to perceived national identity. Nevertheless it is clear that "concerns about community integration have become more focussed on the issue of religion" (Hudson, 2008: 4).

The Mysteries can be read as a play which stages a nation's collective memory or, in other words, the hugely influential historical text which is the King James Bible, as a positive attempt to assert religious diversity as part of the current nation's identity. At the same time, it also reflects openness to racial diversity and equality in terms of gender through its casting. God is played by two female actresses and Eve, Moses and Abraham by black female actresses. However, it is possible that the non-

traditional casting is taken too far in the staging of a black female Lucifer, as this repositions the symbolic oppressed or 'other' in a role most definitely recognised by children as 'bad'. Another problem could be the recognition of the "connections with other faith texts including the Quran, Torah and The Mahabharata" which is promised in its brief (Tara Arts Website). It is perhaps difficult for the child, as the target audience,⁸⁵ to locate these connections within the performance without having a solid knowledge of these religions. The staging was minimal using the black box space of the Tara arts studio. The scenery featured only a ladder used as the throne of God and some traffic cones, the significance of which was never made clear. There was no music other than the singing by the eight actors (the play was intended for nine actors, however one performer was ill on the day) which was accompanied by a rhythmical beat created by either wooden sticks or by stamping their feet and clapping their hands. The costumes were simple, made out of cotton, and the trousers were loose fitting, wrapped around the legs. In addition, each actor had tied some material around their waist and around their heads. The colours of the costumes were bright orange and fluorescent yellow. God's throne was decorated with fluorescent orange cloth and God wore a bright yellow headpiece with little gemstones and a long veil at the front. This prop was important as when a different actress took on God's role this headpiece signified the transformation.

As such, the strong and bright colours could be seen to affirm both an 'Asian' dimension (in as much as these colours relate to typical 'Oriental' depictions) and, especially the florescent colours, a contemporary dimension. However, the play was devoid of obvious and familiar religious signs such as a Jewish skull cap, a prayer

⁸⁵ *The Mysteries* predominantly toured schools and had only two performances on one day for 'ticket buying audiences'. It was interesting that during one of these two performances the audience consisted of only 10 audience members, which included only one child, only one of whom was a child. This might suggest that the regular Tara audience was neither as interested in seeing a performance of the Bible nor felt encouraged to bring their children to see this performance.

shawl, a woman wearing a Muslim headscarf or even the Christian cross, or Hindu statues of gods such as Shiva. The textual connections between religions were not evident within the play text, and could only become clear if the audience members had a knowledge of the religious texts and could see where biblical stories overlap. Therefore the play relies strongly on the educational context in the form of an aftershow discussion, a workshop or teacher pack, to ensure that *all* audiences members can be included in this theatrical experience and that this play does more than simply stages the stories from the Christian Bible.

The Mysteries can be understood to challenge the government's attempt to assert Christianity as the nation's dominant religion because it tells the story through 'Eastern Eyes'. However, the company's *When The Lights Go Out*, a play about Divali, the Hindu festival of light, seems to assert the UK's religious diversity with more ease. Here two girls, Sally and Samina, take on all the roles within the play and tell the legend of Sita and Rama, using masks, paintings with Hindu depictions and Indian costumes. This example of placing the contemporary experience of the child at the heart of the story through the narration of an external character was discussed in relation to Welsh practitioner Jeremy Turner in avoiding the perpetuation of "sentimental cultural stereotypes" (2005: 34). A similar approach could have possibly been used in the telling of the Bible stories by perhaps framing the stories in a contemporary context and making the religious connections more evident for the young audience through external narration. It does however also raise the question of whether two girls such as Sally and Samina in *When The Lights Went Out* could tell stories from both (or multiple) religions in one single performance. In other words, would it be possible to create not an intercultural dialogue, but an inter-religious dialogue in a performance for the child? Or is there ultimately a resistance to fully

engage with religious/cultural difference, to really mix the religious texts, symbols and practices and to create a performance that can be recognised by all young audience members whatever religious, cultural and ethnical background? Moreover, is using religious text in theatre to assert cultural diversity always problematic, as Muslims, the second largest faith group in the UK and the group that currently faces most pressure in society, resists any sort of depiction of God or the prophets,⁸⁶ and thus this particular audience will always be to some extent excluded?

Additionally, the lack of interest in attending church in contemporary society raises the question of whether religion is still at the heart of Britain's national identity. As illustrated by Baroness Warsi, secularism is often considered as aggressive, as destructive to communal cohesion and as eroding society's ability to distinguish right from wrong, hence the government's attempts to (re-) establish Christian values. Although *The Mysteries* and *When The Lights Go Out* challenge the notion Christianity as Britain's dominant religion by illustrating the interfaith connections, these plays would still to some extent please the government as they still promote faith and religious awareness in general. The NT's production of *Nation* does exactly the opposite and can be understood as promoting secularism. Mau and Daphne's nation can be understood to 'mature' by the rejection of religious 'superstitions'. By finding the maps and a piece of glass in the cave, scientific discoveries and knowledge are placed at the heart of the nation, as its foundation and as part of its heritage. *Nation* suggests that harmony within the society can be maintained without religious values. Perhaps this rejection of the importance of religion and the construction of nationality is much more effective in terms of allowing minority

⁸⁶ It should be noted that not all Islamic art avoids the human form or imagery and there is a variation within the Muslim world-wide population in terms of the depictions that are possible. See for example Oliver Leaman in his publication: *Islamic Aesthetics: An introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004). However the widely reported Danish Cartoons Controversy in 2005/6 illustrates that any imagery directly relating to religious texts is not appreciated.

identities to occupy a place in Britain's society and as such contradict attempts by the BNP and EDL to position Islam as a threat to the Christian foundations of Britain. Or perhaps the absence of religion in cultural expressions created for the child is a safer option. Indeed, religious theatre for the child and the need, as well as the possibilities, of representing (national) identities is certainly a 'new' area which needs further exploration.

Stuart Hall argues that the nation is an "ongoing project under constant revision" (Hall quoted in Holdsworth, 2010: 24), and this chapter has explored how in the UK cultural identities are negotiated and presented on stage in performances for the child in order to represent and reflect a changing society. One of the aims was to understand how theatre for the child could challenge the constructions of national identities as homogeneous and instead could reflect the way in which the experience of living in the UK involves a meeting of identities and hybrid cultures. This representation of diversity is important because children do not create their own theatre and often they do not choose which performance to attend; as such their theatre does not automatically reflect the hybridity theatre for adults embodies. Although children's theatre in the UK has a tradition of creating work which reflects multicultural society and addresses racism, especially due to the socially conscious work of the TiE movement, in the current political climate and in light of some critical theories such work is under increasing pressure. On the one hand, cultural representations are scrutinised in relation to Said's framework of Orientalism as stereotypical or superficial representations of diversity and there are concerns that staging difference might alienate audiences or increase division in schools and classrooms. On the other hand, the more recent multicultural backlash has put

pressure on activities that celebrate cultural diversity as these are seen to nurture division and challenge community cohesion. The National Curriculum and subjects such as history, citizenship and religious education subtly proposes 'Britishness' as an inclusive but ultimately hierarchical cultural identity.

Because theatre companies depend on education for financial sustainability and need to enable all children to have access to theatrical performances, caution is needed in relation to these notions of 'Britishness' and the exclusion of those identities that are seen to challenge national constructions. The plays discussed in this chapter can challenge homogeneous cultural representations; however, they also illustrate that engaging with national identities is highly complex. The first play, *My Name is Savitri*, focuses on the difficulties of dealing with a different cultural heritage and coming to terms with your individual identity. Savitri is bullied because of her difference but ultimately she learns to embrace her dual heritage and establish a hybrid identity. The play as such reflects on the experience of many children that lead hybrid or bicultural lives; children who in turn challenge Britain as an homogeneous society and interpenetrate the local with the global. The problem is that the TiE format has been criticised for its didacticism and low production values; as such artistic productions are preferred over those with educational values, making it more difficult for such companies to attract funding in comparison to more popular drama initiatives. However, the engagement with the issue of racism works well because the children are encouraged to look at the issues from both perspectives and the themes of the play are enforced through the workshop, allowing a level of control over the child's individual interpretation.

By discussing the work of the National Theatre it was noted that although performances created for children (and adults) did often incorporate 'colour blind' or

multicultural casting strategies, productions do not often feature intercultural practices. The exception was the play *Nation* that successfully illustrates how a nation or a national identity is constructed by its people (rather than being a natural construct), and how different people can learn to live together and establish a unity that incorporates their cultural differences. However the play features Polynesian culture, a culture which does not have a high presence in the UK. Subsequently the intercultural exchange was hindered by the absence of people with a Polynesian background, and this culture was approached as an exotic setting rather than via an equal and meaningful exchange. The third play, *The Voyage* was completely different, as it focused on a Welsh national identity, thus an identity that could be considered as suppressed in the wider context of the UK. The play affirmed this identity by a focus on the ‘shared suffering’ through the story of siblings who endure hardship at the hands of the English colonisers and eventually emigrate to America. However, by focusing on the ‘shared suffering’ in the past, asserting this as the true cultural heritage of Wales, it might exclude other cultural minorities that live in contemporary Wales.

Ghosts in the Gallery had a similar problem in asserting ‘Britishness’ by an exploration of the past. Although the play had arguably intended to project a positive message of how everyone can be British despite skin colour, this message became problematic because the recurrent dialogue, in which the historical characters in the National Portrait Gallery cannot understand how B can be British if she is black, suggested that the British past and thus the national heritage is ultimately white. Because B had to be presented and positioned as British character, ‘the same as everyone else’, in order for the audience to identify with her, she could not be presented as having a different cultural background or different cultural identity from

what is considered the ‘norm.’ Therefore, the play excluded B from an ultimately ‘white’ cultural British heritage at the same time as denying her the cultural identity that could be associated with her skin colour or related to immigration of her parents or other generations.

The last play *The Mysteries* is arguably more successful in challenging the homogeneous construction by retelling the stories from the King James Bible through ‘eastern’ eyes. By illustrating the connections between faiths and contributing to the child’s interfaith education, the play indirectly challenged Christianity as the dominant, superior British religion, something which is particularly relevant in relation to the current political agenda of the Conservative government as it seeks community cohesion via shared Christian values. Meanwhile, nationalist groups such as the BNP and the EDL focus on Islamic culture as the ultimate challenge to British society. Although the company has been very careful to avoid the stereotypical depictions, the performance raises further questions into how much a theatre production can become ‘inter-religious’ and include the Muslim faith which carries prohibitions against depiction.

Therefore this chapter can be concluded with the observation that contemporary children’s theatre does attempt to reflect on the diverse society in which the child lives and represents those British children who experience cultural hybridity on a day-to-day basis. However, the representation of cultural diversity deserves more attention and more care to ensure that the cultural activities we offer children are “excellent” through their relevance, and as Brian McMaster puts it, “nothing can be excellent without reflecting the society which produces and experiences it” (2008: 11). To return to this chapter’s discussion of identity and children’s theatre, it was asserted that although children do not always interpret the

themes of a play correctly or identify with the (right) characters on stage, they do interpret what they see on stage on a personal level and internalise their theatrical experience. As such theatre practitioners have a responsibility to ensure that theatre for the child is an inclusive experience and reflects the cultural diversity of society. Although staging cultural difference needs to be approached with much care, it should not be avoided, as difference and sameness are not only essential to the construction of personal identities, but it is also essential to recognise that differences and sameness are in constant negation in the formation of national identities. As such national cultures do not necessarily need to exclude those that challenge the nation as a homogeneous constructs, differences, hybridity and diversity construct the nation and instead the elastic borders can stretch to “incorporate new social movements, new ethnicities, political changes and the emergence of cultures of hybridity that enrich and irreversibly alter ‘indigenous’ national cultures” (Holdsworth, 2010: 25-26).

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This conclusion will provide a final overview of the main arguments and important issues raised in the previous chapters. It will also use a play titled *Cosmos* (2009) -- which was created by Dragon Breath theatre in a collaborative process¹ -- to reiterate the importance of the practice of interculturalism in theatre for the child and to illustrate what potential this form of performance can offer to young audiences. It will conclude by providing suggestions for continuing research in this important area. It will also reflect on how this research can be taken further and include the aspect of audience reception to explore how theatre for the child can continue to reflect and represent the diversity of the audience and provide cultural activities that engage with the hybridity of the culture children produce and experience on a day-to-day level.

Indeed, this is the main assertion of this thesis: due to immigration (past and present) and connective processes of globalisation, the lives of children in the UK in terms of the ethnic and cultural make-up of society are becoming increasingly diverse (Madge, 2001: 20-24). As this thesis has established children's theatre as a dynamic theatrical communication set within a specific time and place as well as a wider social, political and economical context, the child's experience and the child's background require theatre practitioners to create work that represents this reality. The introduction illustrated that this diversity within society as represented by the young audience means that to a certain extent the theatrical dialogue with the child

¹ *Cosmos* was created by Dragon Breath theatre in association with curve Leicester; Theatre Design, Narrative and Interactive Arts at Nottingham Trent University's School of Arts and Design; and the Centre for Effective Learning in Science (CELS).

will always be intercultural. Indeed, as was illustrated in chapter one, the child's frame of reference established through their cultural background, personal experience, direct environment and previous experiences ensures that the child interprets what they see on stage on a highly individual and personal level. Theatre is not just restricted to what is presented on stage (or in other words the play text), but it is also the active engagement and interpretation of the play text and the construction of meaning on an individual level that constructs the theatrical experience in its entirety (see Bennett, 1990). As such, theatre in the UK is always an intercultural dialogue between the cultural expression as presented to the child within the performance and the cultural framework through which the child engages with this cultural expression. Chapter one explains that this is the reason that this thesis has shown a preference for interculturalism as a term as well as a practice because it asserts this dynamic interaction. In relation to the literature on this subject, it also embodies an interesting field of struggle and contestation which needs careful analysis and detailed exploration in terms of how performances can avoid cultural appropriation, exploitation, essentialism and other elements which make the cultural exchange problematic. As was illustrated by looking at plays representative of the other practices found in the current practice of children's theatre, those that can be described as multicultural or international will be to a certain extent intercultural as the boundaries between cultures as well as the boundaries between the performers and the child audiences are porous and allow interaction rather than the cultural separation these practices propose.

The second chapter of this thesis provided an historical overview of children's theatre and illustrated how the practices described above developed in relation to the diversification of society, predominantly due to post war immigration. Indeed, the

social, political and ideological theatre of the Theatre in Education movement, which aimed to create performances and programmes which empowered young people and motivated them for social change, could not ignore the changes in society, the racial tensions that divided the population and the institutionalised racism that children would encounter. Chapter two also argues that this incorporation of the diversity of society can be understood as an integral part of the movement of children's theatre in general. Indeed, it is illustrated how children's theatre as a dynamic dialogue needed to continuously adapt and re-construct its motivations, aims and theatrical expressions to meet the demands of the economic, social and political climate (constituting the context of this dialogue). By focussing on the Punch and Judy puppetry show it was illustrated that 'seeking' the child audience was a necessity for the Punch showman who was losing adult audiences because the Victorian construction of childhood did not just influence what was considered suitable for the child but it also redefined what was suitable for the middle-class adult. Thus a general shift away from frivolous entertainment as found in music halls, the pantomime, fairy plays and other unrealistic forms such as puppetry was replaced by 'serious' and realistic drama created specifically for the sophisticated adult. Many of the aforementioned entertainment forms became (partly) redesigned as only suitable for the child (or the lower classes), however this involved certain adaptations which made the material more suitable for the middle-class 'innocent' child, or more suitable in the eyes of the middle-class parents who had the financial means to take their children to the theatre (mainly for Christmas). Therefore, this thesis understands plays including *Peter Pan* (1904), *Alice in Wonderland* (1886), *Bluebell in Fairyland* (1901), its sequel *The Cherry Girl* (1903), and *Toad of Toad Hall* (1929 and 1930) to have come into

existence in relation to financial circumstances and the construction of childhood which in turn shaped the theatrical dialogue between adult and child.

The commercial theatre for the child that is financially sustainable by attracting ticket paying parents predominantly during the Christmas season has not changed significantly since the production of *Peter Pan*. However, more recently television and the popularity of merchandise associated with children's literature or popular movies have attracted more parents to familiar and safe theatrical adaptations where they have more guarantee that their children's will enjoy the theatre trip. However, this commercial theatre is only a small part of the theatrical work in the UK created for children. Due to the legacy of the TiE movement, which aimed at offering all children theatrical experiences and not just those with middle-class parents, much work created is not for profit, receives secondary funding from organisations such as the Arts Council, and aims to attract the interest of schools by relating to the National Curriculum or other educational objectives. Importantly, this also means that instead of theatre that aims to provide the child with artistic or creative experiences, children's theatre cannot escape either the educational realm or the agendas and targets of the funding organisations such as the Art's Council as well as the government. Considering that theatre cannot escape the social and political environment it means that the development of a 'multicultural backlash' and the increasing criticism of political correctness might also endanger the field. As illustrated, it does seem that the protection of traditional values and stories in light of 'political correctness' can be found within the realm of children's entertainment, but so can the sceptical view that cultures or people from specific ethnic backgrounds are solely incorporated to appeal to funding. An important issue is that the collective

devising process was employed by TiE to ensure that cultural diversity was integral to the creative process and was not just something imposed for additional value.

These problems of representing and engaging with the child's diverse society are also recognisable in chapter three, where Edward W. Said's framework of Orientalism, which implies that the West cannot avoid the cultural appropriation and capitalistic exploitation of the (oriental) other (Said, 1978) was used. Indeed, this chapter illustrated that many critics of intercultural productions (especially Rustom Bharucha, 1993; 1997) use Said's framework to illustrate that these Western performances use the processes of globalisation to commercialise the East (or the Orient) and therefore traditional 'local' cultures are oppressed and standardised by a dominant and singular global culture (Lechner and Boli 2005: 140). The chapter recognised both the danger of intercultural productions that aim to maximise profit by using the exotic appeal of other cultures and also the use of perceived 'authentic' or 'primitive' and traditional values which the Western practitioner can use to counter the effects economic globalisation has had on their 'own' culture. Nevertheless it also illustrated where the problematic space of the intercultural performance can offer the opportunity to represent the cultural diversity and also the cultural collisions that are experienced by children on a daily basis. Very important was the description of this intercultural space by Ric Knowles, who has argued that intercultural performances can function as "sites of negotiation" that evoke "the possibility of interaction across a multiplicity of cultural positionings, avoiding binary codings" (2010: 4). By using Roland Robertson's notion of 'glocalisation' in which the two scales of the local and global are in continuous interplay (2007: 546-547), the chapter demonstrated that the child's theatrical experience can be both local and global at the same time. This is not just because the child will relate to what is presented on stage on a local level, but

because the local level is also interpenetrated by the global. The production of *Once Upon a Tiger* (2010) illustrated how children's theatre can incorporate this interaction between the local and the global within its creative processes. This performance also highlighted how small-scale performances (which are the most common in children's theatre) can ensure that the theatrical exchange is a dynamic dialogue and in fact can offer alternatives to those that are perceived as global cultures that appear standardised. Moreover, using Japanese culture as a case study it was argued that the intercultural production can also stage a dialogue between traditional and contemporary modes of representation. Japan was exemplary of the cultural hybridity that can be recognised in most 'Western' nations, despite the desire of these nations to narrate and represent their communal/shared identity as homogeneous, authentic and unique.

The issue of representing the nation as homogeneous was continued in chapter four where it was considered how children's theatre stages and re-stages cultural identities and how these can affirm Britain as a hybrid, heterogeneous and inclusive national identity. In contrast to adult theatre, it was noted that because children do not have the opportunity of staging and performing their identities or have the freedom and the capability to choose and attend theatre that relates to their perceived sense of identity, the adult practitioner has the responsibility to create theatre that reflects the hybrid culture children experience and produce. Agreeing with cultural critics such as Homi Bhabha (1990; 1994), Stuart Hall (1996) and Jan Pieterse Nederveen (2001; 2004), this chapter showed the possibilities and restriction in the way theatre can include the minority identities of children who occupy inside/outside positions within society or lead bicultural lives. This thesis in general, but chapter four in particular, illustrates the problems and avoidance of cultural difference within theatrical

performances. These performances staging cultural difference can be considered as resorting to essentialism or stereotypes, as excluding characters on stage or audience members by illustrating their cultural difference and by highlighting issues of racism and discrimination plays might be considered divisive within a school context. However, also due to recent criticism of multicultural society, the celebration of cultural diversity is perceived as detrimental to societal cohesion and responsible for the loss of the authentic traditional culture and values of Britain.

Despite, or more accurately, because of these problems and tensions the engagement with cultural diversity as part of a theatrical dialogue is essential. The negotiation of difference, the encounters of others and the explorations of cultural tensions are essential to the individual experience even when it concerns children younger than the age of 13. Current audience research by Matthew Reason (2007; 2010), Jeanne Klein (1994) and Roger Deldime and Jeanne Pigeon (2000) illustrates that children do not always respond to theatre in the desired or correct manner. The level on which children identify with characters on stage, recognise and apply the play's messages and themes to their social environment and have access to contextual background knowledge are uncertain factors on which, in contrast, practitioners working within the field of adult theatre often rely. In fact, it is very important that children are recognised as being as diverse in their interpretations and understanding of the world as they are in their cultural backgrounds. This also challenges the assumption that the manner and the extent to which the child will engage and interact with a play is simply down to the age categories recognised in the development of the child. On the contrary, it is not just age, but the social, economical, cultural background as well as the previous interactions, experience and the gender of the child that makes the complex theatrical dialogue impossible to fully control.

Luckily the majority of children's theatre is not about controlling the child's interaction or ensuring the child has understood the message of the play. As is illustrated throughout this thesis with examples from contemporary practice, children's theatre is most often a genuine attempt to offer the child an artistic experience that is a meaningful engagement with the world in which they live. This thesis has argued that respecting and recognising the hybrid cultures children experience and produce, and incorporating this as a part of the intercultural dialogue between the child as part of the audience and the adult practitioner, is essential. This chapter will provide one final example of how children's theatre can provide the child with an intercultural experience which respects their individual participation and recognises the diversity that is represented by the child audience.

Cosmos

Cosmos by Dragon Breath Theatre Company (in association with curve Leicester; Nottingham Trent University; and the CELS) is an example of a performance that is able to represent society's cultural diversity by responding to and including the hybrid identities of its young audience. As the title suggests, the performance focuses on the cosmos and introduces the very young audience between 4 and 7 years olds to concepts of science. Therefore, similarly to the many other performances discussed in this thesis, *Cosmos* has indeed an educational motive and can be seen to relate to the National Curriculum, which might be problematic as discussed in chapter four. However, the performance challenges the attempt to use educational material to construct cultural identities that align with singular homogeneous notions of national identity as can be recognised in the desires of the government (Donald and Rattansi

1995: 4-5; Ross, 2000: 150). On the contrary, the performance demonstrates how to teach an abstract subject such as science while respecting the cultural diversity as found within the classroom.



Illustration 5.18 - *Cosmos*. The story's narrator Stargazer, performed by David Stickman Higgins, includes the audience in the performance by encouraging them to listen to stories.
(Photo: Dragon Breath Theatre)

The story follows a little girl travelling through the universe to find her disappeared 'story star', as without this star she can no longer tell her father any stories. On her journey the girl meets all the planets of the solar system. These are each performed using intercultural performance styles drawn from both 'Eastern' and 'Western' performance traditions,² such as classical ballet, contemporary dance, Konnokal (a form of vocal percussion, as will be explained in more detail), multimedia, puppetry and a Balinese Gamelan ensemble, making the production not only high in aesthetic value but also encouraging the culturally inclusive approach for which thesis argues. Moreover, by basing this intercultural approach on the diverse audience found in the UK, placing these children central in the play's creative

² As explained in chapter four, recognising performance traditions as clearly belonging to the East and to the West is hugely problematic in contemporary context as due to a movement of people and cultures, these traditions have become inherently 'mixed'.

processes and giving them an active participatory role within the performance itself, the play engages the audience on both local and global scales simultaneously. Indeed, chapter three discussed the importance of acknowledging the interaction between these scales, termed ‘glocalisation’ by Roberson, in terms of contradicting the homogeneous processes associated with global exchanges; but beyond this, it even introduces the wider universe within this dynamic interaction.

Because Dragon Breath Theatre and the Nottingham Trent University have created a ‘Research DVD’, the full process of creating *Cosmos* and some of the audience feedback can be considered within this discussion. The DVD shows that the production has had a wide educational impact: Firstly a group of 40 BA undergraduate students reading Theatre Design were involved in creating the production (Theatre Programme). Working alongside 25 professionals, the project offered a ‘intellectual and kinaesthetic’ learning experience for the students who were shown in the DVD working on the costumes, stage design, and on the puppetry and assisting the audience during the performance, as such being able to experience the ‘success’ and audience reception first hand. This way of creating children’s theatre within the context of a university course and allowing students to have an active role in the creative process is especially popular in America, where much theatrical work for children is constructed in this manner. The benefits of this process are evident; funding, which as explained in this thesis is an essential issue in children’s theatre, can be available through the use of teaching budgets. The students are not often paid additional wages to construct, rehearse and perform the production. And it is not just that the students learn from their participation; they might be inspired to continue to work in the area of children’s theatre rather than in mainstream theatre, which is most often more financially and critically rewarded.

Considering this process in action in the States, there are clearly some drawbacks. To put it simply and rather bluntly, the quality of the performance can be compromised by the inexperience of the students and by the fact that this is not the vision of one artist, which can be recognised in the criticism the TiE movement received in relying on collective devising processes as discussed in chapter two. Roxanne Schroeder-Arce and Chris McCoy also points out in a paper titled ‘The Chicken or the Egg: Latino/as in Theatre for Young Audiences, a Cyclical Challenge in Higher Education in the USA’ presented during the ITYARN conference in Malmö 2011, that in terms of demographics the predominantly ‘white’ (affluent) student population is at odds with the intended target young audiences, which are often from deprived areas and are often predominantly Hispanic. This means that when practitioners want to make theatre that recognises and engages with the cultural identity of the young audience members, something which this thesis encourages, it is problematic. The cultural knowledge and involvement is external, ultimately consisting of selecting and representing the cultural ‘other’ and therefore relating to the process of cultural appropriation as described in Said’s framework of Orientalism which has been described in chapter three. Here, it was also argued that Said’s framework needs to be re-evaluated in the context of contemporary children’s theatre, and not just because the need to represent the contemporary experience of the child is essential. This contemporary experience challenges the opposition between East and West as absolute binary oppositions as within many Western societies, such as America and the UK, cultural influences from all over the world are found through present and past immigration. Moreover, global interconnectedness ensures that cultures with their origins and roots throughout the world are in dynamic interaction and disrupt any clear geopolitical boundaries.

Nevertheless, Said's framework demands a careful consideration of cultural engagement. For example, an American student present during the aforementioned ITYARN conference in 2011 discussed the dilemma of 'having' to develop a performance with an Indian theme to be performed for children when none of the students had an Indian background or any knowledge of this culture. In this instance it seems that it was not the quality and integrity of the performance, but the educational value for the students that took precedence. *Cosmos*, however, seems to provide a model that safeguards the artistic quality and integrity of the cultural exchange when a performance for the child is constructed by university students. Although the DVD suggested that most of the students did not seem to represent the cultural diversity which was present in the performance, by involving 23 additional practitioners, it was possible to make sure that the cultural exchange was led by professionals with the relevant cultural knowledge and cultural background. This can be recognised in the practice of some of the TiE companies such as Theatre Centre and Belgrade TiE, who wanted to ensure that the representation of cultural diversity came 'internally' from the collective devising process, as discussed in chapter two.

However, *Cosmos* also ensured that the cultural engagement came from a second 'internal' process, namely by involving children in the creative process that represent the audiences for whom the show is ultimately to be performed. Indeed, the DVD shows that many of the ideas within the performance were developed and 'tested' in workshops with children. Children are shown to roll over silver coloured material, share stories with plastic cups hanging from the ceiling, dance with round paper lamps and lie in their classroom on their backs to gaze up at star projections. Therefore the participating children were not only introduced to scientific concepts (a teacher in the DVD gives the example of discussing and learning about comets) while

engaged in structured ‘play’; these participating children also informed the play and provided the basis for the intercultural dialogue. Indeed, the cultural diversity of the group of participating children has a presence in the performance through various elements. For example during the workshop the practitioners noticed that some of the children used the ‘Hindu’ names of the planets (*Exploring Cosmos*, DVD). In response to this interaction they decided to incorporate Konnakal, a form of vocal percussion consisting of spoken syllables placed together in complex rhythmical patterns that has its origins in Southern India and was developed in relation to drumming and the dance form of Bharatanatyam (Shambu, Programme).³ Konnakal is used throughout the play by various characters. For example, at the end of the play the girl (played by a white actress) uses it to tell her father (played by an actor of Indian origin) the story of her journey. As is explained in the DVD, during this moment the language is stripped down and the girl re-tells the story using Konnakal, dance movements and gestures, and as such the audience is given space to remember and reflect on the whole journey.

Other intercultural references are found within the dance which is a medium used throughout the play. The dance is both contemporary and classical and has Indian references (recognisable are also movements and costumes that relate to Sufi whirling or spinning which is a form of active meditation, although this is not mentioned in the programme or DVD), and is used as ‘two languages drawn together’ (*Exploring Cosmos*, DVD). The various planets, which are introduced to the children, have ‘multicultural references’ and are presented according to their scientific qualities. As such Mars is angry and loud, and Venus represents her inhospitality by

³ For more information on Konnakal or Konnakol as a form of vocal percussion, see ‘Konnakol-The Art of South Indian Vocal Percussion’ (September 2011) Available at: <http://www.konnakol.org/>; as well as ‘Sri T.H. Subash Chandran: The Art Ghatam and Konnakol,’ Available at: <http://www.omradio.com/artghatamkonnakol.php>.

being a ‘diva’ choosing who to interact with and who to reject. Also the music using “a Balinese Gamelan ensemble” balances this cultural reference with an interpretation of science, using sounds to create “the rhythmical patterns of atoms and quarks” (Vear, Programme).⁴ Moreover the creative and performing cast represents cultural diversity to a certain level. For example, the narrator of the story, the actor David Stickman Higgins who performs the character Stargazer, is of ‘dual heritage’ and has produced and delivered a wide range of projects that “connect cultures and communities” (*Cosmos*: Programme).



Illustration 5.19 - *Cosmos*. This image shows the production’s use of classical dance which is performed alongside dance with Indian influences. (Photo: Dragon Breath Theatre)

However, the play does not solely engage with the universe or with the cultures of the world with its intercultural performance elements. Within the play there is also a personal story, of a young girl who leaves her father and her home to find her story star. Indeed, on this level I would like to argue that the play engages

⁴ As explained on the ‘Balinese Gamelan’ website, this ensemble has a wide ranging set of instruments: “Instrumentation takes many forms, from heavy bronze or playful bamboo, to iron slabs and tinkling cymbals. Melodic instruments include bar percussion, rows of small gongs, and flutes. Larger gongs and bar instruments outline the melodic structure.” (Available from: <http://balibeyond.com/gamelanbalidoc.html>). Using the Balinese Gamelan essemble in schools is relatively popular as is described by Robert Kwami in 'Non-Western Musics in Education: Problems and Possibilities' *British Journal of Music Education*, Vol. 15, Issue 2 (1998) pp 161-170.

with the child's identity, as has been discussed in chapter four of this thesis, involving the issues of belonging, independence and family. Nettie Scriven and Peter Rumney, the Artistic Directors of Dragon Breath Theatre, explain that children use stories to interpret the world around them and their place in it and as such they wanted to use both scientific 'facts' and cultural 'fictions' and 'myths' to engage children with the universe. As they write:

the story which drives this participatory performance is also rooted in archetypal rites of passage -- where young children must leave the parental embrace for school, or the Nursery... they discover that there are other 'centres of gravity' in their 'universe' than themselves, and that there is a 'constellation of other children' out there in the big world. (*Cosmos: Programme*)

An example of this negotiation of identity is found in the performance when the children are invited to play with sand and are encouraged to think about what it feels like to be "a tiny grain of sand in the universe" (Ibid). Whether the play achieves such a 'grand' goal of making all the children in the audience see themselves as a small part within the wider world is questionable, especially at such a young age. The DVD shows two girls who mention that their favourite thing was "playing with the balls", illustrating that some of the audience engages with the play on a much more basic level. Nevertheless, this is arguably where the play excels. Even if children cannot fully comprehend the wider meaning of the play, there is still plenty of opportunity to engage with and 'own' the experience through the active participation. The child can play with the balls, slide down a long slide, be picked up and spun round by one of the performers, and they are invited to tell their stories at the end of the play in a workshop which directly follows the production. As is explained on the DVD, the

show does not stop to allow moments of participation. Instead, the children interact as part of the story and therefore the child's experience and interaction with the play (text), which in turn relates to a whole range of additional elements such as the child's previous theatrical experiences, cultural background, the social and economic position of their families and direct local environment as part of the frame of reference, also become a part of the performance. Indeed, this relates to one of the central arguments of this thesis: the child is an active spectator and therefore has a place within the intercultural dialogue that is initiated by the performance on stage. Although the child as the audience is always present in the theatrical dialogue, by placing the child central in their theatrical experience, through involving the child in the creative process as in *Once Upon A Tiger* (chapter 3), through reducing the space between the audience and performers as in *Upstairs in the Sky* (chapter 2) and even through encouraging the interaction of the child (both physically and vocally) as an integral part of the performance as in *Cosmos*, furthers disrupts the boundaries between the audience and the performance and offers the child more opportunities to establish 'ownership' over the theatrical experience.

Moreover, this central position of the child within the play also reflects the disruptions of the boundaries between cultures, making sure that the play is inherently diverse and inclusive of the society as found in the UK. It is diverse in terms of the child's experience. Instead of merely observing the play from their seats in the auditorium, the children have been part of the play in its construction during the creative process and presentation. Not only does this make each performance unique, because the children have engaged in different activities during the performance, they each have a unique theatrical experience.



Illustration 5.20 - *Cosmos*. The interdisciplinary performance also used puppetry to tell the story of a girl trying to find her 'story star' in the universe (Photo: Dragon Breath Theatre)

Further Development of Research

It could be argued that the performance of *Cosmos* needs to rely on these participatory elements because the young audience members are only between 5 and 7 years old. Performances for audiences of this age category are generally more participatory because it is believed that the ability to solely engage with the play on an intellectual level, recognising and abstracting the main themes and issues raised to apply this to their own lives and wider society, is not developed enough. However, the discussion in this fourth chapter illustrated that theatre for audiences between the ages of 7 and 13 has difficulties representing the cultural hybridity as, for example, found in Britain. As such this thesis will end by suggesting that finding methods to explore how the cultural diversity of society can also inform performances for this age group.

Indeed, as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, due to various restrictions and without the sufficient support of relevant institutions, it was not possible to execute the intended research into audience reception in relation to culture, identity, globalisation and nationalism. The hope is that this thesis has argued that such research is essential especially in a political climate and a social context in which the multicultural foundation of this society is questioned and there are

pressures on children to conform to singular notions of national identities. As discussed in chapter two, it appears that while the current society is culturally diverse and hybrid, perhaps more so than ever, representing this diversity within theatre has become more complex and more problematic. For example: critics of intercultural practices in the West such as Rustom Bharucha (1993) relate the theatrical representation of cultural diversity to Oriental practices of appropriation and exploitation. Critics of theatre that is influenced by globalisation such as Maurya Wickstrom (1999) and Dan Rebellato (2009) reduce the theatrical communication between global cultures to the processes of capitalism and consumerism. Moreover this thesis has explained the criticism of the attempts at multicultural or anti-racist education and how this criticism also problematises theatre that relates to these forms because performances can be seen as divisive in the classroom or offer children only a simplified celebration of cultural difference. Lastly, those that criticise the multicultural society and positive attitude towards cultural diversity per se, such as the right wing-groups such as the BNP and the EDL, and worryingly (although to a different extent and from a different angle) the Prime Minister David Cameron, add to the general negative perception of theatrical productions that relate to the diverse society. Indeed, with this immense pressure, it is remarkable that there are still practitioners working within children's theatre who are creating work that reflects cultural diversity.

To realise Brian McMaster's vision of excellent art that reflects the diversity of society, this thesis would suggest that children's theatre starts with this society and uses the diversity of this society as a basis from which theatrical work is created. Of course, the suggestion here is not that all children's theatre becomes drama or applied theatre, or in other words is performed as well as created by children. On the contrary,

although the theatrical dialogue between child and adult will always be to some extent problematic, the enjoyment, ‘benefits’ and even the ‘right’ to access professional theatre created especially for the child are beyond dispute. However, the division of power between adult and child within this dialogue can be readdressed by positioning the child as central within their theatrical experience in terms of motivation, subject matter, cultural representation, participation and the creative process. One of the most fundamental points is ensuring that the adult practitioner does not solely engage with the child as passive, in the sense that the adult practitioner projects what he/she believes is ‘of worth’ and understands the child as simply receiving and complying with these messages or notions of culture. This would risk reducing this theatrical dialogue to a monologue. Peter Wynne-Wilson illustrated in his production *Once Upon A Tiger* that the young audience can be encouraged to be an active participant by incorporating the child in the creative processes of the production. This method can certainly help the play to address issues that children find of importance, to incorporate their sense of humour (as in *Once Upon A Tiger*’s singing squirrel), and to provide cultural references that are significant within children’s lives.

As such *Once Upon A Tiger* offers a very interesting model that is not just helpful in enabling the child to have a stronger presence in the theatrical dialogue. Arguably it can inform future research and offer opportunities to understand the theatrical dialogue from the child’s perspective. As discussed in the introduction, in research with children it is important to avoid reducing the child to a mere research ‘object’. Similarly to the aforementioned problems in the theatrical dialogue, the problem in such research is that the child is assigned a passive role and it is only the

adult who has an active role in appropriating the child's experience.⁵ *Once Upon A Tiger* already offers brief glimpses in relation to building an understanding of what the child desires from the theatrical experience and how in the exchange with South Korean culture, children can negotiate cultural difference as well as explore sameness. Therefore, applying this model to a project that explores the perception of the child's cultural or national identities, it could offer a unique opportunity and insight in relation to this subject. Moreover, such a research project could also lead to the creation of a performance that has cultural diversity at its roots.

For example, inspired by the NT's production of *Nation*, a research project might create a performance to be performed by professional actors around the idea of allowing children aged 7 to 13 from either a participating school or playgroup in a culturally diverse area (an important partnership as the aim would be to offer this cultural participation not just to the predominantly middle-class young audiences who attend the theatre with their parents) to establish a new nation, exploring which religion, language, cultural activities, duties and responsibilities its citizens would have. Alternatively, a project might be more open to the initiatives of its young participants and invite the children to create a performance titled Britain (or England, Scotland and Wales) and ask them what such a performance should entail. Or a performance might just set out with a goal to represent the young participants as a group or individual members. During such a project inviting leading practitioners from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds and disciplines to conduct workshops and

⁵ It is, of course, also important to realise that to some extent the adult will remain in the position of power, both in the theatrical dialogue as well as in research projects that aim to position the child not as a passive object but an active research participant. Indeed Adele Jones rightly illustrates in her chapter 'Involving Children and Young People as Researchers' that the relation between adult and child remains problematic even when the child is given an active role in 'creating knowledge' because of issues of power, constructions of childhood and the notions of children's rights (2004: 113). As such Jones ends her chapter with a series of conditions that need to be insured including clarity of the child's role and purpose in the research, consent, the validation of the child's contribution, accessibility of the research methods and an "understanding and agreement about how far the study (and the child-researcher) should go in prying into the lives of other children" (Ibid: 129).

demonstrate their art might stimulate creativity and offer alternative modes of representation besides those more familiar in relation to the National Curriculum. It would be interesting to consider how children negotiate their cultural identities in relation to the others, and how they conceive the concept of a nation, cultural identities or notions of British/English/Scottish/Welsh identities. While of course there is a need to maintain harmony among the participants, it would be interesting to see whether participating children can overcome the exclusive notions of nationality or other group identities and construct national identities as an inclusive category. Observations and interviews with both participating children and adults would offer an insight into how they experience this process.

The participating children might be invited to contribute to developing the script or choosing which performative practices and cultural elements they would like to see within their production. Their participation might even be taken beyond this point and they might also have a role during the rehearsal process, offering feedback on work in progress. However, it would not be the intention for the participating children to also feature as actors in this production. The second, and equally important aspect would be how other children, who have not participated in the creative process, perceive the cultural representations on stage. To understand these reaction the research method as suggested by Matthew Reason would be relevant, as using a creative practice such as drawing would ensure that children “through the time, reflection, craft and creativity that drawing requires; and through engagement with memory, observation, interpretation and invention” also develop a relationship with the performance (2010: 135). Hopefully such research, which is also accompanied with ‘child-led’ interview techniques, would clarify whether children could relate to the notions of cultural identities as presented on stage. And whether an audience not

involved in the creative process can recognise and interpret these notions of nationality, and whether these are relevant to the child's individual experience. Importantly, the research could clarify whether the child can appreciate the theatrical experience when inspired by society's cultural diversity, not just in terms of an intellectual engagement, but also in terms of enjoying, feeling inspired creatively as well as recognising the aesthetic values of the performance.

Although these proposed research projects and research objectives might appear ambitious, hopefully they illustrate not only how much research this area of cultural diversity and theatre for the child demands, but also how much additional attention it deserves. Indeed, to end with the most important arguments that are presented within this thesis as well as with this thesis outright, children's theatre is certainly an area worthy of academic research and funding should certainly be available for projects that follow this thesis. Moreover, funding for the various companies that create theatrical productions for young audiences needs to be safeguarded, especially considering the precarious position of children's theatre in relation to the economic climate. The great importance of theatre being available to all children, disregarding their social and economic position in society also demands consistency in secondary funding so performances can be staged in a school context and theatre tickets are affordable. Funding is also important in ensuring theatrical productions for the child maintain a high artistic quality, and that companies engage with the child and cultural diversity not with the aim to maximise profit, but create small scale productions in which every audience member matters. Indeed, funding is essential to maintain the current high standard of theatrical work created for young audiences in the UK.

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