THE EBBINGTIDE PROJECT:

The Missing Voice of the Theatrical Adapter

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ABSTRACT

The Ebbingtide Project investigates the process of transforming an original prose story into a new theatrical work. Specifically, it focuses on the remediation of my own prose work, a novel called *Ebbingtide*, into a play. The project is embedded in my own *reflective practice* as teacher and in-house director of student productions at Federation University's Arts Academy, for which the play was written and performed. It comprises two parts: the creation of a full-length play and a dissertation emanating from my own work as a *theatrical adapter* within the project. It is a *confined case study* focusing on the *interior domains of decision-making* from the perspective of the decision-maker. It uses my own embedded perspectives in both the source work (the novel) and the evolving play of *Ebbingtide* to describe the transformational journey from *page to stage*. In and of its nature, *The Ebbingtide Project* challenges existing frames of adaptation theory, which garb themselves in quasi-scientific objectivism. These fail to perforate the skin of the creative act that *is* adaptation, instead confining themselves to restrictive *outsider* perspectives where adaptations are viewed as static art objects and where process is conflated with product. After exploring possible reasons for this confinement, I argue there is an alternative way of viewing adaptations, one composed of the *lived experience* of adapters. I construct a model for capturing it, one framed around *intentional action*. I apply this model to my own journey of transforming *Ebbingtide* from novel to play, borrowing analytical instruments from existing critical frames; the point of difference being that these are deployed with a new critical focus: *creative process*. The *voice* of this process is the adapter as *creative insider*. I reflect upon the narrative of *Ebbingtide's* transformation and find a powerful interplay between circumstances *surrounding* the project and creative decisions I made *during* it. I note how the environment in which I wrote the play governed the work in ways I could not have foreseen and how my own intimate relationship with both the novel and the play engaged a uniquely personal kind of *fidelity*. I opine upon the *laudability* of various choices I made transforming the novel into the play. Finally, I consider the *significance* of insider accounts and, with reference to my own findings, discuss future developments in the field.

Declaration

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

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INTRODUCTION

A PERSONAL CONTEXT FOR *THE EBBINGTIDE PROJECT*

Like many working within the broad church of performance training, my research activity derives from my creative practice as teacher and artist. For me, this practice changed in early 2004 when I took up a full-time appointment at the University of Ballarat (now Federation University, Australia) as Lecturer in Acting within the Performing Arts Undergraduate Degree Programs of Acting and Music Theatre. As teacher, artist and in-house director of student productions I began creating and exploring a very specific theatrical form: large cast, pedagogically oriented 'black box' student productions. Working primarily with large cohorts of Second Year students, those embedded within the heartland of the three year Acting Program, I started exploring the kind of material that best suited such endeavour: vast, panoramic, narrative-driven dramatic plays, these often being adaptations of existing prose works.

In late 2008, when I was contemplating one of these large undertakings, David Edgar's monumental reworking of Charles Dickens' novel *Nicholas Nickleby*, I read a short passage in Edgar's preface to the play, a passage that landed somewhere in me, and stuck. "On November 19, 1979", Edgar wrote, "a group of 50 people sat down in a large circle in a rehearsal room in Stratford-Upon-Avon, to discuss the possibility of turning Charles Dickens' vast, panoramic novel, *Nicholas Nickleby*, into a theatrical entertainment… a large number of actors and actresses, two directors, an assistant director, four stage managers, and a writer" (Edgar x). My initial impression of the rehearsal room image Edgar had created was a mixture of wonder and curiosity. Even from this brief prefatorial description I felt a sense of momentous occasion: an enormous creative team congregated for the first time at the threshold of theatrical endeavour.

But, for me, the passage was significant in other ways. It contained the tantalising seeds of a perspective on the processes of a specific adaptation project: one that produced a play from the template of a nineteenth century novel. The possibilities of enquiry seemed endless. As a traveller of the same theatrical territory, my curiosity was piqued. What, for instance, must it have been *like* in that rehearsal room that day? And who *were* those 50 people? How did the transformative journey *begin*? What were the processes that evolved the work? What decisions were made? What influences came to bear upon those decisions?

All these questions were personal to me. They derived from my own experience as a theatrical adapter, one who wants to share his experiences *as* an adapter, who wants to know more about others and their experiences. Indeed, this entire line of questioning belongs to a very immediate view of adaptation, one accessible to those who inhabit its transformative space – the adapters. Edgar's words were resonant because they alluded to a central concern of my own creative practice. Beneath every specific adaptation there is an accompanying narrative of its evolution, describing not just the adaptation as product or static artefact, but as a lived creative process brought to life by people who *adapt*, whose agency provides important information about the ongoing praxis that produces adaptations.

Around this same time – late 2008 – I was also contemplating another parallel endeavour: undertaking a performance-based PhD. Thinking about the research area I most wanted to explore, my own work as a theatrical adapter took on a new significance. As I considered its potential and appropriateness I began a preliminary perusal of the broader landscape of adaptation theory. I was at once struck by the paucity of existing research on creative processes. To my surprise, even less research existed in the more specific domain of theatrical adaptation. I also came to understand that my specific activities in Ballarat – working in a pedagogically oriented environment, with its inbuilt discursive meta-discourse on the processes of theatrical creation – formed the perfect environment to explore and articulate these dimensions of the specific adaptations I was undertaking.

In this respect, Edgar's prefatorial passage, for me at least, takes on another layer of significance. That large *Nicholas Nickleby* circle of people serves as a metaphor for the broader discourse surrounding adaptation; a discourse that, whilst possessing a certain degree of diversity, also contains critical blind spots, one being the almost mute voice of the theatrical adapter. The reasons as to why such a voice should be silent are varied. Suffice to say, this performance research project, *The Ebbingtide Project*, both its creative and critical dimensions, is my personal response to this situation.

A NAVIGATIONAL MAP OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document consists of two parts: **Part 1 – The Dissertation** and **Part 2 – The Performance Project**.

Part 1 – The Dissertation – contains six chapters, each concerning a distinct dimension of *The Ebbingtide Project.* In Chapter 1, I provide an overview of both creative and critical dimensions of the project: its specific nature, defining creative and critical parameters, along with its distinguishing features.

In Chapter 2, I examine the extant critical discourse of adaptation and the major currents flowing within it. I observe that it is an academic field of study on the 'margins.' I provide a basic roadmap for viewing the study of adaptation by surveying developments during its sixty-odd year history. I explain early theoretical concerns, beginning with the founding father of adaptation theory, George Bluestone. I then unpick some of the major threads underpinning the discourse: the conflation of product and process; and the adopted trope of Darwinian survival. I explore the rhetoric of fidelity and trace its roots back to the word/image divide and biblical notions of canonic law. I show how such arcane ideas were imported into literary contexts. I argue that the parent field of English Literature has annexed the discourse of adaptation; how this has led to the exclusion of adapters from critical frames. Then I discuss recent relational models of adaptation and the value they potentially hold. Finally, I review some recent contributions by theatrical insiders who offer a different way of looking at adaptations from the inside.

In Chapter 3, I consider the methodological implications of *The Ebbingtide Project*, with its origins in the *creative act* of adapting an original novel. I discuss my situated presence in the work and its long creative journey from *page to stage*. I argue that the project addresses critical lacunae; that it is qualitative research capturing a particular *world* of the *case study*. I contemplate the ramifications of practice led research and my own *knowing through doing*, along with the inherent dangers of autoethnographic work. Finally, I locate *The Ebbingtide Project* within a general model of *intentional action*. And I outline my own dual lens model of *circumstance* and *linear insider narrative*.

In Chapter 4, I view the project through the lens of *circumstance*: the context in which the play was created. I situate the play within its pedagogical setting, explaining the multi-dimensional nature of my roles in the project. I then go on to discuss the

unique meta-discourse of rehearsal that underpins the all-important rehearsal phase of the play's evolution. I discuss the logistical and organisational factors impacting upon the shape and textures of the project: rehearsal scheduling and duration, cast numbers and duration of the performance season. I conclude with a description of the physical setting the play was written for, rehearsed in and where it was ultimately performed.

In Chapter 5, I provide a composite perspective of the project, viewing the adaptation journey as a *linear insider narrative*, one that outlines the processes and decisions I undertook during the practice of writing and rehearsing the play. This linear narrative divides the transformational journey of remediation into five distinct phases, each representing a clear and delineated stage of the overall creative journey of adapting the novel into the play.

By way of conclusion, Chapter 6 provides a retrospective analysis of my research findings. I discuss textures within the existing critical terrain of adaptation that have restricted potential developments. Then I provide a summative account of my insider model, its dual lens approach and the mechanisms that enable its critical penetration. I reflect upon various dimensions of the transformational journey from novel to play. I examine the impact of circumstances: how the environment in which I wrote the play dictated rhythms of my work, how the pedagogic brief and site-specific exigencies helped shape the play. I explain how working on my own original novel affected the decisions I made, how being author of the novel *and* adapter of the play created a unique coloration of fidelity. I analyse the transformative arc of the project, opining on the laudability of various decisions I made. Finally, I assess the significance of insider accounts and, with reference to my own findings, the potential for future developments.

Part 2 – The Performance Project – contains two artefacts:

1. The *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo, this being a filmic record of the final performance of the production of *Ebbingtide* at Federation University in Ballarat on the 26th October of 2014.
2. The *Ebbingtide* Script, being the written text used as the basis for the production of *Ebbingtide* at Federation University in Ballarat from October 22nd to October 26th of 2014.

PART 1: THE DISSERTATION

CHAPTER 1

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF *THE EBBINGTIDE PROJECT*

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter provides a short introductory overview of *The Ebbingtide Project.* Firstly, I describe the nature of its adaptive subject, its complexion as reflective practice, the embedded perspective of its situated insider narrative. I explain that there are two components to the project: the creative dimensions of the performance project, and the dissertation. I name the artefacts that I have produced as part of the project. I define the parameters of the work and its pedagogic context and identify the research areas being investigated. I then conclude with an outline of the project's distinguishing features.

THE NATURE OF *THE EBBINGTIDE PROJECT*

The Ebbingtide Project consists of two parts: the performance project, which involved the adaptation of an original novel draft I wrote, entitled *Ebbingtide*, into a theatrical play of the same name; and a dissertation, using my own reflective practice as the cornerstone of critical analysis. The play of *Ebbingtide* was created for a very specific performance situation: a production by Second Year Acting students at Federation University. In this sense, it was a customised adaptation project, one defined by its very particular creative *brief*, one engaging many of my composite selves: novelist, adapter, playwright, teacher and director; along with one other, germane to capturing and recording the experience – reflective practitioner.

Critically, *The Ebbingtide Project* is assertively an insider account, using my own situated perspective to illuminate the transformational journey from *page to stage*. It is a confined case study focusing on the interior domains of remediation, an interiority that challenges existing models of adaptation theory, which locate themselves *outside* the work, regarding adaptations as static and hermetically sealed artefacts or products.[1] Outsider perspectives are unhelpful because they fail to perforate the skin of the creative

[1] I use the term 'remediation' here, and throughout this document, in a strict and purposeful way to describe the transformation of one medium (the novel) into another medium (the play). In so doing, I repudiate any moralistic implication that either is superior or that the latter in any way *remedies* the former.

act that *is* adaptation. *The Ebbingtide Project* occupies a different critical space. Its aim is to navigate the moody waters between *creating* adaptations and *studying* them, using a model framing my own intentional action as adapter within the broader map of circumstance surrounding me.

As might be expected, a project involving the creation of a play for a large and diverse cohort of student actors was always going to be a long and, at times, arduous undertaking. Less predictable were the many twists and turns I was to encounter along the way. But once I opened up my adaptive practice to reflective purview, the relationship between my own intentional action and surrounding circumstance became unexpectedly transparent and causally direct. Most pleasing was the discovery that my own intimacy with both the source novel and the play's initial production could be harnessed to examine *why* the play became the entity it did.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE PROJECT ELEMENTS

Creative Dimensions – The Performance Project

The Ebbingtide Project involved the theatrical adaptation of an original prose story (the *Ebbingtide* novel) about a group of Irish orphans who travelled out to Australia during the Great Famine. The adapted work (the *Ebbingtide* play) was performed as an in-house Second Year studio production at Federation University's Arts Academy in October of 2014. The production formed part of a practical strand of the Acting Program and was directed by me as part of my in-house directorial duties as Lecturer in Acting. Creative dimensions of *The Ebbingtide Project* produced the following performance project artefacts:

1. A live performance work – *Ebbingtide* – performed in a short performance season by the abovementioned students from the 22nd to the 26th of October 2014.
2. The *Ebbingtide* Script, being the written text used as the basis for the production of *Ebbingtide* at Federation University in Ballarat from October 22nd to October 26th of 2014.
3. A DVD/Vimeo of the final live performance on the 26th of October 2014.

Defining Creative Parameters Of The Performance Project

The performance of *Ebbingtide* was unambiguously situated within a framework of teaching and learning. It was not a full-scale, professionally performed, commercial production of a known theatrical work. Rather, it was a small budget, studio-based Second Year student production of a newly adapted original play, one that was performed within a course (or subject) called *Theatre Practice*. Productions such as this allow students, in the relative safety of a controlled learning environment, to put into practice various performance skills they are being taught; skills such as Acting, Movement/Dance and Voice. Superficially, this particular creative environment may appear to be a somewhat compromised milieu in which to create and study a theatrical adaptation. I would argue, forcefully, to the contrary. Whilst the play of *Ebbingtide* certainly drew heavily upon its novelistic donor, it was in equal measure shaped by both the site-specific circumstance that surrounded its evolution, and the heavy imprimatur of pedagogy that ultimately demarked its performative playing field. From my perspective as adapter this confluence posed no obstacle or hindrance to creating the play. Rather, it provided a uniquely fertile medium for both evolving it and reflecting upon it.

Critical Dimensions – The Dissertation

Most critical perspectives of adaptation view it from the outside. This has traditionally tended to occlude creative dimensions of the adaptive journey. Because of this, the voice of the adapter is almost entirely missing from critical writing. Whilst Chapter 2 of this dissertation provides an account of major ideas running through the discourse of adaptation theory, it also has a very specific agenda: to examine *why* this voice has been silenced. Inherent in this work is a call for its reinstatement.

After examining methodological implications arising from the project (Chapter 3), I then construct a model for rendering it (Chapters 4 and 5), one based on my own intentional action working within the circumstances of the project. Within this frame, my own insider narrative articulates the volatile and contingent creative arc of the adapter: traversing preliminary textual encounters, issues arising from transforming the novel's narrative structures, drafting strategies, unforeseen creative excursions, and finally, discoveries made in the peformative testing ground of rehearsals.

The dissertation will investigate five domains of enquiry. Firstly, it will examine existing critical currents and the omission of adapters from analytical frames. Secondly,

it will address the question of whether it is possible to construct a model for looking at adaptation practice that captures the perspective of the insider/adapter. Thirdly, it will investigate the impact of surrounding circumstance upon the work. Fourthly, it will elucidate the transformational arc of the adaptation: its processes and the decisions that led to the creation of the play. Finally, it will discuss the significance of insider accounts within the broader discourse of adaptation.

DISTINGUISHING *THE EBBINGTIDE PROJECT*

In describing the restricted terrain of most adaptation theory, Simone Murray refers to the "endless stream of repetitious and theoretically timid comparative book/film studies" produced over the past fifty odd years (Murray, 2012, 2). Inherent in her assertion are assumptions that go to the heart of problems with the broader discourse. The terms "book" and "film" are often used universally to describe adaptation practice, when in fact they only refer to one iteration: *novel to film*. Whilst there are parallel features across adaptive mediums, many simply fall outside this dominant novel/film template.

The Ebbingtide Project is one such example. It concerns a *theatrical* adaptation. In this respect, it forms part of a generic sub-group of adaptation practice.[2] Whilst many examples of theatrical adaptation exist, the genre has not yet established itself within the broader adaptation discourse. Additionally, my dissertation deals not with a simple comparative between two *products* (source novel and adaptation), but explores the fundamental processes of transposing one to the other. Whilst this certainly makes it atypical within the broader complexion of adaptation study, it is by no means alone in its preoccupation. Recent work by English theatrical practitioner, Mike Alfreds, Australian playwright/academic, Janis Balodis, along with English academic, Margherita Laera's 2014 book of interviews with theatrical adapters, would suggest a growing interest in procedurally focused theatrical adaptation research.[3]

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[2] A broad genre that includes, apart from Edgar's *Nicholas Nickleby*, Nick Enright and Justin Mongo's adaptation of Tim Winton's *Cloudstree*t, Christopher Hampton's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, Oxenburgh and Ross' adaptation of Stow's *The Merry Go Round In The Sea*, John Steinbeck's own adaptation, *Of Mice and Men*, and the raft of adaptations undertaken by Mike Alfreds' *Shared Experience* company, to name a few.

[3] I refer here to Mike Alfreds' 2013 work, *What Happens Next*, which gives strong account of the long arc of the theatrical adapter as crafter of narrative-based theatre; and Janis Balodis' PhD Project, *The Practice of Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction into Theatre* (2012), which is a micro-analytic study of two particular adaptations he had undertaken; and Margherita Laera's series of interviews with theatrical practitioners in *Theatre and Adaptation: Return, Rewrite, Repeat* (2014).

There is a third, albeit more subtle, distinguishing feature of *The Ebbingtide Project*: I am creator of the originating work *and* the adaptation. This unique situation enables an immersive critical transparency into the creative impulses that shaped them both. I can articulate how each work *speaks* to the other. There is yet another layer to this conversation, an important one: although the originating prose work reached a degree of completion, it remains, ultimately, fluxive. It is *an unpublished work*, albeit one that is in a well-developed state. A draft of the *Ebbingtide* novel won the 2002 Queensland Arts Council New Writer's Award. Nonetheless, for me as adapter, its unpublished status gave it an open, unfinished fluidity, a characteristic that impacted upon both the decision-making process and reflective dimensions of the dissertation.

These collective differences, taken together, mean *The Ebbingtide Project* represents a significant shift away from dominant critical domains of adaptation. For this reason, I do not intend in the following critical chapter to slavishly critique a fundamentally different species of adaptation. Rather, I will highlight strands of adaptation theory relevant to the project; and more particularly, those concerning the omission of the adapter. My aim here is twofold: to provide an overview of these relevant major threads running through the discourse; and to situate my own contribution within it.

CHAPTER 2
THE DISCOURSE OF ADAPTATION

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTER

Remarkably, even after some sixty odd years of evolving history, the study of adaptation is still regarded – even by many of its own exponents – as an academic field on the margins. In this chapter I explore why, beginning in Section A with a brief longitudinal map of the three major waves of adaptation theory.

Then, in Section B, I unpick some of the predominant ideas running through the broader discourse of adaptation: definitional markers around the term 'adaptation'; the conflation of product and process; the controversial issue of intention; the trope of Darwinism and survival. I explore theoretical seeds sown by one of adaptation's early theorists, George Bluestone. I delve into the ever-present spectre of fidelity and the problems surrounding its perpetuation in the discourse: its roots and origins; its effect on the way we view (and do not view) adaptation. I examine why the novel has become a dominant adaptive template. I then go on to interrogate why adapters have been occluded from the critical landscape of adaptation: how this arose from changing perspectives of authorship and the role intention played in the parent field of English Literature.

In Section C, I outline recent theoretical shifts of the ever-expanding field of adaptation studies: relational perspectives such as translation, narratology, the sociological turn and finally, the small, but significant contribution of theatrical adapters. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a review of the current status of adaptation study.

INTRODUCTION TO AN ACADEMIC FIELD ON THE MARGINS

The "discipline" of adaptation studies, as Simone Murray refers to it, is currently experiencing a "welter of criticism", not only from outside its own ranks, but also from within (Murray, 2008, 4). Her catalogue of examples reads like a theoreticians' litany of dissatisfaction. James Naremore, for example, laments the "jejune" and "moribund" nature of contemporary adaptation studies (Naremore Introduction 11). Robert B. Ray believes the bulk of adaptation criticism, "constitutes a dead end and is useless in its stale models and trite suppositions" (Ray, 39, 46; Murray, 2008, 4). Robert Stam argues,

"adaptation studies is inchoate, (being) hamstrung by the inadequate trope of fidelity criticism, whereby screen adaptations are judged according to their faithfulness to print originals" (Stam, 2000, 62 – 76; Murray, 2008, 4). Thomas Leitch observes that, "adaptation has remained tangential to the thrust of film studies... because it wishes to be" (Leitch: "Twelve Fallacies" 149, 168; Murray, 2008, 4). Kamilla Elliott "regrets the pervasive sense that adaptation scholars lag behind the critical times" (Elliott, 2003, 4; Murray, 2008, 4). Elsewhere, Sarah Cardwell posits that writing about adaptation has tended to become imprisoned in the methodology of comparison (Cardwell 9).

But these criticisms are not an end-point. They form part of a bubbling "intellectual ferment," one that is "ripe for a sea-change in theoretical and methodological paradigms" (Murray, 2008, 4). Indeed, most form part of the matrix of evolution and reform currently underway in the field. Elliott, for instance, seeks to re-evaluate the word/image divide that has dominated and impeded novel/film adaptations. Stam reconceptualises adaptation as intertextual dialogism. Leitch has called for various reformative frames, such as genre (Leitch, 2008 a & b). Murray advocates a more industrially oriented sociological frame (Murray, 2012). Nonetheless, adaptation study is "nothing if not reflexive", the "habitual checking of its own academic pulse" being the result of an inherent disciplinary insecurity, arising because it inhabits a "borderland" between traditional literary studies and the "newly emergent, often recusant film studies" (Murray, 2012, 1).

Being the marginal "bastard offspring" of two fundamentally inimical disciplinary pillars – literature and film – has held adaptation study in methodological stasis (Murray, 2008, 4). The effect is twofold. Firstly, critical perspectives have traditionally been drawn from these two competing academic disciplines. Secondly, these perspectives have obfuscated *other* ways of seeing adaptation, such as *insider perspectives*. These tendencies have also obscured other domains of adaptation, such as *theatre*.[4] Importantly, too, this disciplinary conservatism has resulted in a "curious and troubling disinterest in how adaptations come to be" (Murray, 2012, 4).

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[4] Tellingly, both major journal publications focussing on adaptation – *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance* and *Adaptation* – are both heavily film oriented.

SECTION A:

A BASIC ROADMAP OF ADAPTATION THEORY

So how could an academic area of study, with a lifespan of more than sixty years to establish itself, have become so marginalised? Partial explanation may be found in the sheer diversity of ways commentators view the critical field of adaptation. Sarah Cardwell, for instance, looks through the lens of 'approaches' that comprise it: medium specific approach, the comparative approach and the pluralist approach (Cardwell, 2002, 43 – 73). Brun et al prefer to view it as a series of theoretical "clusters" or trends, such as fidelity or broad-based relations between texts (Brun et al 4 – 5). My entry point into this discussion is to view it through the same longitudinal lens that Murray, herself, does. In her 2012 work, *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptation*, she provides a compact survey of adaptation theory, which she divides into three waves of development (Murray, 2012). For my purposes this schema also supplies an introduction to key principles of adaptation, principles I will expand upon later to explain why the adapter has been occluded from critical frames.

First Wave: Fidelity And Anti-Fidelity

The first wave of academic studies of adaptation is typified by an outright attack on "fidelity criticism as an adequate schema for appreciating the richness of and motivations driving adaptations" (Murray, 2012, 7). Fidelity criticism, configured by these *anti*-fidelity theorists, is generally based on an analytical template of comparison, whereby the subsequent adaptation (usually filmic) is compared to the prior originating novel, one usually belonging to a pre-existing inviolate canon of great literature. Viewed in this way, the adaptation is seen as inferior and unfaithful to the original.

This '*anti*-fidelity' strain of criticism constitutes the dominant preoccupation of first wave adaptation theorists, stretching forward from the 1970s, well into the twenty first century.[5] Central to *anti*-fidelity criticism is its rebuttal of the idea that adaptations must adhere to certain substantive, formal and thematic characteristics attributed to the source novel. *Anti*-fidelity theorists reject outright fidelity critique's "moralistic,

[5] Murray's list of *anti*-fidelity theorists is compendious and includes major critical writers over the best part of four decades (Cartmell and Whelehan, 1999, 3; Ray 45; Leitch, 2003, 16 – 62; Hutcheon xiii; Geraghty 11).

sexually loaded and near-hysterically judgmental vocabulary, with its accusations of unfaithfulness and betrayal" (Murray, 2012, 8).

The next iteration of this first wave of criticism – and one emanating from the first – involves the taxonomic classification of adaptations on a sliding scale of fidelity.[6] In other words, adaptations are measured according to their resemblance to the original source work, or degrees of variance from it. This sliding scale of fidelity is an attempt to equalise "the respective status of author and director" (Murray, 2012, 8).

Second Wave: Structuralism

Historically, the second wave of adaptation theory arose in the 1970s, along with the importation of the principles of narratology from an amalgam of sources: Russian formalist literary theory, structuralism and Continental semiotics. The influence of Roland Barthes, Gerard Genette and Christian Metz can be heavily felt in this particular strand of adaptation criticism. The aim of this "structuralist inspired quest" is to isolate signifying codes in both source novels and their filmic adaptations. The utility of such an approach is that adaptation theory can recast itself as a two-way dynamic between source text and adaptation (Murray, 2012, 9).

This recasting enables analysis of the way films and novels influence *each other*, effectively negating one of the major problems inherent in a fidelity lens: that a hierarchy is established valorising source novel *over* subsequent adaptation. Such a structuralist approach also provides a highly effective method for analysing the way the different mediums of novel and film execute *narrative*. According to Murray, the problem with this kind of critical lens lies in structuralism's tendency to isolate texts from wider circuits of production. Quarantining sociological contexts also entrenches "the practice of textual analysis" (Murray, 2012, 9). Isolating signifying codes in each medium also reinforces textual comparatives as an unquestioned evaluative norm.

Third Wave: Impact Of The 'Posts'

The third major critical innovation in adaptation studies began in the 1980s and developed maturity throughout the early twenty-first century. This involved the importation of concepts from post-structuralism, post-colonialism, feminism and

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[6] Again, Murray's list of exponents of this taxonomic 'turn' in anti-fidelity is populace (Klein and Parker, 1981, 9; Wagner 219 – 231; Larsson 74; Cartmell and Whelehan, 1999, 24; Andrew, 2000, 29 – 34; Cahir16 – 17; Cordaiy 34).

cultural studies, or the 'Posts'. This helped to break down the self-isolating wall that adaptation studies had built up around itself via its undue emphasis on textual comparison. Fidelity also became less a critical preoccupation. The cumulative effect of these 'Posts' was to emphasise adaptation as a site of *intertextual citation*. This was a radical recalibration, one that widened adaptation theory's critical margins to include socio-political, ideological and cultural dimensions: a movement away from its narrow inward focus of text-based analysis and comparisons between source text and adaptation. Its new focus was outwards towards the wider cultural landscape; 'culture' in this newly constituted sense being "a vast web of references and tropes ripe for appropriating, disassembling and rearranging" (Murray, 2012, 10).

SECTION B:

THE BROAD LANDSCAPE OF ADAPTATION THEORY

DEFINING TERMS: ADAPTATION

At the heart of each wave of adaptation theory is a shift; not only in the way we view adaptations, but also in the way we *define* them. So what, then, are some of these definitional markers?

"In the strictest sense", argues Paul Edwards, "to adapt is to make fit... the intransitive verb names the task of an organism finding itself in a potentially hostile setting and seeking to fit in" (Edwards 369). Early adaptation theorist George Bluestone restricted the term *adaptation* to a somewhat more contained field, that of *filmic re-mediation*: a medium (a film) that uses the source text (a novel) as a departure point or raw material to create another work (Bluestone viii). Writing some sixty years after Bluestone, Linda Hutcheon broadened the term to include "an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works; a creative and an interpretative act of appropriation/salvaging; an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work" (Hutcheon 8).

Julie Sanders also defined it within broad parameters to include other generic types of transposition, adaptation being "…frequently a process involving the transition from one genre (of literature or performance) to another: novels into film; drama into musical; the dramatization of prose narrative and prose fiction; or the inverse movement of making drama into prose narrative" (Sanders 19). For Sanders, then, adaptation

refers to *the relationship* that exists between prior and subsequent literary or performative forms. It is, she argues a "highly active mode of being" (Sanders 24). In describing *theatrical* adaptation, Laera picks up on this active mode of being. Adaptation, she argues, applies to a wide variety of theatrical operations: the dramaturgical practice of turning a novel into a play script, or the work of directors and their mise en scene, or of actors in performance and rehearsals (Laera 3).

In formulating his definition of adaptation, Robert Stam cites copyright law, which refers to it in terms of *derivation*. His purpose, and one aligning more broadly with the third wave of theorists, is to steer definitional markers away from binary comparisons between source novel and filmic adaptations. Adaptations recast, transform, or adapt something prior (Stam and Raengo, 2005, 45). But all works, he argues, are in *some* ways derivative. All are part of interconnected webs of influence and confluence (Stam and Raengo, 2005, 46). Cassetti builds on this idea of interconnectedness. Adaptations are "sites of production" where various discourses are circulated as symbolic constructions, clusters of meanings that a society considers possible. Elements in one site of production – such as a plot, a theme or a character – may reoccur in another site to form a new communicative situation (Cassetti 83). Importantly, both Stam and Cassetti reconfigure adaptations into new critical frames that cast them in active and *harmonious* relationships with host texts:

> ... Adaptations redistribute energies and intensities, provoke flows and displacements; the linguistic energy of literary writing turns into the audio-visual-kinetic-performative energy of the adaptation, in an amorous exchange of textual fluids (Stam and Raengo, 2005, 46).

Dudley Andrew assigns adaptations an even more significant role in the larger cultural space. They play a defining role "in biological and social organisms of every sort" (Andrew in Stam and Raengo, 2004, 190). For Andrew, adaptation is a form that uses previous source material and evolves it into a *new cultural object*, one that inhabits multiple discourses: literary, performative, biological; as well as cultural and sociological domains. Recast in this light, adaptation practice cohabitates with other wider realms of participation and agency. Adaptation is something done by people as they adapt to myriad circumstances, "so as to persist as themselves" (Andrew in Stam and Raengo, 2004, 190). Adaptation, in all its spheres, is therefore natural and naturally

occurring. Seen through this lens, adaptation forms part of the human impulse towards metamorphosis, a naturally occurring evolution of perpetual self-actualisation.

The Conflation Of Product And Process

In each of the preceding definitional samples there is an inherent conflation between adaptation as *product* and *process*, something Sarah Cardwell observes in most critical writing about adaptation (Cardwell, 2002, 11).[7] This duality results in two questions usually being asked by critical writers. Each question is different, but related. Asking what is *an* adaptation, results in an examination of the generic qualities of adaptations – a study of product. Asking what *is* adaptation, on the other hand, usually refers to the *processes* that have actively been undertaken *during* the adaptation. Cardwell argues that these questions within the traditional, historically dominant approach to adaptation – the comparative approach, where source novel and adaptation are *compared* to each other – has usually conflated and conjoined the two, the result being a conceptual circularity that mindlessly interchanges both.

But why should process *be* conflated with end product? The answer is obvious: convenience. Conflating process with product allows for neat and rounded critical comparison between two end products: source work and adaptation. But what kind of process is it that excludes activity undertaken *during* the creation of the artistic work? And what definition of process excludes the agent responsible for the very processes it purports to describe?

Creative acts – and the processes that comprise them – carry with them all the messiness of a journey towards an uncertain destination, a journey bearing the powerful imprimatur of discovery and experiment, of trial and error, of regrouping and coming again, of volatile contingency. These are the *real* procedural textures of adaptive practice. They are composed of issues arising, decisions being made, transpositional selections, omissions, substitutions, mistakes and rectifications; along with a swag of influences – aesthetic, performative, cultural, economic: the complex intersection of context and circumstance surrounding the developing work.

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[7] One notable exception being Margherita Laera, whose 2014 work includes interviews with seventeen theatrical practitioners, each attempting describing their own *processes* of adaptation (Laera 2).

Dare We Mention Intention?

Linda Hutcheon is one of the few critical writers who have attempted to reconceptualise adaptation as being both product *and* process. Her critical modelling in *A Theory of Adaptation* addresses key questions like: *what* is being adapted; *how* are these enjoyed; *when* and *where* are they adapted. Importantly, too, amongst her key framing questions is: *who* adapts and *why*? Hutcheon asks these questions about agency because she sees a fundamental blind spot in the critical discourse, one that seems to have permanently sidelined adapter presence (Hutcheon 95). Her efforts to break through the caul of taboo surrounding such agency inevitably lead to the contentious issue of *intentionality* – the intentions of adapters. I will deal more fully with this issue later in the chapter. Needless to say, Hutcheon sees the benefits of such enquiry in the emerging critical horizon. She argues, adapters' "deeply personal as well as culturally and historically conditioned reasons for selecting certain works to adapt and the particular way to do so should be considered seriously by adaptation theory, even if this means rethinking the role of intentionality in our critical thinking about art in general" (Hutcheon 95).

Howling Woolfs And The Defensive Strain

Resistance to adaptation practice runs deep. As early as 1926 Virginia Woolf, with blunt and ominous prescience, observed of the fledgling film industry (and its tendency to turn novels into films) that it was a "parasite" and literature its "prey" and "victim" (Hutcheon 3). Within a dyadic model, where adaptation is set *against* its novelistic original, both are often portrayed as fighting for survival in a competitive literary ecosystem. Adaptation is the nascent but robust new medium, bourgeoning from the ruins of the older established literary host upon which it feeds. Within this overarching narrative the agent of this potentially destructive process, the adapter, is either perceived with distrust, outright enmity, or worse still, is *omitted* from critical frames altogether.

The Darwinian Analogue: Adaptation And Survival

The above narrative I describe is also reminiscent of another struggle, one first enunciated by Charles Darwin in the middle of the nineteenth century. Writing on the thread of evolutionary narrative in the nineteenth century novel, Gillian Beer elucidates what, in her opinion, distinguished Darwin as an innovative thinker and scientist from his contemporaries:

> The key concepts for natural theologians seeking to display God's workings in the material world were *design* and *creation*. Darwin, on the contrary, was trying to precipitate a theory based on *production* and *mutation*… Instead of an initiating Godhead, Darwin suggests, diversification and selection have generated the history of the present world. Instead of teleology and forward plan, the future is an uncontrollable welter of possibilities (Beer xviii).

The paradigmatic shift brought about by Darwin's thinking is useful in explaining why much of the discourse of adaptation has framed itself around Darwinian principles and terminology. Darwin's 1859 work *On the Origin of the Species* pervades adaptation discourse, often evoking the analogue between living organisms struggling for survival in the natural world and the parallel struggle being waged between *literary* organisms and *their* adapted offspring. In this analogue the source text (often, aptly, a nineteenth century novel) is cast in terms of the pre-existing order, which is stable, complete and hermetically sealed as a text, being created by an originating author (usually an individual and part of a self-perpetuating literary tradition) who is cast in the role of initiating Godhead.[8] The subsequent adaptation arises from the source text through a process of selection and diversification, usually forming into another derivative text that is both mutated from, and unfaithful to, the original.

This compact template of adaptation has itself undergone considerable mutation. Introducing an essay on the theory and practice of adaptation, Robert Stam observes that Charlie Kaufman's 2002 film *Adaptation* is not just an example of a filmic adaptation; in this case, of Susan Orlean's novel *The Orchid Thief*. It is also a "giddily reflexive" account of the practice of adaptation itself, one depicting many Darwinian principles (Stam and Raengo, 2004, 3). The central image in the film, a rare and delicate orchid, is a metaphor for the fragility of the source novel in the hands of its destructive adapter.

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[8] This characterisation of solo authorship in the novel is one of Bluestone's central tenets distinguishing novels from film (Bluestone viii). Murray's recent work on the book industry would refute such a narrow construction of novelist authorship (Murray, 2012, 25).

Sanders notes that it is apt the disciplinary domains proving "most resonant" for adaptation study are biology and ecology (Sanders 24). The scientific community investigates processes of environmental and genetic mutation. Adaptation scholars investigate mutations of one literary or performative medium into another. Hutcheon similarly finds Kaufman's Darwinian metaphor apposite: "To think of narrative adaptation in terms of a story's fit and its process of mutation or adjustment… to a particular cultural environment is something I find suggestive" (Hutcheon 31). So suggestive, in fact, that she extends this biological analogue further by drawing on Richard Dawkins' cultural parallel to Darwin's biological theory in *The Selfish Gene* (Hutcheon 32).

"Cultural transmission", Dawkins argues, "is analogous to genetic transmission in that, although basically conservative, it can give rise to a form of evolution" (Dawkins 189). Hutcheon develops this by introducing another biologically derived concept, again borrowed from Dawkins. The *meme* is a unit of cultural transmission or imitation, that, "like genes, are replicators" (Hutcheon 32). When memes are transmitted, they always change, for they are subject to "continuous mutation, and also to blending" (Dawkins 195). This is necessary for their survival in the "meme pool" (Hutcheon 32). Dawkins' conception of the meme restricts the term to the realm of an idea that evolves over time. But Hutcheon broadens its reach to cover not merely ideas, but stories, which, she argues, *are* ideas. Some have "great fitness through survival… or reproduction" (Hutcheon 32). They adapt to new environments "by virtue of" mutation, in the offspring of their adaptations, where, "the fittest do more than survive; they flourish" (Hutcheon 32). The biological analogue has thus itself been mutated into a narrative where the adaptation is viewed not as destructive predator, but as healthy offspring ensuring the flourishing continuance of the originating story.

SOWING EARLY ANALYTICAL SEEDS
GEORGE BLUESTONE'S *NOVELS INTO FILM*

Firmly ensconced in the vanguard of the first wave of adaptation theory is George Bluestone, whose 1957 work *Novels Into Film* is generally seen as a seminal early work.[9] On one level the work represents an early attempt to define analytical techniques applying to filmic adaptation. More importantly, for the purposes of this critical survey, it contains many of the conceptual seeds that proliferate through the entire adaptation discourse: the comparison, the case study, text-based examination and a well-developed form of medium specific analysis. To explicate some of these seeds I will present Bluestone's ideas without delving into the myriad rebuttals, refutations and reformations that have arisen since his work. Rather, I will examine them as freestanding edifices, ones that occupy fertile theoretical ground for my own analysis of *The Ebbingtide Project*.

Bluestone's Modelling: Comparison And Case Study

In his Preface to *Novels Into Film,* Bluestone outlines broader issues surrounding filmic adaptations and their analysis.[10] His disciplinary starting point is the assertion that film and its cognate, the filmic adaptation, is an entirely separate and autonomous medium from its literary source, the novel. It is hybrid and protean, with many "intersecting circles" which overlap with other "traditional arts" (Bluestone viii). As such, the source novel is "less a norm than a point of departure" (Bluestone x). Demarking the adaptive medium as separate and distinct is an important critical manoeuvre because it legitimises it as a valid subject of *comparison*. Both source novel and filmic adaptation have their own "unique qualities". They have "essentially different traits", each belonging to "two separate artistic genera" (Bluestone viii).[11]

Whilst separate in genre, both mediums are also conjoined, having enjoyed a "close relationship... from the beginning" (Bluestone 2). But this relationship has

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[9] Many contemporary theoretical writers like Kamilla Elliott still acknowledge Bluestone and his work as laying the foundation for many of their subsequent endeavours, describing him as "forerunner and mentor" (Elliott, 2003, Dedication).

[10] *Novels into Film* opens with a discussion about the two mediums of novels and films: the way they work, their ontological traits, along with the differences and similarities between them. This is followed by a series of individual case studies structured around the model of comparison.

[11] Although subsequent waves of adaptation theory have refuted 'essentiality', the idea that adaptations can be regarded as a separate artistic genre has proved useful to some analysts: Sarah Cardwell, for example, speculating on future directions of adaptation studies, argues there may be an "aesthetics of adaptation" which includes developing a more thorough idea of adaptation as a genre in its own right (Cardwell in Welsh and Lev: *The Literature/Film Reader*, 2007, 51).

often been a "fitful" one in which they are "overtly compatible, secretly hostile" (Bluestone 2). Such hostility arises from assumptions that blur and detract from the "mutational process" (Bluestone 5). Bluestone's argument is that such "mutations" are inevitable the moment one abandons one medium for another. His project accepts this inevitability and begins to plot the mutational process itself.

The entry point of this process is *the case study* in which the film adaptation is referred back to the source novel. Each case study is a "specimen". Each specimen is a vehicle to highlight a particular adaptation issue, where, "instead of trying to lead the films, I let the films lead me" (Bluestone x). Using this approach he is able to examine issues as diverse as the way films externalise subjective psychological states, the re-sequencing of narrative events in adaptations, ensuing structural modifications, stylistic analogues and even re-mediation failure.[12]

Bluestone's use of the term *specimen* is deliberate and establishes the code for all subsequent adaptation theory to follow, its scientific overtones replete with Darwinian metaphor, aiming to provide an *objective record* of the transpositional journey from novel to film. He achieves this by placing the specimen under the analytical microscope of close reading. His goal is for the film adaptation to be as "atomised" by critical scrutiny as the novel (Bluestone xiii). This is executed by superimposing the shooting script of the film (with final amendments based on a viewing of the film) over the text of the novel, the palimpsestuous residue forming a "reasonably" objective record of how the film differed from its source (Bluestone xi). The aim of this transpositional tracing is designed to evolve an "exact record of alterations, deletions and additions of characters, events, dialogue", such an approach serving to reduce "subjective impressions to a minimum" (Bluestone xi). Significantly, Bluestone's comparative methodology for examining these case studies addresses two key dimensions of adaptation: as *product* – where the two artefacts of novel text and amended shooting script are compared; and as *process* – where intermediary records of the transpositional journey are used to speculate upon processes undertaken *during* re-mediation.

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[12] Bluestone's case studies focus on adaptations of Liam O'Flaherty's novel, *The Informer*, Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, Walter Von Tiburg Clark's *The Oxbow Incident* and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.

The Wide Arc Of Bluestone's Project: Medium Specificity

Beyond his basic analytical template of comparison and case study, Bluestone engages with a broader and more sophisticated investigation: the way novels and film make their respective audiences *see*, how each medium operates, their specific properties and capabilities.[13] Film, he asserts, is based on the principle of "persistence of vision": the illusion of constant motion created by the speeding frame upon the perceiving human eye. This allows the camera to be used as an instrument that replaces the human eye as the centre of perspective and indeed, reality itself (Bluestone 17). Film has its own properties and grammar, and like its linguistically based counterpart, is bound to and by its own laws and ontological constitution (Bluestone 18). It appeals to the "perceiving senses" and is therefore free to work with "endless variations of physical reality" (Bluestone 20).

Literature, on the other hand, renders its own reality according to its properties and capabilities. Word-symbols must be translated into images of things, feelings and concepts via the reader's thought and imagination. Where the moving picture comes to us directly through our perception, language must be filtered through the "screen of conceptual apprehension" (Bluestone 20). Language is also subject to "connotative" or "figurative luxuriance": the ability of meanings to multiply when conceptualised by a reader. Film is more narrowly limited in this regard. Because it is visual and spatial, its representation is more governed by the literal. Being externalised in space, filmic images cannot be converted through the same conceptual screen. "A film is not thought", he contends; "it is perceived" (Bluestone 49).

The two mediums also differ in the way they render time. Here, Bluestone distinguishes between two kinds of time: *chronological time* – which is measured in discreet units (as in clocks and metronomes); and *psychological time*, which distends or compresses in consciousness, presenting itself in a "continuous flux" (Bluestone 50).

Novels present *chronological time* on three primary levels: duration of the reading, duration of the narrator's time, and the span of narrative events. Film dispenses with the first of these since the camera is always the narrator and we travel at the same rate as it propels us. The ranges of chronological time for respective

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[13] Bluestone's point of departure for discussing the different ways each medium functions is based on comments by novelist, Joseph Conrad, and film director, D.W Griffith, who, despite working in different mediums, both espouse the common goal of making their audience "see" (Joseph Conrad, 1942, 83; Lewis Jacobs 119; Bluestone 1).

audiences of each medium are fluid, yet fixed by the convention of the medium: a novel can be read in anywhere from two to fifty hours, a film normally takes two hours to view. Readers control the rate at which they read a book. A film audience is fixed to the relentless rate of the film projector. Novel conventions of chronological time are varied. Films are tight and compact.

Psychological time has two aspects: *the feel of time passing*, and the general sense of *time flux* that has no sharp boundaries and "can scarcely be measured at all" (Bluestone 51). Language in novels has the capacity to create varying rates of time passing. It can compress it or distend it. Language can also deal with *inner psychological states*, *the feel of time passing slowly or quickl*y. Film, on the other hand, controls time through *spatiality*. A film's director creates a new reality that is spatially governed and represented *graphically*. Just as space can be moulded, so too can time be arrested and quickened via graphic representation: flowers grow miraculously fast, sunsets merge into nights and then into dawns in a matter of moments.

Time flux is somewhat more problematic for both mediums. Time flux refers to time experienced *inwardly*. We experience time as fluid. Remembered events, for instance, carry with them a sense of continuous present. Language in novels has the capacity to render internal processes of thought and recollection (Bluestone 55). Whilst film cannot render the attributes of *thought* in the same way, it can find filmic equivalents through the mechanisms of representation available to it (Bluestone 60). Ultimately, Bluestone's temporal characterisation of novels and films is like a composite whole. The novel abides by the possibilities of psychological law. Film abides by the possibilities of physical law (Bluestone 61).

Bluestone's Critical Legacy

Bluestone's legacy upon the adaptation discourse is profound. His *medium specific analysis* opened a critical vista whereby the mechanisms of both mediums – source novel and filmic adaptation – could be evaluated according to their respective representational mechanisms. He deployed the *closely observed case study* as a way of focusing his analysis on singular examples of adaptation. Within this narrow focus he applied *close reading* as a mode of enquiry, firmly entrenching *comparison* between source novel and filmic adaptation as a way of viewing the transaction that took place between them during and after transposition.

Significantly, too, in a move that harks back to our Darwinian metaphor, Bluestone adopted a critical vantage of scientific objectivism; a critical model in which two separate *specimens* can be distinguished and compared by the objective outsider/scientist/investigator. His 'specimens' are case studies. Each specimen carries the potential for biological attribution inherent in the term. Each case study, in turn, becomes a micro-study of comparison, one executed by *superimposing* the adaptation over the top of the novel. Superimposition becomes a method not merely to compare media, but also to track, record and analyse the journey of variance from the original.

This justifies Bluestone's claim to be examining *process*. Using samples of final film cut and shooting script as evidence of the adaptation's evolutionary journey, this gives the effect of a sliced or *freeze frame* view of the evolving adaptation. It also enables him to give the appearance that he is the objective outsider looking *inside* or *through* the adapted work. His evidence is ultimately text-based. Even amendments in final film cut are superimposed over the mediating document of the shooting script (Bluestone x). Evidentiary weight is adduced from, and attributed to, these *incremental artefacts*, forming a critical narrative pieced together from *traces* leading from source novel forward. The limitation of this approach – an outsider account where the 'objective' theoretician looks *into* the adaptation from the *outside* – is that any conclusions drawn must inevitably be relegated to the realm of speculation. Inner dimensions of adaptive decision-making remain, ultimately, opaque.

ATTACK OF THE MUTANTS: FIDELITY

The Rhetoric Of Fidelity

Running beneath the carefully crafted textures of Bluestone's analysis is a heavily fortified bulwark against an unseen critical foe: the spectre of fidelity criticism. Novels and film adaptations are, he observes, "overtly compatible, secretly hostile" (Bluestone 2). Arguably, Bluestone's entire project is predicated on the need for adaptations to be protected against the charge of illegitimacy. It is a cry oft repeated in adaptation theory, so regularly that, according to Simone Murray, the ritualistic slaying of fidelity criticism – the anti-fidelity strain – forms not only the basis of much first wave adaptation criticism, it is now permanently embedded in its genetic make-up (Murray, 2012, 1).

But what exactly does the term 'fidelity' mean when applied to adaptation? According to Brian McFarlane, fidelity inherently implies that the source text contains

a single, correct "meaning" that the adapter "has either adhered to or in some sense violated or tampered with" (McFarlane 8). The assumption in a simple fidelity frame is that an adaptation can render a novel's meaning exactly. Perfect rendition means perfect fidelity. Distortion or variance represents infidelity. Degrees of distortion or variance represent degrees of infidelity. The problem with this kind of literalist approach is that any adaptive transformation involves new representations, and with them inevitable distortions from the original.[14]

McFarlane goes on to distinguish between an adaptation that is faithful to the letter and one that simply adheres to capturing the essence or spirit of the work. But what is this *spirit* that needs rendering so faithfully? Kamilla Elliott argues that it is "commonly equated with the spirit of the personality of the author" or "the authorial soul or personality (which) becomes authorial intent, imagination, or style" (Elliott, 2003, 136). This idea of a text's spirit profoundly colours our experience of adaptations. An adaptation's failure to be faithful to the spirit of our "beloved text" leaves us with a sense of "thwarted expectations" (Hutcheon 4).

But it is not merely thwarted expectations that result from such an encounter. Something altogether more powerful occurs: "We read a novel through our introjected desires, hopes, and utopias", observes Stam, "and as we read we fashion our own imaginary mise-en-scene of the novel on the private stages of our minds" (Stam in Naremore 54). This is a reference to Christian Metz's description of adaptation as a "bad object" (Metz 12). When "confronted with someone else's phantasy… we feel the loss of our own phantasmatic relation to the novel" (Metz in Naremore 55). The process Metz describes is one where the adaptation literalises for us that which the source novel invokes us to imagine. In terms of Bluestone's characterisation of the way novels work – by harnessing language's figurative luxuriance – the film's literalised and specific image jars with that we imagined as we read the novel. The result is a feeling of betrayal.

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[14] Duska Radosavljevic provides a wonderful example of the way fidelity expectations manifest in her description of the public and critical response to the Royal Shakespeare Company's commissioned production of *Cymberline* by Kneehigh Theatre in 2006. Opinion of the production, which opened with "an eerie dumbshow of public grief and civil unrest underscored by electric guitar", was passionately divided. Some thought it celebrated Shakespeare's original text. Others thought it closer to desecration (Radosvljevic 56 – 57).

Underlying Assumptions Behind The Rhetoric Of Fidelity

In an attempt to unpack the rhetoric of fidelity Robert Stam pinpoints various assumptions situated within it (Stam and Raengo, 2004, 4). At its most basic, there is an a priori valorisation of literary forms that have come before others, one which assumes that "older are necessarily better arts". A second source of hostility derives from the dichotomous view that presumes a bitter rivalry between literature and performance, where adaptation becomes the Oedipal son that "symbolically slays the source text as father" (Stam and Raengo, 2004, 4). Adjoined to this prejudice is the view that adaptation is, by nature and practice, parasitical. The adaptation attaches itself to the host body of the source text, burrows down, and sucks the life-blood from it. This view draws upon another misassumption: the fallacious correlation between the way a medium is received – or consumed – by its audience, and the value that should be placed upon it as an art form. That which is seen is obscene, as opposed to that which is read and imagined (Stam and Raengo, 2004, 6). This prejudice elevates the literary over the visual and the written over the performed. Iconophobia (demonization of the image) and logophilia (hagiography of the word) operate to maintain the hierarchy of the literary over the visual.

Adding weight to Stam's list of damning assumptions behind notions of fidelity, as late as 2008 the then newly appointed editors of the journal, *Adaptation* – Deborah Cartmell, Timothy Corrigan, and Imelda Whelehan – gave reasons as to why the journal had taken so long to come into being. Tellingly, they all relate to the issue of fidelity. The result of these assumptions is a critical lexicon of adaptation that is suffused with moral undertones. Frequently used terms like *infidelity*, *betrayal*, *deformation*, *violation*, *bastardisation* and *desecration* draw pejorative force from biological frames and binary oppositions between source text and their adaptive offspring.[15]

[15] There is another kind of discriminatory thread permeating the idiom of adaptation criticism – it is also a gendered discourse. Fidelity, according to Shelley Cobb, invokes a metaphor of heterosexual love and marriage. Faithfulness of an adaptation to a source text is portrayed in terms of Western cultural expectations for the gendered relationship of heterosexual marriage and romance (Cobb 29).

Rebuttals To Fidelity Criticism

In my introductory snapshot of the three critical waves of adaptation theory, I noted Murray's observation that most critical writing contains some form of fidelity *rebuttal*, or what I termed an *anti*-fidelity stance. This rebuttal comes in various forms. Robert Stam, for instance, rejects outright the idea that a novel has an originating core or kernel of meaning that can be "delivered" by an adaptation (Stam in Naremore 57). Rather, he contends, "a single novelistic text comprises a series of verbal signals that can generate a plethora of possible readings, including readings of the narrative itself" (Stam in Naremore 57).

Cardwell rebuts fidelity criticism by constructing a distinction between *biological* adaptation and *cultural* adaptation (Cardwell, 2002, 13). *Biologically*, species evolve and adapt over time in a linear way. And yet each increment of adapted life forms part of an outwardly radiating web of life. Each new increment of adaptation is commonly regarded as an improvement on that which preceded it. But each increment of life has interrelations with all other increments and can be referenced not only linearly backwards to the original, but also to others in the ever-expanding web. There is, therefore, both a continuum over generations and a pattern of interconnecting radial reference points for all living organisms, each being in some way related to previous and subsequent versions.

Cultural adaptations, on the other hand, have *one* referent: their *original* or *source*. They are locked into a binary relationship with it. One source may have many adaptations (or versions of it), but all refer back to their original. This limits ways of tracing an adaptation's origins and the relationships they enjoy with texts *other* than their one original source. As such, literary adaptations can only ever be merely subsidiary versions or derivative imitations; all references ultimately being sheeted back to their original. Little wonder, then, as Stam observes, early rhetoric surrounding adaptation was so profoundly moralistic (Stam and Raengo, 2004, 3).

But do Stam and Cardwell's rebuttals rid adaptation of the blight of fidelity criticism? Hardly. Indeed, Simone Murray's account of the second and third waves of adaptation theory do little more than catalogue ways in which an enfeebled academic field has sought, for the most part vainly, to run from the long critical shadow of fidelity via a series of *anti*-fidelity arguments.

So why has *anti*-fidelity become so entrenched in adaptation theory? On this front, Murray, herself, offers a radical and worrying explanation. The war against

fidelity, she argues, is a mythical one. Fidelity's presence is more *chimeric* than real. Reading back over fifty years of academic adaptation criticism shows "not the dead hand of fidelity criticism… but how few academic critics make any claim for fidelity criticism at all" (Murray, 2012, 8). But if Murray's argument is right – that fidelity criticism is virtually non-existent in academic writing – then what purpose would this preoccupation with *anti*-fidelity serve in critical domains? Murray's answer is that the ritualistic slaying of fidelity criticism in academic critiques, its "standardised routing", has come to "function as a shibboleth", a hollow idea, a phony war against a phantom enemy, *posing* as methodological and theoretical innovation.

Its effect has been to sustain and reproduce a set model of *comparative textual analysis* (Murray, 2012, 8). Adaptation theory, she argues, is an academic discipline without a real methodology beyond simple dyadic comparison. *Anti*-fidelity was merely a way for "adaptation studies to gain entry to the academy" (Murray, 2012, 7). The problem with such methodological stagnation is that it comes at the cost of exploring *other* ways of looking at adaptation. Her argument certainly explains why alternative frames of adaptation, such as insider accounts, remain unexplored.

TRACING THE ROOTS OF FIDELITY

Plato And The Mimetic Hall Of Mirrors

It may well be that the moralistic rhetoric surrounding adaptation has some roots in Platonic conceptions of imitation. "For Plato", explains Mary Klages, "all art was representational; whether in words or colours, poetry or painting, art created pictures of the material perceivable world, which ... (he) called, nature" (Klages 13). In this frame, art becomes part of a chain of refraction, which moves incrementally away from the truth of ideal forms. But since "nature" and the natural world, according to Klages, is itself only a reproduction or copy of what exists in perfect form in the realm of the ideal, any art that attempts to reproduce it is a mere "copy of a copy" (Klages 13).

Mimesis creates, then, a double degree of refraction – art being a copy of a copy of an original. Again, within this refractive chain, as a copy of an original or source work (such as a novel) an adaptation becomes a further diluted re-presentation of truth: a copy (the adaptation) of a copy (the source novel) of a copy (from the natural world), which is itself a copy of the original form. Like a distorting hall of mirrors, each degree of refraction removed from the *essence* of the original form, distances us a step

further from the truth contained within it. Each degree becomes part of the incremental elegy of loss.

The real power, though, of such a conceptualisation is only achieved with the added dimension of agency. In Book X of Plato's *Republic*, the artist is described as an imitator, whose mimesis is specifically designed to deceive, one who is likened to a magician. The power of such imitation is strong over the weak and gullible (Cooper and Hutchinson 1202). The artist, then, with unwitting charm, works to glamour their audience. The image Plato deploys for this refractive deception is water. Something looks crooked when seen in water and straight when seen out of it. This refractive power is used to deceive and excite with powers that are "little short of magical" (Cooper and Hutchinson 1207). It unseats the rational mind because imitation "consorts" with a part of us that is far removed from reason (Cooper and Hutchinson 1207). Reconfigured in this way, adaptation sits at the deepest end of the pool, in the darkest regions of moral corruptibility.

Sacred Word / Profane Image

To understand more fully how the disparate threads of biological survival, dyadic comparison, close textual analysis and a preoccupation with fidelity fit together within the discourse of adaptation, I will now explore a more fundamental binary – the word/image divide. It is present in Bluestone's medium specific analysis. It lies at the heart of analytical frames of comparison and plays a central role in describing transpositions from one medium to another. It also forms part of the puzzle as to why adapters have been omitted from critical writing about adaptation.

Ella Shohat views adaptation with a long historical lens. It occurs, she notes, within specific cultural contexts, with roots that can be found in a "larger, millennial movement across philosophical traditions and cultural spaces" (Shohat 23). Specifically, she is concerned with image phobia, which she traces back to its theological and cosmological roots in the Judaic/Christian/Islamic traditions. "Might," she asks, "the denigration of… adaptation be partially linked to the biblical phobia toward the apparatuses of visual representation" (Shohat 24)?

Her answer to this question stretches back to biblical first causes and its "righteous rage" against the fetish of the image. Explicitly stated in the first covenant between God and the People of Israel – The Ten Commandments – is the prohibition of the practice of creating "graven images". This prohibition operates on two levels.

Politically, it is aimed at the worship of false idols existing in competing polytheistic practice. But additionally, according to Judaic cosmology, an infinite God cannot adequately be represented in material terms. That is, infinite God cannot be made flesh by finite humans. "How can the unknown and the transcendent be represented visually" (Shohat 24)? God, according to a monotheistic belief system, is a deity that is fundamentally indivisible. This is the first ancestral source for the demonization of visual media.

The prohibition on graven images also carries with it an accompanying positive corollary: the affirmation of the Holy Word. Judaic practice, Shohat argues, has at its heart the primary role of the Word – spoken and written. The conceptualization and rendering of God and God's domain is inextricably bound to the Word itself. Moreover, man is cast in God's image. He, therefore, cannot be depicted in any other form such as an animal, as he is, in say, Greek or Egyptian traditions. It is this unifying indivisibility that provides Christian/Judaic cosmology with its hierarchical base. Adam, being of God, and beneath Him, assumes his place in a descending series of hierarchies: man over woman; humans over animals; and animate over inanimate. Part of this hierarchical cosmology is also, in part, functional as well as legitimizing. "God endows Adam… with the power of the word, the power to name" (Shohat 25). And with this power to name comes verbal dominion over a world "entrusted" to him by his "creator" (Shohat 25).

The power of the word, the power to name things is thus the power to designate, allocate and define. This power ascribes the ascendency of the word over the image, since words have the power to name and therefore to create things. The prohibition on graven images – and the corollary of the dominion of word over image – carries with it a central contradiction: while we are prohibited from *creating* a graven image, we are allowed to *describe* one; the bible itself enacting this central paradox many times over. The result: "the importance of the word was predicated on its paradigmatic substitution for the visual" (Shohat 27).

For Shohat this split between word and image is central to our understanding of the hostility in contemporary adaptation discourse. For her, "any attempt at (visual) representation thus amounts to a sacrilege, precisely because it would force God's invisible abstractness to descend into the bad neighbourhood of the visible and the earthly" (Shohat 27). Shohat's argument draws parallels between the omnipotence of the biblical God as an abstracted voice, who utters and creates and names, and the

contemporary literary discourse, with its revered elevation of author and authorial voice.

This is the key to Shohat's thesis: that the ancient monotheistic hierarchical prescription in the bible – of word over image, of elected speaker over listener and named – is *re*-enacted and carried forward in subsequent cultural and literary forms. Shohat is particularly concerned here with the hostility towards cinema, towards its powerful ability to "delude the spectator into believing in the three-dimensionality of the moving image" (Shohat 41).

But the same may be applied to other "graven" forms involving embodiment and embodied performance, like *theatre*. For all adaptive mediums, according to Shohat, involve a translation of the word into image and space. Again, there is an unresolved contradiction in this re-enactment of the ancient sacred word/profane image divide: while adaptations *affirm* the desirability of the word by venerating the original text with a subsequent iteration, they must, according to the biblical template, be despised as merely a "surrogate icon incapable of surpassing the true god, the supreme textual being" (Shohat 42). As we shall see, such re-enactment also plays its part in perpetuating the idea of a literary canon.

Tracing Literary Strands Of The Divide: Aristotle's Poetics

We have already seen that Bluestone distinguished between the mediums of novel and film on the basis that the former is verbal, the latter visual. This harks back to a more fundamental aesthetic division between mediums, one that may be traced back to Aristotle, who provided an account of "species and their respective capacities": those attributes afforded to "modes of imitation" in *Poetics*. It is contained in his account of *the evolution of tragedy from epic poem*, an evolution that also maps a fundamental bifurcation between word and image, language and embodiment.[16]

Tragedies and Epic poems differ in the "manner" which they represent their "object". Epic poets such as Homer speak "at one moment in narrative and at another in an assumed character". "Plays," on the other hand (are) "termed dramas, because in a play the personages act the story" (Aristotle 52). The epic mode is narrative-based

[16] The evolutionary trajectory of Tragedy evolved through "improvisations", which stopped when it had found its "natural form". This happened incrementally with developments such as more actors, less business for Chorus, the elevation of dialogue, more scenery, multiple acts and magnitude of metre (Aristotle 54).

and consists of words wrought in a particular way – constituted by an amalgam of styles, "that is in one kind of verse and in narrative form" (Aristotle 55). Its mode is diegetic. Narrative and action is *recounted*.

Tragedy, on the other hand, engages its audience through *dramatic action*. Character and action are not merely described, but enacted through mimetic representation. Embodied actors re-present themselves as discernible and identifiable images, three-dimensional iconic representations we, the audience, perceive as "characters;" arousing in us, "pity and fear" (Aristotle 55). Further distinctions ensue. Action in epic poetry, being recounted, has no temporal boundaries, no fixed limit of time. Whereas enactment in tragedy, being embodied representation, is temporally compressed, endeavouring, as far as possible, to keep "within a single circuit of the sun" (Aristotle 55).

The distinction, then, between the two modes is clear. The epic mode is primarily one comprised of language, where words are used to describe and tell the action of the story. Language in this mode functions as an evocative instrument to signify, engage, evoke, inform and recount. Tragedy, on the other hand, being dramatic, incorporates language into the fabric of mimetic re-enactment. But language, thus subsumed into dramatic form, is transformed by action. Reconstituted as enacted and embodied dialogue, words are now incorporated into the embodied visual image.

The influence of this binary word/image divide has been pervasive. Indeed, Aristotle's articulation of these two distinct mediums, along with the different ways in which they engage with their audience – their respective capacities – lies at the heart of *medium specific analysis*, something I will explore more shortly. It also establishes the idea of *equivalence*: that one medium may contain similar content, but be expressed in a different, but equivalent, way. This conceptualisation of the way different mediums express is a central idea running beneath much adaptation theory. It also presents an irreconcilable paradox: each medium is separate and distinct, with completely different ways of expressing content; and yet, within a comparative model, expressing the same content in different mediums forces the issue of communicative equivalence. Bluestone enacts this paradox by declaring novels and film to be distinct and unique, while finding expressive equivalence in a model employing comparison.

Essentiality: Medium Specific Analysis

Aristotle's description of the way the different modes of Epic Poem and Tragedy represent their objects forms a lineage of critical perspective stretching deep into the heartland of adaptation theory. His critique in *Poetics* is based on a simple binary of modes. But this same representational analysis can be applied to a multiplicity of mediums. I would argue that nowhere is Aristotle's analytical influence more apparent than in *medium specific analysis*.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, in his late eighteenth century work, *Laocoon*: *An Essay upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, sought to differentiate mediums on the basis of their specific properties (Lessing 91 – 92; Carroll 41). As the title to his work suggests, Lessing was specifically examining the way the two mediums of painting and poetry worked. He noted that the proper subject matter of each medium could be determined by extrapolating their constituent *physical* properties. This kind of analytical lens laid the foundations for what would become medium specific analysis.

Medium specific analysis is a thread of adaptation theory that seeks to interrogate the different ways mediums communicate, the properties they contain and their modes of representation. Noel Carroll notes that each medium, be it novel, film, theatre or any other, has its own unique artistic domain; that domain being determined by the nature of the medium through which the *objects* of a given art form are composed (Carroll 40). The *nature* of the medium is determined by the physical structure and properties possessed by the medium. Each medium contains essential qualities or *essences* that endow it with a uniqueness and individuality, not only defining it as a medium, but also separating it from others. But medium specificity goes further, advocating a partitioned view of the way mediums operate *in respect to each other*. Each art form should restrict itself to those "effects" that it – and it *alone* – can achieve. Or, as Carroll explains, "each art form should pursue only those effects which, in virtue of its medium, it excels in achieving" (Carroll 40).

Predictably, the tenets of medium specific analysis are contestable. Firstly, a medium's *physical properties* may have little or nothing to do with that medium or the way it expresses (Carroll 42). Secondly, judging mediums according to their properties can simply be used as a way of asserting one medium's superiority over another, usually the source novel. Thirdly, creating fundamental divisions between mediums on the basis of their respective properties is limiting and ignores the way mediums grow and morph with usage.

With respect to this last point, Carroll makes a perceptive observation about mediums and the way they work. His view is that their reach is much more *fluid* than simple medium specific analysis would suggest. In fact, he opines, it is "our purposes that mould the medium's development and not the medium that determines our artistic purposes…" (Carroll 42). His point resonates strongly with my own experience of theatre. Our *purposes* determine which elements and properties we choose to ignite in the medium. These choices give shape to the way the medium functions.

Even a brief snapshot of theatrical endeavour over the past few decades would attest to the fluid 'essentialities' made possible by the intermix of various technologies drawn from a number of different mediums. Theatre regularly borrows from documentary film, expressionistic painting, pop video, reality television and social media, to name a few. The choice of these ingredients is governed by the *purpose* for which they will be used. Indeed, Mike Alfreds echoes this sentiment when discussing what kind of source material is suitable for adaptation: "the choice lies not so much with the material as with an individual's idea of theatre and its parameters" (Alfreds 104).

Despite the above qualifications, medium specificity certainly has its place in adaptation theory. And *practice* as well. Adapting involves transformations from one medium to another: the process of re-mediation. The *host medium* has a set of specific communicative mechanisms available to it, those by which it articulates and enunciates. The *adaptive medium* has *its* own set, ones that are used to transform the novel into its new form. An understanding of both is necessary to effect the transformation.

This is grist for the adapter's mill. Creative endeavours such as *The Ebbingtide Project* involve explorations that test the boundaries of both source and adaptive mediums. Such ventures are usually a matter of trial and error: problems present themselves, solutions are suggested and trialled, outcomes evolve. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 5, freed from the morally charged terrain of adaptation theory, medium essentiality becomes a useful way of describing various considerations along the transformative arc.

The Novel As Adaptive Template: The Issue Of Adaptogenicity

Be it an adapted stage play, a film or television series, the common denominator we often find linking them is their use of novels as source material. Why is this so? The answer is certainly relevant to our broader discussion of adaptation. But it is doubly so, given a novel is the source text for *The Ebbingtide Project*.

Ian Watt, in his 1957 work, *The Rise of the Novel – Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, traced the early epistemological roots of the novel to the eighteenth century, with its emerging trend towards modern realism. It begins, he argues, "from the position that truth can be discovered by the individual through his (sic) senses" (Watt 12). This has its origins in Descartes, Locke and Hume who each contribute to the novel's evolution. Descartes proposed, "the pursuit of truth is conceived of as a wholly individual matter" (Watt 13).

But the real innovation of the novel is one of individual *perspective*. Where previous literary forms made conformity to traditional practice the major test of truth, the new form of the novel asserted individual experience as the ultimate arbiter of reality (Watt 14). This development is attributed to Locke, who defined personal identity as consciousness in duration of time. Individuals are in touch with their continuing identity through *memory* of their past thoughts and actions (Watt 21). Identity, then, becomes linked with the idea of perceived reality and our memory of things perceived.

To this, Hume's idea of the integration of memory with *causation* is added: "Had we no memory, we never should have any notion of causation, nor consequently of that chain of causes and effects, which constitute our self or person" (Watt 21). The principle of individuation occurs when existence is rooted in particular time and space and "they become particular only when both these circumstances are specified" (Watt 21).

Watt here draws the crucial nexus between this epistemological thread of his argument and its application to the novel form. *Characters* in the novel, he argues, can only be *individualised* if they are set in a background of particularised circumstance of time and place. This is the kernel of his thesis: the representation of ideas about personal identity articulated by Descartes, Locke and Hume found expression in the burgeoning novel form. Thus, structures of narrative and character, circumstance and plot became fashioned around the emergent perspective of the individual percipient. The matrix of circumstance is constructed around the fabric of individuated reality;

cause and effect, experience, memory, recollection and finally, the interpretation of events as experienced by the individual, travelling through their own individuated time and space. Watt views this as a major paradigmatic shift away from a Platonic view where Forms and Ideas are "ultimate realities behind the concrete objects of the temporal world" (Watt 21).

Significantly, these fundamental forms of the emerging nineteenth century novel were also absorbed into adaptations *using* them as sources. Theatre, argues Bert Cardullo, did this by creating pictorial realism that drew on novelistic conventions, rendering ships that could sink, locomotives that could collide, and battles that could be fought "with breathtaking spectacle" (Cardullo 2 – 3). But films, being more amenable to such pictorial rendition, "took over this populist realist aesthetic almost immediately" (Cardullo 3). Film, according to this line of argument, became the novel's natural inheritor. Brian McFarlane sees novels and films as existing in symbiotic harmony, each mutually complementing the other, their aims being shared.[17]

But if there is a certain symbiosis between the nineteenth century novel and subsequent developments in film, is there an equivalent relationship between source novels and *theatrical* adaptations? The answer has been partially supplied by one of the major exponents of theatrical adaptation over the past forty years, Mike Alfreds. As a theatrical adapter, Alfreds outlines what makes novels so attractive to him:

> … I believe that what is essential to drama is the interaction of characters as they pursue their goals through life, with all the dilemmas and obstacles, the moral and practical challenges that these throw up, I always look for fiction that provides plenty of action (in both the Aristotelian and Stanislavskian senses) … (Alfreds 105).

Adaptogenicity, as Alfreds sees it, revolves around characters in action: physical and mental. But he goes further, making a powerful inventory of qualities nineteenth century novels possess that make them so amenable to theatrical adaptation:

[17] In his 1996 study *Novel To Film – An introduction to the theory of adaptation* McFarlane explores the notion that both source novel and filmic adaptation share a richly innovative image-based perspective of reality.

> The properties of these novels – realism, psychology, strong plots and action climaxing in scenes of highly charged conflict, intense emotion, vividly individualised characters expressing themselves in rich idiosyncratic language, a layered portrait of society, deeply embedded themes – are all properties of good theatre (Alfreds 105).

The echoes here with Watts' earlier observations on the attributes that gave rise to the novel in the nineteenth century are hard to ignore. This particular iteration of novel, one that developed throughout the nineteenth century, formed the template for adaptations in both film *and* theatre. At their heart is a vision of the world comprised of personal realities – characters – whose individual perspectives allow them to see, think, feel, remember, speak and act in very particular crafted circumstances.

THE LITERARY ANNEXATION OF ADAPTATION

Darker Political Dimensions Of Using Novels As Source Material

It would be easy to conclude from the above account that the overarching nexus between source novel and adaptation is narrative, character and action. Novelistic form provides the rich ore that adaptations can readily translate into their own medium. This allows each medium to straddle the word/image divide, and yet also accommodates a view that they are mutually sustaining, even complementary forms. Viewed in this way, the novel becomes an almost prescient benefactor, offering many foundational elements to its adaptive offspring.

But Robert Ray offers a slightly different view of this mutuality. The novel works as an ideological instrument that *legitimates* the film industry at large, a power drawn from the cultural status of its host medium, literature. It is a mutually advantageous project: for film, which uses the cultural cache of the canonised novel, and for the novel finding new cultural oxygen in its filmic offspring. Ray's opinion would be easy to discount as that of an outlying maverick, *if* it were an isolated case. But it is not. Kamilla Elliott observes that novels have been critically ascribed values that make them *appear* to be the stylistic forerunners to film. Critics have been guilty of creating a false relation between the two based on a "mythological anachronistic aesthetic history" (Elliott, 2003, 114). In other words, the kind of critical construction depicted in the previous section, which portrays the novel as being stylistic forerunner,

is misleading. The explanation for this mischaracterisation is significant and goes to some of the core issues of the limiting frames of adaptation:

> It turns out that the cinematic novel analogy has served literary interests so well that literary scholars have championed it... First, it bestows on novels and novelists seminal, prophetic, and prescient powers, rendering them not only precursors and progenitors of cinema, but also mystical and atemporal ones. Second, it permits literary scholars to encroach on cinematic territory, positioning literary scholars as established experts with solid credentials to discuss films (Elliott, 2003, 114).

It is important to note that Elliott's claim refers not only to film. Literary scholars have championed adaptation of *all* varieties. In some respects, the study of adaptation itself has become owned and appropriated by them. The way we *view* adaptation, the way we examine and analyse it, the critical tools we use, have all in some way or another, been influenced by this critical association with *literature*. It accounts for the limits that have been placed upon its analytical framing. All adaptive mediums, including the theatrical, have to some extent been subsumed into the same governing critical domain: that of literature and those that study it. I will now examine some of the ways in which this has manifested.

The Literary Canon: Its Function In Protecting 'The Word'

One of the ideological cornerstones of a literary-based model comparing source novel with subsequent adaptation is the concept of the *Literary Canon*. Superficially, the adaptation is analysed in terms of variance to the source text. But this variance takes on far greater significance if, as is often the case within a literary-based model, the originating novel is deemed part of this canon. This is where notions of faithfulness and fidelity draw great moral traction.

According to Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg and Meaghan Morris, the term "canon," derived from the Greek *Kanon*, meaning "rule, law, or decree"… (It) has a wide range of applications in religion, the arts, law and literature, but draws its greatest definitional strength from its biblical context: the canonical books, which were seen as inspired, or certified by ecclesiastical authority, as the authentic word of God"

(Bennett et al 20).[18] The bible becomes the canonistic original: authentic, inviolate. All subsequent versions, in the form of authoritative literary works, form a continuing sequence or tradition of holy texts; revered and protected – like the original – from betrayal, perversion and corruption.

Within such a model, variance from the original becomes the cultural rape of a sanctified entity, one valorised within the broad cultural church of English Literature. The canon is created and perpetuated in a new secular literary context, with novels imbued with qualities akin to their original: pure, venerable, numinous. Such an entity therefore needs to be protected against the invading mutant. In a paradigmatic sense, both the root strands of Darwinism and Fidelity – as they operate within adaptation theory – come together in service of their primary cultural function: the preservation of the literary canon; specifically, the protection of the source novel against the marauding re-incarnation, the adaptation. This provides a powerful ongoing narrative, one that gives some credence to claims for the lingering presence of fidelity in a discourse that by now should have moved well beyond it. Importantly, this literary incarnation of canonic belief encompasses not just canon as product, but as agency as well. It casts author/novelist as God/Creator and adapters as invaders, infidels, and violators of the originating Word.

Adaptation's Place In The Great Literary Project

The concept of a literary canon has profound repercussions for the discourse of adaptation, which creates desecration with each enactment. But how did the idea of a sacred canon, one emanating from a *literary* model, migrate so readily into the discourse of *adaptation*? To gain a proper insight into this and other migratory tendencies, I will interrogate some further developments in the parent discourse of literature.

Although a dominant literary figure in the late nineteenth century, Matthew Arnold crops up frequently in critical discussions of adaptation. Why should this be so? James Naremore sheets adaptation theory's obsession with binary oppositions back to Arnold's 1869 work, *Culture and Anarchy*. In it, Arnold asserts "culture is synonymous with great works of art and that the inherited cultural tradition of the Judeo-Christian world, embodied in the best that has been thought and said, can have a

[18] This reverberates back to Ella Shohat's exploratory work on the religious origins of the word/image divide.

civilising influence, transcending class tensions and leading to a more humane society" (Naremore, 2000, 2). The problem with designating literary texts with the sacred duty of protecting the values of civilisation is that adaptations become cast as subversive. Not only do they *destroy* the sacred canonistic texts, they also destroy the *values* those texts represent.

Significantly, Terry Eagleton sees Arnold as the central figure in the institutionalisation of English literature, one of the prime movers in instigating ideas around the formation of the English canon of literature (Eagleton 21). The canon forms part of a greater cultural project to "Hellenise" or cultivate the philistine middle class (Eagleton 21). This would be communicated through education, and specifically through the teaching of English literature. Literature, in this sense, becomes an ideological enterprise, a liberal, humanising influence (Eagleton 22).

Brian McFarlane similarly acknowledges the destructiveness of literary perspectives on adaptation theory, which set up what he terms a "Leavisite evaluative judgement, a high culture/popular culture hierarchy" in which adaptations inevitably fall below the literary text (McFarlane in Welsh and Lev 4). McFarlane's mention of F.R. Leavis here is appropriate. Leavis was, according to Eagleton, the true inheritor of Matthew Arnold, becoming the Cambridge architect of the Great Tradition of English Literature. It was Leavis' 1948 work, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad*, that helped consolidate the conceptualisation of a novelistic canon, arguing in its thesis for a formulation of what was, and was not, worthy of canonistic designation. It was into the fray of such formulations that the study of adaptation was originally thrust.

Adaptation As Literature's Lackey: New Criticism

Why the discourse of adaptation should have become ensnared by *literary* preoccupations is further explored by Robert B. Ray, who attempts to piece together some of the disciplinary and political strands that have created critical frames around adaptation. The first tier of Ray's argument is grounded in the observation that the study of adaptation has focused on *narrative*. This is not difficult to understand. As we have seen, the adaptive template is usually drawn from a narrative-based novel. Studying narrative in adaptations therefore seemed a natural enterprise, since it "legitimised the comparison, demonstrating that as a means of organising information,

narrative is not specific to any one medium" (Ray 39). The next part of Ray's argument is somewhat more provocative.

Because adaptations were being analysed narratively, the natural domain of their study was given over to literature departments of universities, who were, "traditionally charged with the responsibility for narrative" (Ray 39). The study of adaptation *should* therefore have led to an enterprise that focused upon *narrative transmutability*, employing an inter-textual model of analysis, where meaning in the adapted text is subject to an interchange of signs between source novel and adaptation. This would have ensured a mutuality of status between source novel and adaptation.

But something went wrong: the lens of narrative transmutability was *never pursued*. Why? Because these same literature departments were, at this time, under the sway of the dominant literary trend of New Criticism, which tended to restrict critical purview to the way a text functioned *within* its own medium. Being annexed to these same literature departments, adaptation studies simply followed suit. This restricted the study of adaptations to close readings of particular case studies, rather than a broader "more sweeping explanatory poetics" (Ray 45). Situated in "a field growing in the 1960s out of literature departments, the study of adaptation… simply inherited the assumptions of the dominant New Criticism" (Ray 44-45).

New Criticism creates a methodological legacy, one imported into the newer discourse of adaptation: its reliance on individual case studies, the repetitive use of comparison, close textual analysis and its inherent treatment of text as hermetically closed and quarantined from broader sociological contexts of reading (Ray 45). Of those academics that refused to envisage a more open inter-textual model of criticism, Ray argues: "Fearful of seeing literature's narrative role usurped… and under the sway of New Criticism's religious reverence for serious art, these critics typically used adaptation study to shore up literature's crumbling walls" (Ray 46).

The implications of Robert B. Ray's argument are far reaching. He presents the portrait of a nascent academic field of study (adaptation) being held captive by a more powerful and self-protecting one (literature). The consequence of literature departments appropriating the study of adaptation at such a tender point in its development meant that critical modelling became limited and derivative. Little wonder then that fidelity appeared to hold such a plenary position in its critical textures. Of course, such a radical and controversial opinion would easily be

dismissible, *if* Ray were the only one asserting it. Tellingly, he is not.[19] The presence of the larger literary project, with its underlying ideological and methodological preoccupations, is present as opaque adumbrations across the entire discourse of adaptation. It is felt in two ways: in dimensions that are *present,* and in those that are *absent*. Both have worked as active contours guiding flow and direction of adaptation theory. Nowhere is this more palpably evident than in the issue of authorship.

Author! Author!

One of the conceptual lynchpins of New Criticism was the shift in ideas around authorship and authorial intention. Citing the influence of New Criticism over adaptation theory, Ray refers to its critical manifesto, W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley's 1946 essay *"The Intentional Fallacy"*. It is worth reviewing because its central tenets have left a heavy imprimatur on the way we still think, and *don't* think, about adaptation.

In the essay, the authors argue, "the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art" (Wimsatt 3). Moreover, it is impossible to ascertain such a thing as authorial intent. "A poem can *be* only through its *meaning*" (Wimsatt 4). Consistent with the tenets of New Criticism, it is the artefact that speaks for itself, not the artist of the artwork. This fundamental severing of the artwork from the author is crucial to understanding how the artefact exists: "It is only because an artefact works that we infer the intention of the artificer" (Wimsatt 4). The upshot of Wimsatt and Beardsley's thesis is that as literary analysts we can no longer rely on vague interpretations of authorial intent for meaning. Instead, we must give over to the hermetic sanctity of the text and our own responses to it. It is the text itself that holds sway. The author has been excised from the analytical equation.

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[19] Murray refers to adaptation studies' former "handmaiden status to English departments and of literary academics" (Murray, 2012, 2). James Naremore bemoans that the theme of adaptation, as it is taught in literature departments, is often used as a way of teaching celebrated literature by another means (Naremore, 2000, 2). Leitch notes that adaptation study has been absorbed by the pedagogical habits of "close reading and the aesthetic values of literature" (Leitch in *Literature and Literacy*; Welsh and Lev 17). Imelda Whelehan argues the field of adaptation has in the past been dominated by scholars working within a framework of English literature, a perspective that may be more inclined to privilege the originary literary text above its adaptations (Whelehan, 1999, 17). Sarah Cardwell argues that adaptation's restrictive theoretical modelling appears to be "imprisoned" by writers who were trained in English departments (Cardwell 1).

This idea is neatly encapsulated in the title of Roland Barthes' 1967 essay, *'The Death of the Author'*. According to Barthes, we can never know the author or their intentions, for all writing is "that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (Barthes 142). As for the author, "we shall never know (them), for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin" (Barthes 142). The ritualistic slaying of this figure – the death of the author – brings with it liberation of the text from the narrow confines of ownership by an author/God: "a text is not a line of words releasing a single theological meaning (the message of the author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes 146).

The *tissue of quotations* Barthes refers to allow a text – in the process of being read – to move across the boundaries of its own borders, constantly engaging with and interacting with others. Text is relational. Text is inter-text (Barthes 148). Significantly, this revalorisation of author and text creates a new relational space between text and reader. The death of the author gives rise to the birth of the reader: "The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost: a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (Barthes 148).

Like Barthes, Michel Foucault also reappraises the role of the author. In his 1969 essay, '*What is an Author*?' he argues that the idea of the author is historically constructed and constitutes a particular "individualisation in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences" (Harari 141). Its role is merely functional. The author in this context is a socially constructed being, one that frames the work, giving it a particular coherence and authority. Imbued with this authority the text itself becomes property. It gains legal status as a commodity. But yet, copyright law also elevates the text beyond the author. As legal entity, it exists in its own right. This central paradox is resolved thus: "the author was always already dead" (Royle et al 25). Severing the author from critical frames of literature had profound effects for the study of adaptation. If authorial presence vanishes, so does attribution of intent. This is particularly so in adaptations, where the adapter has been erased from discussions of process.

VANISHING AUTHOR, MISSING ADAPTER

Re-Examining Intention In Adaptation

In A *Theory of Adaptation* (2006) Linda Hutcheon asks two fundamental questions of adaptation: *who* adapts, and *why*? These two questions are twin pillars in a greater endeavour; that of installing adapter intention into the landscape of adaptation study. Her argument: in academic circles, "we stopped talking about these dimensions of the creative process some time in the twentieth century" (Hutcheon 106). She attributes this to Wimsatt and Beardsley, Barthes and Foucault, who, she argues, were all protesting, each in their respective ways to having "authorial intent as the sole arbiter and guarantee of the meaning and value of a work of art" (Hutcheon 106-107). She argues that strident professional advocacy in academic circles of both Modernism and New Criticism worked to remove authorial intention from the critical spectrum. "Intentions", Hutcheon opines, "if recoverable, therefore were deemed irrelevant to critical interpretation" (Hutcheon 107).

Critical erasure became political expediency. A general injunction on the use of intention as a critical instrument – the excision of all dimensions of author and authorial intention – gives *the critic,* "not the author or adapter", authority over the text (Hutcheon 107). This is a major statement and turning point in the critical discourse of adaptation, militant in its effect upon critical orthodoxy in both literary and adaptation discourses. Wimsatt and Beardsley wiped authorial intention from the analytical map of literary criticism. Operating beneath the larger canopy of literature, the study of adaptation was compelled to follow suit. In so doing, the discourse of adaptation robbed itself of a powerful analytical instrument, one that would and could have employed *adapter intent* to describe processes taking place *within* adaptation.

Hutcheon's call for its instatement is radical and profound. She believes that traces of the adapter *cling* to the adaptation. They are visible and recoverable. And, whilst these traces *do* exist and have been rescued in other discourses such as feminist, queer, post-colonial, race and ethnic studies, their presence in adaptation theory remains largely unacknowledged. Intent has effectively been outlawed because taking into account the artist's intentions apparently diminishes and reduces literature to mere autobiography and reading to voyeurism (Hutcheon 108).[20]

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[20] To reinforce her argument Hutcheon uses a case study of the Carmelite nuns of Compiegne, a story about a group of nuns who were forced out of their convent in 1792. She plots its history from novel into

For Hutcheon, adaptive processes are embedded with the concerns of the adapter and, perhaps more importantly, the *decisions* that are made throughout the creative project. These lie at the core of the adaptive act:

> In the act of adapting, choices are made based on many factors... including genre or medium conventions, political engagement, and personal as well as public history. These decisions are made in a creative as well as an interpretative context that is ideological, social, historical, cultural, personal, and aesthetic (Hutcheon 108).

This creative context can be traced in two ways: *intra-textual* evidence that comes to us through the text; and *extra-textual* statements of intent and motive often exist, "to round out our sense of the context of creation" (Hutcheon 109). Hutcheon argues that these two kinds of traces give us access to the adapter's voice (Hutcheon 109).

Hutcheon's call for the inclusion of intention into critical frames of adaptation is invaluable. We cannot lay claim to understanding adaptive process if we omit the intentional voice of the adapter from conversations about it. If anything, this may simply be an unfortunate by-product of a false segregation of *critical* from *creative* domains. At present the two are partitioned. Quarantining artistic perspectives from critical domains hinders deeper understanding of adaptive process. Gay McAuley attributes this divide, in part, to "fundamentally different mindsets". Academics construct objects of study. They want critical closure "when the art form gives us the indeterminacy of a continual process of meaning making" (McAuley, 1995, 57). Her own 2012 work, *Not magic but work: An ethnographic account of a rehearsal process,* provides clear evidence that this creative/critical Rubicon can not only be crossed, but crossed with great benefit and insight.[21]

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film, making penetrative use of biographical details about its adapter's imminent death and the intentional nuances this gives the film's evolution and final product (Hutcheon 95 – 105).

[21] McAuley's ethnographic perspective does map some of creative processes taking place in a real world model of rehearsal. But there is some qualification here. Whilst being embedded in the process, her own account is nevertheless one of the outsider looking in at the process. I would argue that such a perspective still presents degrees of opacity in the deep region of artistic intent.

SECTION C:

THE EXPANDING DISCOURSE: IDEAS SHAPING RELATIONAL MODELS OF ADAPTATION

For an academic field that had long laboured under the critical yoke of its literary parent, it was perhaps inevitable that adaptation study would eventually turn its analytic gaze outwards. Recent developments – those most closely aligning with Murray's second and third waves of adaptation criticism – generally reflect a theoretical push away from close textual orientation towards more *relational* models. This same centrifugal urge, whilst doing little to inject adapter presence into critical frames, nonetheless, offers fresh and useful new ways of viewing adaptations.

DISMANTLING HIERARCHIES: THE DESTRUCTION OF THE STABLE SELF

Inherent in notions of fidelity is the idea that an originating core of a novel can pass into a later adaptation. This passage relies for its efficacy on an intentioned individual, an author, who has consciously imbued the original work with a spirit, one that can be invaginated into the adaptive work. We have already seen the collective influence of Wimsatt and Beardsley, Barthes and Foucault in breaking down the notion of a stable authorial self. But they were not alone.

Sigmund Freud, Mary Klages notes, sought to reconstitute a humanist model of *the self*, one where conscious rationality of the "I" self would control the unconscious (Klages 74). For Robert Stam, such constructions of a stable self have subsequently been discredited (Stam and Raengo, 2004, 9). Jacques Lacan, for instance, claims the psychoanalytic project to establish a stable self is impossible. The ego can never take the place of the unconscious because the "I" self is only an illusion, a product of the unconscious itself. And the elements of the unconscious – wishes, desires, images – are all part of a signifying chain which constantly shifts and slides as the self tries to find stable meanings, ultimately failing in the attempt (Klages 76). The ramifications for adaptation theory run deep. If, Stam asks, authors are "fissured, fragmented, multi-discursive, hardly present, even to themselves… how can an adaptation communicate the 'spirit' or 'self-presence' of authorial intention" (Stam and Raengo, 2004, 9)?

SHIFTING TEXT OUTWARDS: THE NOTION OF INTERTEXT

Freed from any governing authorial spirit, texts – or perhaps, more correctly, those that study them – are free to roam wide. All texts, argues Graham Allen, "whether they be literary or non-literary, are viewed by modern theorists as lacking in any kind of independent meaning" (Allen 1). The mere act of reading invokes a network of textual relations. To discover meaning in any text, we must trace those relations (Allen 1). Allen sheets these inter-textual developments in critical thinking back to Ferdinand de Saussure, who supplied "a recognition of the relational nature of the word" (Allen 14). The focus on the microcosmic relations in sign systems allows us to question the way each medium – source novel and adaptation – functions. Such perspectives also force a rethink of hallowed assumptions about authorship and the place of canonic hierarchies between source texts and adaptations.

But *linguistic* notions of synchronic relations between sign systems are only one influence in the move towards intertextual perspectives of adaptation. Russian literary theorist M.M. Bakhtin developed Saussure's principles into *social* domains (Allen 16; Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978; Bakhtin/Volosinov, 1986). Language, according to Bakhtin, cannot be separated from the social setting that surrounds it. It is always in a, "ceaseless flow of becoming" (Allen 18; Bakhtin/Volosinov 66). No utterance exists in isolation, but is by its nature *social* or *dialogic*. Words act as a bridge between speaker and listener, who are in a constant dialogue with each other (Bakhtin/Volosinov, 1986, 86).

This idea is pivotal to the paradigmatic framing of the way a particular medium speaks to its audience. It also explains within a relational frame how meaning migrates from one medium to another. Combined, these two layers – the way each medium speaks and the way meaning migrates across mediums – can be used to analyse the way an *element* from a novel transposes into its new theatrical setting.[22]

Allen claims that Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic is the forerunner of *intertextuality*.[23] No utterances exist singularly, but "are shot through with other, competing and conflicting voices" (Allen 27). Liberated from a hierarchical lens, texts

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[22] By the use of term *element* here, I mean a particular feature of the novel, whether it be narrative-based, compositional, a moment in a scene, the way a character is presented, or a linguistic dimension of the work.

[23] This, despite the fact that Bakhtin was writing half a century before what Stam describes as the influence of structuralist semiotics of the 1960's and 1970's, which treated all signifying practices as shared sign systems (Stam and Raengo, 2004, 8).

can be examined as part of the same continuum. All are in a constant state of flux and becoming. All are refracted and shaped by what precedes and influences them; ultimately released back out into the world in the full knowledge that more will follow as a consequence. No text is an individual isolated object, but is a compilation of "cultural textuality", one that requires readers to "step into the production of meaning" (Allen 34; Kristeva, 1980, 36-63). This takes us back to Barthes' idea that all text is a *tissue of meaning* (Barthes 146). All texts have a myriad of cultural reference points and intersections.[24] We, as readers, bring these cultural references to our attendance of the text.

PERFORMANCE AS TEXT

If readers contribute to the production of meaning, so too, do theatrical audiences. The place of audience has become part of the broadening critical field of adaptation. One of the detriments caused by situating adaptation in literature departments is that scripts such as the *Ebbingtide* script are defined as literary rather than performative entities. This modal misplacement denies the active relationship they have with their audience. Gay McAuley opines that the performance event has always been problematic. She calls for it to be "seen as a mode of oral cultural production" (McCauley, 1995, 56-7).

Williams, too, sees a shift away from a template "privileging the play text and the author", towards the post-modern phenomena of "privileging the contemporary encounter with such texts" (McConochie et al 512). The encounter he refers to here is between the performance and its audience. Revalorising text and performance in this way has deep significance to adaptation practice. Theatrical adaptations do not just exist on the page. Like other theatrical forms they engage with audiences.

Textual drafts of the play script of *Ebbingtide* were always liminal, always transitional, being contingent upon performative dimensions of rehearsal and performance, where embodied transactions reshape and actualise earlier text-based versions. Drafting of scripts is filtered through with the anticipation of reception: that joint text between performers and audience. Text in these performative encounters is relational, being merely the end-point in a long procedural arc. For Hutcheon, "every

[24] Perhaps the most fully developed expression of theory tracing this tissue of influences was Gerard Genette's work *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, which attempted, through a comprehensive taxonomic scheme, to show the various ways texts could be related.

live staging of a printed play could theoretically be considered an adaptation in its performance since the implements of performance; 'gestures, expressions, and tones of voice' are all adaptations made by performers at the point of final performance text" (Hutcheon 39).

CAN ADAPTATIONS TRANSLATE?

Relational perspectives of adaptation brought with them a renewed focus on the way mediums interact with each other. One of the arising tropes applied to adaptation is translation. Languages can be translated, but can mediums? The idea is contentious. The term *translation* reminds us that both the source novel and the theatrical adaptation are each constituted by their own language and system of signification. Translation therefore becomes a way of describing the way language in the source medium finds new expression in its adaptive offspring.

Some, like Gerard Genette, dispute such a conceptualisation. Each language has its own notional distribution of meaning and signification, therefore its own degree of *un*translatability. No translation can be completely faithful. Every translation distorts, to some extent, the meaning of the translated text (Genette 214 – 215). So, adaptation can only ever be an imperfect distortive act. For Elliott, too, adaptations can never translate. In fact, they commit multiple heresies in the attempt: words and images cannot translate, form and content cannot be separated and one signifier can only have one signified. "If words and images do not and cannot translate", she asks, "and if form does not and cannot separate from content... then what remains to pass between a novel and a film in adaptation" (Elliott 4)? However, R. Barton Palmer's opinion is less absolute. Translation as a trope is useful because "it emphasises… the shared identity of source and adaptation", but "is also distorting, for it postulates a 'carrying over' of some irreducible set of features or qualities from one text to another" (Stam and Raengo, 2004, 261).

So, is there any benefit in using translation as a way of looking at adaptation? It depends on how tightly or loosely one defines it. Elliott's strict definition absolutely forbids it. But Walter Benjamin argued that no "translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original. For in its afterlife… the original undergoes a change" (Benjamin in Lodge and Wood 73 – 74). For Benjamin, the task of translation is to create a *living equivalence*, the task of the translator to find an echo of the original, where "the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation

of the work in the alien one" (Benjamin 76). The idea of equivalence is important here. It opens up the possibility that mediums can represent in ways that, whilst not exactly the same, might resemble or be equivalent to those in the original source medium.

If we allow the concept of equivalence to enter the analytical field, then equivalence and resemblance can be used in critical methodology. Andrew acknowledges this in his reference to Metz's principle of *resemblance*, which states that different sign systems do bear some resemblance to one another (Andrew 33). For Andrew, different sign systems "construct in their own way… (and are) indeed commensurable" (Andrew 32). In a theatrical context, Duska Radosavljevic agrees on this point. Translations, she argues, can never be literal. However, they might be identifiable in terms of figurative likeness, which ultimately means reconfiguring content from the source medium into its stage vocabulary (Radosavljevic 70 – 71).[25]

Robert Stam also entertains the idea that a widened lens of translation could be used to describe adaptation. "The trope of adaptation as translation", he argues, "suggests a principled effort of inter-semiotic transposition, with the inevitable losses and gains typical of any translation" (Naremore 62). Stam's own intertextual project for adaptation reverberates with echoes of this broad translational lens. The filmic adaptation of a novel performs transformations according to the protocols of its own "generative grammar" (Stam and Raengo, 2004, 46).

I would argue adaptation is a particular kind of translation; one that admits each medium – source or adaptation – uses its own very different communicative language or grammar. Exact replication is not its point or purpose. Benjamin's *living equivalence* and Stam's *energetic* redistributions both resonate strongly as active translational reference points. From the perspective of the adapter describing their own ongoing practice, admitting translation as an operant trope opens a vital portal into the processes of adaptation, one with the potential of describing *what* grammatical elements have been translated, *how* they travelled from one medium to the next, and *why* redistributive choices were made: the *what*, *how* and the *why* of adaptive transformation.[26]

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[25] When he mounts a theatrical production, director, Ivo van Hove of Tonelgroep Amsterdam speaks of translating the text into tonal textures, creating what he calls an X-ray of the text. By this he means he reduces a text to its barest core feature (Laera 55).

[26] In an interview with Roger Baines and Manuela Perteghella for their 2011 book, *Staging and Performing Translation: text and theatre practice*, playwright Christopher Hampton distinguishes between translations, versions and adaptations on the basis of deviance from the original. Translations most closely adhere to the spirit and text of the original. Versions are re-creations where exact adherence

NARRATOLOGY

Earlier in this chapter, I outlined Robert B. Ray's argument that the annexation of adaptation studies to literature departments resulted in a disciplinary preoccupation with closed textual reading and narrative. Nonetheless, specialist focus on narrative has led to a deeper understanding of how transpositions between mediums occur.

Narratology looks at the way narrative or story is conveyed. Seymour Chatman describes narrative as a deep structure independent of its medium. It is a kind of textual organisation that needs to be actualised within that medium. Actualisation may occur in various forms: written words, spoken words, in drawings, in dance movements, in mime and music (Chatman in Mitchell 117 – 118). In a narratological frame, the medium becomes the means of expressing the story, its "subject" (Gaudreault and Marion in Stam and Raengo, 2004, 58). Medium and subject interact in a physical encounter. They wrestle, as the medium attempts to capture the opacity of the subject through a process of resistance and actualization (Stam and Raengo, 2004, 58).

This kind of frame is doubly useful. It helps us to analyse the way each medium *expresses* narrative. And it helps us to *compare* these different expressions. Different aspects of narrative can also be explored within a medium. Film narratologists, for example, regularly examine the way adaptations deal with time.[27] A narratological frame can also compare the way perspective is used: who sees and knows what, and what we see and by what means. It can also give insight into the larger fabric of story presentation and the various modes of narrative presentation.[28]

There are many such narratological projects. Gaudreault and Marion propose *narrative mediatrics* as the model for studying such an encounter. The authors define it as an examination of an adaptive medium's intrinsic capacity to represent and communicate a representation. They argue "that capacity is determined by the technical possibilities of the medium, by the internal semiotic configurations that it

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to the linguistic textures of the original is not as closely followed. Adaptations send a clear 'signal' that they are changed from the original (Baines et al 184).

[27] Stam notes most analysis of this kind draws upon Genette's three characteristics of novelistic time: order (sequence), duration (how long) and frequency (how often) (Stam and Raengo, 2004, 32). This allows for a detailed comparison describing how temporal dimensions of the novel have migrated across into the adaptation. This kind of temporal analysis harks back to Bluestone's medium specific analysis of the way novels and films respectively deal with time (Bluestone 50 – 51).

[28] Different modes of narrative may be, for instance: auto-diegetic (where the narrator tells his/her own story), homodiegetic (where the narrator is part of the story but is not the central protagonist), and heterodiegetic (where the narrator is outside the main story action) (Stam and Raengo, 2004, 37).

calls up, and by the communicational and relational apparatuses that are able to be put in place" (Stam and Raengo, 2004, 59).

Brian McFarlane's 1996 work *Novel to Film* also stands as an exemplar of narratological endeavour. The aim of his project is to "offer and test a methodology for studying the process of transposition from novel to film, with a view not to evaluate one in relation to the other, but to establishing the *kind* of relations…" (McFarlane Preface vii). His first focus is on *classifications* of narrative elements (McFarlane 12).[29] His second, is the *enunciation* of narrative, or "the whole expressive apparatus that governs the presentation – and reception – of the narrative" (McFarlane 20).[30]

Novel to Film presents these principles in a series of five close comparative case studies, utilising what Cardwell describes as a "coherent theoretical grounding", which is a combination of narrative-based and semiotic analysis (Cardwell, 2002, 58). These twin pillars of his analytical frame – a micro taxonomy of narrative and a study of the way narrative works within each medium – are applied to each of the case studies. It is a highly wrought and close in its study, allowing him to penetrate not only deep into narrative structures, but also into the various transferences and equivalences of the filmic adaptation.[31]

A narratological perspective is familiar to the adapter. They are used to the physical encounters between texts. They wrestle constantly with the subject they are adapting, with the various forms of resistance they find in the source text, as they struggle to actualise it in their adaptive medium. Detailed analytical mechanisms offered by a narratological frame are useful in describing the ongoing transpositions being made during the adaptive process.

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[29] The classification of McFarlane's narrative elements draws heavily on Roland Barthes schema of narrative structures in *Image, Music, Text* (Barthes 89).

[30] Echoing McFarlane's principle of enunciation, Hutcheon describes the way different mediums enunciate through what she terms "modes of engagement". There are three modes: *telling, showing* and *interacting*. Modal engagement allows us "to think about how adaptations allow people to tell, show, or interact with stories" (Hutcheon 132).

[31] To illustrate, McFarlane's analysis of David Lean's 1946 film adaptation of Charles Dickens' novel *Great Expectations* presents the broad context of the novel's first publication as a serial. He then breaks the narrative structure of the novel down into detailed incidents, followed by a close comparison between narrative structures in novel and film. Next, he deals with narrative and character *functions*, the way each operate in both mediums and the various enunciative mechanisms used by both.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL TURN

In 1984 Dudley Andrew articulated the need for adaptations to be seen as a "cultural enterprise" (Naremore 30).[32] It was time, he opined, "for adaptation studies to take a sociological turn" (Naremore 35). This critical call to arms acknowledged that each adaptation was the product of broader cultural influences and practices outside the boundaries of its own text (Naremore 37). This sociological turn argues for what R. Barton Palmer describes as a consideration of institutional and contextual issues surrounding adaptation, for "it is within a disciplinary framework of cultural materialism that a sociologically oriented adaptation studies might find its most appropriate and welcoming home" (Stam and Raengo, 2005, 258-260).

In her 2012 work, *The Adaptation Industry: the cultural economy of contemporary literary adaptation* (hereafter *The Adaptation Industry*), Simone Murray – whose comments on the three waves of adaptation theory began this survey of critical material – provides a glimpse into the potential reach of such a sociological turn. She proposes that we see adaptations "not as an exercise in textual analysis of individual books and their screen versions, but as a material phenomenon produced by a system of institutional interests and actors" (Murray, 2008a, 10). *The Adaptation Industry* examines various industrial dimensions of adaptation: commercial conceptualisations of author, its legal context, its role in the literary industry, its industry stakeholders and its marketing instruments.

It is a vast and impressive project, one that shines light into darkened domains of the critical discourse. In a description harking back to its biological roots, adaptation is again cast as an ecosystem. And, "like all ecosystems, the adaptation industry functions according to complex patterns of feedback and responsiveness, with changes in role and status of specific agents affecting the structure of the field as a whole" (Murray, 2012, 186). It is designed to "highlight the processes facilitating the creation of certain kinds of adaptations" (Murray, 2012, 185). Murray's critical take is perceptive and useful. As I shall demonstrate in Chapter 4, theatrical adaptation, whilst different from its filmic counterpart in detail, scale and nuance, inhabits its own performative ecosystem. It evolves according to its own complex patterns of feedback. It responds to its own surrounding sociological and cultural influences, influences that

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[32] Dudley Andrew first expressed this perspective in his 1984 book, *Concepts in Film Theory*. The idea was later revisited as a separate chapter in James Naremore's book *Film Adaptation* under the title, *Adaptation* (29 – 37).

can be described and used to examine creative decision-making in *The Ebbingtide Project.*

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE: JANIS BALODIS AND MIKE ALFREDS

One of my preliminary observations about the adaptation discourse was its film-centricity. Whilst generally true, there are recent developments in the specific domain of theatrical adaptation of some importance.

Duska Radosavljevic, in her 2013 work, *Theatre Making: Interplay Between Text and Performance*, devotes a chapter to Devising and Adaptation, a combination which both acknowledges a growing interest in the field of theatrical adaptation, and, in my opinion, a tendency to conflate two very separate sub-genres of theatrical practice: devising and adaptation. Whilst she makes some interesting points on both – observing, for instance, devising's tendency to work from unscripted origins and adaptation's ongoing wrestle with the issue of fidelity – her critical coverage of theatrical adaptation is somewhat thin, reflecting perhaps her greater purpose of cataloguing recent trends in theatre *making*.

Somewhat more focussed is Margherita Laera's 2014 work *Theatre and Adaptation: Return, Rewrite, Repeat*, which comprises a series of interviews with theatrical practitioners. Interestingly, these interviews reveal little about insider perspectives of theatrical adaptation, and much about the reluctance of theatrical practitioners to apply the term 'adaptation' to their work at all, perhaps further evidence of the pejorative status still inherent in the term.[33]

More significantly, there are two recent contributors who like me, practice adaptation and speak of their practice. One is a playwright and academic, the other a broad-based theatre practitioner.[34] Importantly, too, both share a highly relevant perspective. Being adaptation practitioners they articulate the voice of the insider.

The first is Janis Balodis, a major Australian playwright with a career spanning more than three decades. Writing in a similar context to the current study – a 2012

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[33] Typical, is Peter M. Boenisch's interview with Flemish theatre director Ivo van Hove. When asked whether he uses *adaptation* as a term in relation to his work, van Hove bluntly replies, "to be honest, not really". Revealingly, it is one of the few references to adaptation made in this or any of Laera's collection of interviews (Laera 51).

[34] Of course, with many decades of work in theatre between them their experience is much wider than this simplistic nomenclature would suggest. Both have worked as theatre collaborators and directors, both have spent considerable time in tertiary institutions training professional actors. I describe them here as recent contributors only in the sense that their specific writings I refer to are relatively recent in the terrain of adaptation theory.

PhD submission – Balodis articulates a tripartite methodology (Balodis 1).[35] This tripartite approach makes critical inroads on a number of fronts. Firstly, as a creative writer he uses the creative processes of his adapting projects as the raw material of his adaptation study. Secondly, as a practitioner he situates his research within both the site and activity of adaptation. This allows him transparent access to decision-making dimensions of his work. Thirdly, using extant analytical instruments of adaptation (mostly drawn from the filmic domain) he creates ways of articulating transformations occurring between source material and his adaptations.[36] This accompanies his own "acquired professional artistry 'learnt by doing' over a longstanding professional career as actor, director and writer" (Balodis 1). His final contextual layer consists of the commissioning brief (Balodis 1). His intention is clear: "I am researching creative practice through reflective practice and exegetical inquiry" (Balodis 6). The subject of his study is two original theatrical adaptations, one arising from an existing Nick Earls novel, *Perfect Skin*, the other arising from factual and anecdotal material collected by Balodis entitled, *Red Cap*.

The second contributor is Mike Alfreds, whose 2012 opus, *Then What Happens* is not only a chronicle of his personal journey as an adapter, but also a 'how-to' handbook on the craft of theatrical adaptation. The work is a highly personalised insider account of the evolution of Alfreds' own adaptation techniques with his *Shared Experience Theatre Company* in England. It is based on a simple principle: "all you needed to create theatre were actors with stories to tell and audiences to tell them to" (Alfreds 9). He also deals with the practical issues of theatrical adaptation: transforming narrative material intended to be read or told.

Alfreds divides his work into two distinct sections. Part One deals with the *what* of adaptation: what one is doing in creating narrative-based theatre or story-theatre, the conditions necessary to create it, the various component parts of narrative and the basic principles of transformation. Part Two is concerned with the *how* of adaptation and contains a comprehensive breakdown of adaptation skills, presented in the format of sixty workshops, each focussing on specific areas of the adapter's craft.

Alfreds compares source stories and plays with a precise practitioner's eye. Source stories such as novels, may be read at the pace of the reader. Their length,

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[35] Balodis, J. *The Practice of Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction into Theatre*: submission for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy – Queensland University of Technology, 2012.
[36] Balodis' critical lens consists of a comparative analysis giving "close consideration" to generic, authorial and medium-specific contexts, as well as a focus on elements of narrative (Balodis 1).

number of locations and characters are unlimited. They flit easily between past, present and future. They may contain dialogue, description or commentary. They can sustain multiple points of view, may teem with physical action or inhabit the "depths of a character's psyche" (Alfreds xxiv). Plays, on the other hand, are written to be performed, their texts comprising components of the dramatic: dialogue, people interacting with each other and occasionally with us, with minimal descriptions of behaviour or appearance, limited characters and locations, action that mostly proceeds chronologically, with characters revealed rather than explained (Alfreds xxiii – xxiv). Each story requires a unique treatment. It is the infinite variety of their demands that will "light the fuse of your imagination" (Alfreds xxiv).

Alfreds' view of his own practice as an adapter is simple: "I try to keep my adaptations as close as possible to their original texts, incorporating not only the dialogue but as much as I can of their narrative, precisely to retain the authorial voice" (Alfred 16). Significantly, too, he sees the wide arc of the adaptation project as traversing all stages of remediation or "the whole journey from page to stage" (Alfreds xxv). Most relevantly, the end-point of the adaptive journey is always firmly fixed upon its destination – the audience. As the name of his company suggests, all of his adapting energy is directed towards the "shared experience" of the theatrical medium itself, actors and audience creating together. This exists on two levels: the co-sharing of what Alfreds terms the "here and now", between the actors and their audience; and the "there and then", between the audience and the characters being played by the actors within the context of the play (Alfreds 27).

For Alfreds, story is the glue allowing this duality to occur. The performance style he and his company have evolved to facilitate the source novels' theatrical equivalents is unique. The empty theatrical space is the starting point for storytelling. Technologies may be seductive, but "their siren songs can lure… practitioners aground in the shallows of deceptive effects" (Alfreds 33). An empty space is the "visual equivalent of Once upon a time" (Alfreds 36). He carefully articulates the way theatre can be used as a blank canvas to create the reconstituted theatrical rendering of the novel world. Theatre is a "medium of visual synecdoche: a single chair may represent a room, but each member of the audience will see a room of their own, of their own imagining" (Alfreds 36 – 37). It does not literalise in the same way as film, but creates its own suggestive luxuriance.

Running beneath the powerful sinews of Alfreds' analytical system for adaptation is a clear-sighted understanding of key transformative elements of novel to play adaptation, one firmly steeped in a thorough working knowledge of his own adaptive medium. Like Balodis, whose final layer of methodology arises from his own "acquired professional artistry", Alfreds has learnt from doing. The knowledge and insight both bring to the adaptation discourse is significant because they, like me, are writing as reflective practitioners from the inside.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON THE DISCOURSE OF ADAPTATION

Looking back over sixty odd years of adaptation discourse, at its myriad oscillations, I am struck by the great range of ideas and critical textures. It certainly is self-reflexive, arguably the by-product of its perceived marginality as an area of academic study. But it is anything but moribund. Being a relative infant, its growth has understandably been somewhat corralled, if not stymied, by the firm yoke of its parents: literature and film. The protracted preoccupation with fidelity evidences a degree of uncertainty at the core of its genetic make-up. The inheritance of analytical trends such as the negation of authorial intention, has also created critical blind spots in its fabric – those that otherwise might have harnessed adapter perspectives.

Whilst this preoccupation with fidelity has created an almost obsessive fixation on comparing source novels with their adaptive offspring, the same fixation has, nonetheless, produced powerful and diverse instruments of analysis. *Medium specific analysis* drew close attention to the *properties* different mediums possessed. This allowed for deeply penetrative insight into their unique ontologies and functioning. Bluestone's study into the way novels and films make us *see* still stands as a critical cornerstone. McFarlane's investigation of *narrative transference* and the way different mediums *enunciate* can be sheeted directly back Bluestone's legacy. Perhaps ironically, too, given its exclusionary effect on adapter presence, New Criticism's insistence on restricting analysis to the artistic work itself has led to deeper critical probing of individual case studies of adaptations.

These same longstanding critical preoccupations have given rise to another powerful impulse within the discourse: the need to move it forward. New relational perspectives are part of this impulse. Widening critical apertures to include adaptations as *translation* means that principles of *equivalence* can be entertained when discussing them. Barthes' metaphorical killing of the author paved the way for adaptations to be

viewed as being part of a broader tissue of cultural influence. Stam's *energetic* interpretation of the way different works *speak* to each other is a similar appeal for a more outwardly inflected discourse. When Dudley Andrews opined that it was time for adaptation studies to take a more *sociological turn*, Murray answered the clarion call by examining industrial contexts in which it occurred.

All these shifts and developments occurred within a culture of critical foment, one borne of a unique disciplinary mix and history. But because of a deeply felt insecurity running through its veins, change has often brought with it an air of religious zeal, a muted desperation wherein each new wave of reform is seen as cancelling out all the others that led to it. The discourse of adaptation does not have a simple arc or trajectory. It is divergent in theory and practice.

At the moment, there are holes in the discourse, ones that serve as indicators for new exploration. The insider perspective, particularly as it manifests in a theatrical setting, is one such area. I have traced in this chapter some of the root causes and underlying currents of ideas that have brought this about. But if the history of the critical field of adaptation is anything to go by, one can take heart that this occlusion is not an end-point. Hutcheon's articulate call for adapter intentions to be instated in critical thinking, along with the practice-based contributions of Balodis and Alfreds, would suggest there is development in this area. Sarah Cardwell, describing her aspiration for the future of adaptation, writes:

> What I hope to see in the future is an aesthetics of adaptation, entailing both the responsive appreciation of individual artworks... and thus the art of adaptation, and also a careful, conceptual, comparative exploration of key issues, including medium specificity, authorship, style, and evaluation, and a consequently greater understanding of the specificity and potential of the arts... (Welsh and Lev 62 – 63).

Her aspiration is one built on the platform of various waves and approaches. It is in some ways also an acknowledgement that future innovation will be built around existing threads of critical discovery. It is a balanced approach, accepting and capturing the specifics of an individual artwork using a hybrid mix of existing critical tools, one drawing on the long heritage of adaptation theory.

In the next chapter, I will describe the unique features of my own project, along with methodological considerations emanating from them. I will then, in the two following chapters (Chapters 4 and 5) outline a model to capture the perspective of the insider, a perspective that I have already argued is strangely absent from the panoply of extant critical frames. The model I propose will consist of a situating circumstantial lens, along with a composite lens composed of my own insider narrative of the project. Together, these will describe my own intentional action of evolving the play *Ebbingtide*. Like Cardwell's expression of future hope, it will be composed of an eclectic mix of different critical machinery applied to my own adaptation practice.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTER

In the preceding chapter I surveyed the broader critical terrain surrounding the discourse of adaptation. In this chapter, I turn my critical gaze inwards towards the specifics of *The Ebbingtide Project* itself: its methodological overlay and those creative and critical dimensions defining it. I examine, more closely, its distinguishing features: its adaptive origins, its theatrical iteration, its original source material, my own multiple presences in it and its adaptive scope from page to stage. I then move on to discuss the methodological implications arising from these features: its address to a particular lacuna in the critical terrain, its qualitative nature and the effects of a participatory mode of reflective practice. I note the traps inherent in its autoethnographic complexion, before applying Mafe and Brown's four criteria for practice led research. Finally, I construct my own insider model for the project based on the twin perspectives of circumstance and insider narrative, which together situate the project within a frame of *intentional action*.

CRITICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE PROJECT

The Ebbingtide Project is performance research framed as an individual case study, in which I adapt my own original novel *Ebbingtide* into a stage play of the same name. It aligns with Nelson's notion of praxis as "theory imbricated within practice", focused as it is on both the creation of the play *and* a study of the processes and decisions involved in remediation (Nelson 5).[37]

Critical dimensions contextualise the adaptation within its immediate performative environment, describing those circumstances that influenced and, in various ways, governed decisions being made during the play's creation. I will detail this performative environment in Chapter 4. Having outlined that environment, I will then map the overall adaptive journey in Chapter 5. Procedural developments will be presented as an insider narrative of the adaptation process: my first contact with the

[37] The project also aligns with Brad Haseman's definition of practice led research as capturing "the nuances and subtleties of ... research processes... (It) asserts the primacy of practice and insists that because creative practice is both on-going and persistent, practitioner researchers do not merely 'think' their way through... a problem, but rather they 'practice' to a resolution" (Barrett and Bolt 147).

original story, initial issues arising from my early textual encounter with the novel, my preliminary textual excavation, my narrative concerns for the evolving work, my drafting of the rehearsal script, along with examples of developments occurring during performative stages of rehearsal.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

It Originates From A Creative Act: Turning A Novel Into A Play

As we have seen from my survey of the adaptation discourse, many writers, like Simone Murray, situate themselves in the larger landscape of adaptation, choosing from this perspective to make broad topographical observations about critical trends or waves. Others, like Kamilla Elliott, choose to focus their attention on specific issues, like the word/image divide. Others still, like George Bluestone and Brian McFarlane, explore overarching analytical issues – such as variance or narrative transformation – by situating them within individual case studies. In this instance, critical writers work from the outside *in*, moving from broader issues to specific illustration. *The Ebbingtide Project*, on the other hand, is a single case study, one in which I use the act of creation as the starting point for analysis. Its distinguishing feature is its dual critical perspective, one where I both describe the circumstances surrounding the creation of the play and my own experiences inside the processes of adapting. In this respect, it is a situated narrative.

It Is A *Theatrical* Adaptation Of A Novel

As I noted in Chapter 1, when researchers such as Simone Murray describe the adaptation industry, they are usually referring to its dominant iteration: a filmic adaptation from a source novel. *The Ebbingtide Project*, on the other hand, involves the adaptation of a novel into a stage play. Whilst there is some overlap with its filmic counterpart – my play adaptation, for instance, often uses a novel as its source – the properties of theatre and film are substantively different: their ontological underpinnings, their means of representation. The entire caste of analysis in *The Ebbingtide Project* concerns my rendering of the novel in theatrical terms.

But there are deeper truths to theatricalising my novel. I concluded the previous chapter with Sarah Cardwell's hope for a future aesthetics of adaptation that was both responsive to individual artworks and contained a careful conceptual and comparative exploration of key issues within them (Welsh and Lev 62-63). I strongly concur with

her sentiment and have applied them to my own theatrical project. My analysis of the adaptation of *Ebbingtide* draws on multiple threads of the extant discourse, applied within the context of my own artistic practice as adapter. That practice is theatrical in nature *and* craft.

To illustrate: considering a particular passage from my novel for remediation in the play, I must firstly assess the merit of its inclusion. This engages with my overall theatrical *purpose* for the play: its shape, its feel, and its place in the overall theatrical scheme. Should I decide to include it, I must assess what prose elements are involved and how these elements might be rendered onstage. Such assessment involves a multi-laminate approach, engaging *medium specific analysis* to each of my two mediums: how they operate, how they represent, their strengths and limitations, their respective enunciatory mechanisms. I must pay careful attention to the delicate passage of transposition: how elements from the novel might be *translated* to those of the play, the deployment of *theatrical equivalents.* All this is undertaken within a general framework of ongoing *comparison* – always returning to the question of *variance* between novel and its theatrical counterpart. Overriding all these layers is the guiding principal of artistic purpose or *intention*, that of both novelist and theatrical adapter. Finally, all decisions must be filtered through the governing theatrical end-point: the anticipation of the *audience* and their reception of the newly constituted material.

It Is Based On An Original Novel: An Unpublished Work

In chapter 2, I interrogated issues arising from using novels as source material for adaptations, their adaptogenicity. Often, a complicating layer to the template of using novels as donor texts is that they are *known* texts. That is, novels are already known in their original novelistic form by their readers/audience. This initially caused adaptation criticism to be preoccupied with moralistic arguments revolving around fidelity and the subversion of canonistic texts. Later, it led critical writers to examine the complex intertextual relationships underlying our understanding of *all* texts.

But in *The Ebbingtide Project* the source novel is not part of an existing canon. Nor is it a known text. It is an original novel written by me, one that was never published, and is in some ways, still in a state of flux and openness. How is this significant? Well, firstly, my analysis will be free from the confining shackles of a hierarchical fidelity frame. The nascent and developing state of both texts means neither has primacy over the other. Secondly, by working with two *cleanskin* texts the

palimpsestuous ghost that inhabits many adaptations – and our prior experience of them – has effectively been removed. The audience of my play has no prior experience of the novel. It is not relevant to them or their experience of it. Analysis is therefore free to explore other domains, such as the broader tissue of influences permeating the work itself. Thirdly, because both source novel and play are evolving, both can be scrutinised as living, open and ongoing. There is, in a sense, a live conversation running between them. My analysis of them is also free to reflect the contingency of ongoing remediation, the open dialogue passing between the two works as they *speak* to each other. This dialogue, of course, is enabled by another important dimension to the analytical frame: I am both novelist and adapter/playwright.

The Multiple Roles Of A Situated Presence

Freeman observes that it is not normally the role of artists to give commentary on their work (Freeman ix). Indeed, within the domain of adaptation studies this critical normativity would seem to have thus far held sway. Conventional studies are undertaken amidst layers of critical refraction. Usually, one person writes the source novel, another creates the adaptation; another still, gives commentary from outside the works on purported transactions occurring between both.

But what if these layers of refraction were nullified? What if creative and critical dimensions of a project were no longer partitioned, but conducted alongside each other in an embedded way? As novelist, adapter/playwright, director and researcher I navigate the open pathways between novel and play, creating a bridge between creative processes and critical commentary that accompanies them, articulating these processes and analysing them throughout various stages of my arts practice.

Being at the helm of both textual and performative realms gives me direct, unfettered access to all levels of creative decision-making. Situated i*nside* the work, this multiple agency also affords longitudinal advantage: I can penetrate the deep fissures of creative decision-making that usually lie hidden from conventional critical sight, follow their unravelling threads as the work progresses into play script and beyond, into the embodied realm of rehearsal.

From Page To Stage

Gay McAuley opines that theatre practitioners rarely document rehearsal processes because these are regarded as private, a domain that does not "willingly admit observers" (McAuley, 1995, 56). But creating a stage play from a novel involves a long creative act, one that stretches from pre-textual consideration well into the heartland of rehearsal, and sometimes beyond. Mike Alfreds argues that adapting and staging form a synergy and are inseparable parts of the same long adaptive process, or what he calls "the whole journey from page to stage" (Alfreds xxv).

The Ebbingtide Project describes the environment in which the play was created. But it also records my own experience of the long arc of the adaptation's evolution, its creative journey. This contains selective coverage of early influences impacting upon both novel and play, such as my first contact with the orphan story at the Hyde Park Barracks, my first imaginings for the stage adaptation, early decisions about how the novel should be approached; decisions surrounding early textual excavation, various drafting issues for the play script, micro-textual issues surrounding transposition of scenes, structural variance from the novel, as well as remediation undertaken during the all-important rehearsal period.[38] In other words, my insider account will selectively track the transformational journey of the theatrical adaptation from *page to stage*.

METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR *THE EBBINGTIDE PROJECT*

Hybrid Modelling

To capture dimensions of the adaptation process I deploy analytical tools drawn from the broader discourse of adaptation, drawing readily on a hybrid mix of existing approaches to adaptation. I have already noted that both novel and play are cleanskin texts. Conventional notions of fidelity are therefore of little relevance to the project. My circumstantial lens in Chapter 4 draws from, albeit in a vastly modified form, Murray's *sociological frame*, adapted to the much smaller cultural industry of my own theatrical medium and site-specific ecosystem. In Chapter 5, I use the *comparative frame* as part of my practice-based linear narrative, one that refers continually to decisions arising out of transforming the novel into its theatrical counterpart. I apply this comparison to various elements of the emerging work: narrative structures,

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[38] Analysis of this process will *end* with the completion of rehearsals – purposely omitting the performance season of the play – since substantive evolution of the work effectively concluded at this point. I will describe the reasons for this more fully in the next chapter.

linguistic textures and character presentation. I also draw heavily upon the principles of *medium specific analysis*, as I explore ontological underpinnings of both my mediums and their respective communicative or enunciative mechanisms. I unashamedly speak in terms of *equivalence* in reworking material, something that may be inferred as aligning with the trope of *translation*.

Transforming Critical Lacunae: Pentimento

The Ebbingtide Project is situated within its circumstantial surroundings. But it also employs an insider perspective of adaptation to articulate micro remediation decisions and broader procedural developments within the work. These are most often excluded from conventional outsider perspectives. In this sense, it provides a portrait of adaptation resembling what Denzin and Lincoln refer to as *pentimento*: something that has been painted out, an image that has been denied, which will be reconstituted through critical commentary and analysis (Denzin and Lincoln 4). *The Ebbingtide Project* also forms part of the shifting tide of critical activity in the domain of both adaptation and performance, one where dominant meta-narratives of truth are being replaced by smaller communities of micro-narratives, where "fragmented persona in fluid environments literally play out a new way of seeing" (Nelson 55).[39]

A Qualitative Research Frame For The *World* Of The Case Study

Denzin and Lincoln describe qualitative research as "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world", one consisting of "a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (Denzin and Lincoln 3). But these practices also transform the world through a variety of representations such as field notes, interviews, narratives that may be both of and to self. It is both interpretative and transformative, involving the study of things in their natural settings, with the researcher attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings ascribed to them.

But what constitutes any particular studied world is diverse and multi-dimensional, requiring the collection of a broad range of empirical materials: case study, personal experience, introspection, life story, interview, artefacts, cultural texts

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[39] Nelson situates this argument firmly within the broader lineage of post-modernism, stretching from Lyotard's incredulity at grand narratives to revised preferences of composition in "post-dramatic theatre" (Nelson 54 – 55). I would cite both Mike Alfred's 2013 work, *Then What Happens* and Janis Balodis' 2012 Thesis: *The Practice of Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction into Theatre* as evidence of other similar eruptions in the broader discourse of adaptation study.

and productions to describe both the "routine and problematic" (Denzin and Lincoln 3). To capture this world, qualitative research deploys a broad spectrum of "interconnected interpretive practices", which are used for the purpose of making the world both visible and comprehensible, the researcher becoming an interpretative "bricoleur", a methodological "Jack of all trades", who pieces together a set of representations fitted "to the specifics of a complex situation" (Denzin and Lincoln 4).

The Ebbingtide Project employs the general frame of qualitative research to examine the world of the studied object: the theatrical adaptation of *Ebbingtide*. More particularly, it assembles a quilt of qualitative tools, customised to explore the creation of the play and the processes involved in this creation.

Performance Research: Knowing Through Doing

In performance research, knowledge is constructed from the context of individual practice. New knowledge – about the work and about the field – occurs in parallel with the evolving creative work. Questions, problems, strategies and solutions are formulated within the context of this arts practice.[40] Mafe and Brown also observe that practice led research engages a fundamentally "bottom-up" perspective, where research is derived from, and shaped by, the individual interests of the researcher, and perhaps most significantly, the nature of their practice (Mafe and Brown 14).

In *The Ebbingtide Project* the practice of adaptation lies at the heart of the knowledge gathering process. Boyce-Tilman et al, in their 2012 examination of issues surrounding practice-based doctorates in the performing arts, note that the importation of Descarte's mind/body separation into academic modelling (specifically as it applies to performance related PhDs) has resulted in the exclusion of knowledge gathering through "material thinking", or the "making" domains of arts practice (Boyce-Tilman et al 7). Drawing on the psychologist Antonio Damasio, the authors argue that separating the "thinking" mind from the "non-thinking" body denies a fundamental ontological truth: "We are, and then we think, and we think only inasmuch as we are, since thinking is indeed caused by the structure and operations of our being" (Boyce-Tilman et al 7; Damasio 248).

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[40] Bolt also describes a two-way interplay between theory and practice, a "double articulation" whereby theory arises out of reflective practice, whilst practice is informed by theory (Barrett and Bolt 29).

This particular line of reasoning as it applies to performance related research is resonant. The "operations of our being" as arts practitioners is our arts practice. From our practice we derive our thinking, from our thinking we gather knowledge. Practice, thinking and the process of gathering knowledge are inextricably linked. Or, as Nelson conceives it, "Theory... is not prior to practice, functioning to inform it, but theory and practice are rather imbricated within each other in praxis" (Nelson 62). Most significantly for *The Ebbingtide Project*, knowledge gathering is bound to my practice of adaptation. From my practice, the knowledge gathered through the experience of adapting will then travel outwards (or perhaps upwards if we are to maintain Mafe and Brown's vertical configuration) to intersect with the fault-lines of knowledge in the existing critical terrain of adaptation.

A Participatory Model

Guba and Lincoln observe that, as qualitative research has grown, so too has the complexity of models being employed by it (Guba and Lincoln 195). Participatory models, such as the one engaged in *The Ebbingtide Project* – where researcher participates in both the creation of the adapted work *and* critical commentary describing it – exhibit new ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs and practices.

Ontologically, reality is constituted by a participatory reality – which Guba and Lincoln describe as a combination of subjective and objective realities – being co-created by mind and the given cosmos of the participants' world. Epistemologically, knowledge is both subjective and experiential, being constituted by a combination of experiential, propositional and practical knowing. My insider narrative of adapting during the project will reflect the subjective experiential dimensions of my participation. The description of the pedagogical and cultural backdrop at Federation University will situate this participation firmly within the objective cosmos of my creative world.

Mafe and Brown argue that within practice-based research knowledge is often embodied or tacit (Mafe and Brown 14). This aligns with Freeman's assertion that in practice led research a kind of knowledge comes into play that is not explicit and articulated, but is rather unspecifiable, implicit and tacit (Freeman 179). Drawing on Polanyi, Freeman notes that in any activity there are two different levels of acquiring or using knowledge: *focal knowledge* and *tacit knowledge*; the former being about the

object of, or phenomenon in, focus; the latter providing background to this focus (Freeman 179).

Viewed in this way, in *The Ebbingtide Project* the adaptation artefacts – both script and embodied performance – become the *focus* for knowledge. Tacit knowledge – involving principles of adapting the novel into its new theatrical medium – is constantly engaged in ongoing creative decision-making.[41] Knowledge within this practice-based frame starts as "personal insight, and may be elaborated and/or verified to become a new way of understanding in the discipline" (Mafe and Brown 15). Knowledge flow is potentially two-way. Some will be new to the practitioner, but known to the field. Some may be new to the field (Mafe and Brown 15).

Reflective Practice And Developing A Situated Narrative

Hanstein describes ethnographic research as "field-based", seeking to study phenomena in their naturalistic settings, the ensuing methodology taking into account "the ambiguities of the situation, with wide variations in human behaviour, and the role of the researcher as an interpreter of what is seen, heard and felt" (Hanstein 45). The idea of the researcher as interpreter is pertinent to *The Ebbingtide Project*. The situated self within ethnographic accounts gives something more than an observer's record. The process of reflecting within practice is what Mason describes as "noticing and marking", something most relevant "to practitioners wishing to develop, or who want to study their own decision and choice making in the moment-by-moment flow of events" (Mason 175). Data collection within reflective practice often draws from records in diary-form and transcripts and tapes of incidents. In these forms, sensitivities and noticing can be collected and articulated. In Chapter 5 (the insider narrative of *The Ebbingtide Project*), I draw upon some of these data forms: the diary, script drafts and reflections of rehearsals.

[41] Nelson further distinguishes between types of knowledge in her tripartite division: knowing *what* and *that* is clearly distinguished from knowing *how*. It is the latter which describes that unique knowledge at work within creative decision-making (praxis), in this instance, embedded within the praxis of transforming the novel into what became both script and embodied play performance (Nelson 38 – 47).

The Autoethnographic Trap

Ellis defines autoethnography as "writing about the personal and its relationship to culture" (Ellis 37). She cites the *first person voice* as the typifying feature of an autoenthnographic account, this manifesting in a variety of potential mediums such as personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, photographic essays and scripts. Common to these forms are the threads of self and narrative, and self in relation to the particular culture it inhabits. Clearly, there are autoethnographic dimensions in *The Ebbingtide Project*, the utility of which lies in the capacity to give voice and utterance to my experience of transforming the novel into the play.

Such an approach contains inherent dangers. Bochner concedes that autoethnography gives life a "structure" it does not possess, and it advances a romantic construction of self (Ellis and Bochner 745). This structuring impulse is compounded when one considers Schon's observation that reflective practitioners often exercise intuitive knowing in order to cope with "the unique, uncertain and conflicted situations" of their real world practice (Schon, 1983, ix).

There is also a trap for the unwary researcher, who creates research that is merely inwardly reflective, solipsistic, or worse still, narcissistic. Freeman's criticism of such a tendency is pointedly succinct: "the difficulty facing researchers is of finding ways or articulating key aspects of their creative processes in a manner that resists accusations of self-justification and navel gazing" (Freeman 183). The rebuttal to such charges lies in creating mechanisms that, whilst allowing experiential dimensions to be accommodated, facilitate a reciprocal impulse to move the gaze of the researcher outward. Ellis describes "the autoethnographers' gaze" as one that focuses outwards to social and cultural aspects of personal experience and inwards to a self that moves through, and even resists cultural interpretations (Ellis 37 – 38).[42]

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[42] Boyce-Tilman et al openly acknowledge this two-way focus when, in analysing practice-based doctorates in the performing arts, they include Christopher Frayling's criteria for assessment, criteria inculcated with *outward* inflection. Submissions, according to Frayling, should contain, "... systematic enquiry.... and techniques appropriate to the subject... (that) grasp contingent areas of knowledge, context and performance/production... (They should)... document the process... in a way that is communicable... and (should) develop a sustained and logical argument contextualised to (the) relevant discourse" (Frayling 11; Boyce-Tilman et al 13).

A Test For Practice Led Research: Mafe And Brown's Four Criteria

Mafe and Brown argue that practice led research of this type must exhibit four fundamental traits if it is genuinely to be considered research (Mafe and Brown 1). It must be *differentiated* from both previous work of the researcher and the broader field; it must be rendered *accessible to scrutiny*; be *transparent* and clear in structure, process and outcomes; and contain *transferable* information and outcomes that are useful beyond the specific research project (Mafe and Brown 2). Applying these criteria to *The Ebbingtide Project:* it is *differentiated* through its exploration of the critical lacunae (or pentimento) of insider process; it is made *accessible to scrutiny* and *transparent* through its clear and detailed description of circumstances surrounding the adaptation, along with an insider narrative describing decisions made and processes undertaken throughout the project's evolution; outcomes will be made *transferable* by referring the significance of my research findings to the broader discourse of adaptation.

Voice In A Situated Context

Mafe and Brown's four criteria go some way to ensuring that practice led research travels outwards from the researcher. Without these checks there is an inherent danger that an insider account will remain unfixed, floating free, self-reflective and ultimately, solipsistic. Geertz reminds us of this balance in ethnographic descriptions when he posits necessary characteristics they should contain. They should be *thick* descriptions: possessing a stratified density of interpretation, one that contains imaginative insight and acknowledges man (sic) as a cultural being "suspended in webs of significance" (Geertz 5). What they should be interpretative of is the broader 'flow of social discourse' (Geertz 20). They should render this in, "perusable terms" (Geertz 20). But they should also possess the ability to be "microscopic", possessing the ability to render the "great world in the little" (Geertz 22).

The above attributions have powerful resonance and application to *The Ebbingtide Project*. They acknowledge the presence of my artist/researcher selves, whilst insisting that these selves be situated within the larger cultural web of its adaptive environment. Moreover, such a focussed case study is free to examine the processes of adaptation – along with the decisions that occur within them – with an outward-looking gaze, one that acknowledges both contextual dynamics and the broader terrain of the existing adaptation discourse.

Capturing Phronetic Insight Within The Work: Intentional Action

There is one final methodological dimension arising from the kind of interrogation I undertake in *The Ebbingtide Project*. It concerns the way knowledge and understanding is acquired during the act of remediation. Schon observes that traditional artefacts evolve culturally through successive corrections of "bad fit", which evolve until the form of the artefact becomes "good" (Schon, 1983, 52). Creating a play from a novel is much the same. Artefacts are evolved through practice. The acts that constitute this practice involve a constant process of trial and experimentation. Using Schon's terminology, the play evolves through a series of bad fits that are constantly refined through various stages of the work.

Anna Pakes observes that arts practice as research activates a unique epistemological rationale, "with its own distinctive logic, parasitic on neither deductive nor inductive theoretical reasoning" (Pakes para. 5). It is practical knowledge that demonstrates an awareness of how to act in the world. It is a form of insight embodied in the world and derives from what we do in the world (Pakes para. 4).

For Pakes, this knowledge develops from our intentions as artists/creators, this intention being exercised and activated continually throughout the process of creating the artistic work. The issue here is one of articulating the way knowledge manifests, not merely in the object as artefact (although this may be one of the aims of the applied knowledge), but in the work as evolving process. Pakes advocates a model for examining these processes: *the intentional action model*. As artists, she argues, we balance our intentions against the specific set of circumstances in play. We act according to our purpose and the state of affairs that surround us (Pakes para. 4). This involves a principled coherence or artistic insight, which is not necessarily norm-governed, but may be a product of various situational and circumstantial matters arising from the practice.

Drawing on Aristotelean terminology, Pakes distinguishes between elements of *techne*, or the technical skill of craft in the work, and *phronesis*, which is more a disposition towards laudable action, one that is "grounded in sensitivity to particular situations and circumstances" (Pakes para. 8).[43] Phronesis, then, is a kind of practical wisdom, one based on acting well, or laudably, within certain social and moral domains. It is a capacity to respond to the "particularities of experience" (Pakes para.

[43] Pakes borrows the conceptual basis for her argument from Carr (1978, 1987,1999 a & b).

8). Artists may produce creative works or objects, but their processes involve being sensitive to both "materials and their evolving situation" (Pakes para. 9).

Articulating Intentional Action In *The Ebbingtide Project*

The distinction between *techne* and *phronesis* is an important one. Techne may involve understanding based on general laws and knowledge. For me, as a theatrical adapter, adapting constantly draws upon my own technical knowledge of theatre. [44] But techne alone doesn't capture the type of knowledge arising from procedural decisions throughout the adaptive journey. This is where the companion concept of phronesis comes into play. Each decision I made in *The Ebbingtide Project* was the product of the matrix of circumstance that surrounded it, the logic being applied to it, and the intended purpose or outcome for that decision. In this sense, the concept of phronesis as it applies to creative process, still carries with it a test of *laudability*.[45]

Pakes' notion of intentional action in research has powerful methodological resonance for *The Ebbingtide Project*. Phronesis creates a permeable and contingent kind of articulation, rendering decision-making during remediation transparent and accessible. It allows for a more complete picture of the adaptation process by situating decisions in the circumstances within which they were made.[46] Importantly, too, it captures the potential fallibility of decisions, the innate contingency of progressive bad fits and adjustments that inevitably form part of the unfolding artistic journey.

Methodological Modelling For *The Ebbingtide Project*

To accommodate my own intentional action in *The Ebbingtide Project* I have created a model that aligns with Sarah Cardwell's aspiration for the future of adaptation study to be built on a balanced mix of existing critical tools (Welsh and Lev 62 – 63). It is based on two ways of looking at my own creative process.

Firstly, in Chapter 4, the project will be viewed through a *circumstantial lens*, which will situate it in its creative setting, describing institutional, pedagogic, cultural and spatial specificities; those factors that, together, formed the creative brief. This provides an informing framework around my intentional action: the decisions I took,

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[44] I would argue my knowledge of my novelistic medium as well.

[45] The test of laudability could potentially be assessed by asking: was the decision a sound one, given our understanding of the circumstances in which it was made, the logic being applied to it, and the intended outcome being sought?

[46] Christopher P. Long defines phronesis as being "determined by the world in which it is embedded" (Long 46).

the choices I made whilst creating the play. In this respect, it answers Dudley Andrew's call for adaptations to be seen as cultural enterprises. It also draws from Murray's sociological model, which examines factors influencing adaptations, adjusted to the smaller and more localised industry of my own theatrical adaptation.

Secondly, in Chapter 5, creative process will be expressed through a linear narrative tracking the long arc of the adaptive journey. In a first-person insider's voice, this narrative will describe the gestational journey of the play through its various phases of development. It will give transparency to the deep regions of creative decision-making emanating from my own arts practice, providing a portrait of my own intentional action whilst I was creating the play. A closely observed *case study*, it will draw *comparison* between different aspects of the novel and the play. It will employ *close textual analysis* within the specific context of the evolving adaptation. At times, I will use *medium specific analysis* to explain the logic behind transformational decisions. I will demonstrate how various features of the novel *translated* into the new theatrical milieu, how different aspects of the novel found *equivalence* in the play. I will also articulate how, as an adapter, I wrestled with various aspects of the novel, how I struggled to find adaptive solutions, how I was forced to yield to the inevitable nexus between intention and contingency.

To illustrate and illuminate this transformational journey, I will draw upon various artefacts and sources germane to the project: excerpts from the source novel, fragments from early drafts of the play, travel diary entries, personal notebooks, impressionistic accounts of significant places, experiences and moments. Together, these artefacts provide important portals into my own creative practice.

CHAPTER 4

THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL LENS

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTER: INFORMING CIRCUMSTANCES

In my critical survey of the adaptation discourse I noted that one of the major recent developments was the *sociological turn*. In particular, I singled out the work of Simone Murray, who insists that adaptations are not created in isolation, but within particular industrial ecosystems. This outward critical inflection is useful in describing the way adaptations evolve. Like Murray, I believe that adaptations do not occur in a creative vacuum. They are the product of interactions between creators and the unique ecosystem that surrounds and supports their work. Adaptive decisions are made within a creative context that is ideological, social, historical, cultural, personal, and aesthetic (Hutcheon 108). Put simply, as a *theatrical adapter* I was always aware that my work was being guided and shaped by the circumstances surrounding the project. This chapter examines those circumstances.

I will explore the nexus between circumstance, process and decision-making more in the linear narrative of Chapter 5. Here in Chapter 4, I begin by situating the play within its pedagogical setting, explaining the multi-dimensional nature of my roles in the project. I then go on to discuss the unique meta-discourse of rehearsal that underpinned the all-important rehearsal phase of the play's evolution. I examine some of the logistical and organisational factors impacting upon the shape and textures of the project: rehearsal scheduling, cast numbers and the duration of the performance season. I conclude with a description of the physical setting for which the play was written, rehearsed and ultimately performed.

THE PEDAGOGICAL SETTING

The play was written according to a specific brief: it was to be rehearsed and performed as part of a Second Year *Theatre Practice* Project at Federation University's Arts Academy in Ballarat. This had profound bearing upon all aspects of the adaptation and my own experience as creator of it. It is not my purpose here to provide a comprehensive overview of pedagogic art. Rather, I will provide a selected outline of the most significant pedagogic elements of the project, those that created the unique context for the evolving work.

The Arts Academy offers two three-year undergraduate degree programs: *Acting For Stage and Screen* and *Music Theatre*. Both Acting and Music Theatre programs are designed to train aspiring performers to professional standard in their respective specialty fields. Both programs work to a small studio-based model of teaching and learning. The Arts Academy conforms to the general model of similar institutions around Australia, with its small studio-based learning environment delivering skills-based experiential learning to cohorts.[47] Whilst sharing certain ideological, methodological and pedagogical features of these other institutions, the Arts Academy is also, in some ways, profoundly distinct.

Firstly, it is situated within a regional university setting in Ballarat, one that has in recent years been incorporated into the larger administrative arm of the Faculty of Education and Arts (FEA). Being part of a regional university, the Arts Academy attracts and selects many of its students from across regional Victoria, as well as other regional centres around the Australia.[48] Many students, no matter where they come from (country or city), apply to study at the Arts Academy because of its regional location. The unique blend of geographical isolation and close-knit artistic community creates for them a distinct feeling of inclusivity, one lacking, they perceive, in other similar institutions situated in larger capital cities.

Secondly, because the Arts Academy is part of the broader FEA, cohorts consist not only of aspiring performers but also others who see their performance training as part of a broader continuum of study, say in education. This blend of student profile means pedagogy must be aimed not only at high-level performance students, but also those who may later seek employment in performance related fields.[49]

Thirdly, most of the Arts Academy cohort is drawn directly from secondary schools. This is one of the starkest points of difference between Arts Academy students and others attending similar institutions.[50] The vast majority have had very little direct life experience, or exposure to the performing arts, beyond that provided by

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[47] Institutions such as The Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), The National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) and The Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA).
[48] This being one of the university's constitutional briefs: to serve students from centres across regional Victoria.
[49] Such as secondary drama teaching, event management and other related arts-based industries.
[50] Most similarly modelled training institutions like NIDA, WAAPA or VCA have tacitly (if not overtly) held a belief that students should traditionally have a few years experience after high school before coming to them. Wrongly or rightly, this kind of policy has resulted in the average age of their students being significantly above that of the Arts Academy cohort.

their secondary school. Again, this markedly impacts upon both cohort profile and teaching methodologies employed at the Arts Academy.[51]

Fourthly, our intake numbers are considerably higher than most equivalent institutions – upwards of 35 to 40 in each cohort. Anyone familiar with teaching performing arts students will instantly recognise that these cohort numbers are unusually high, perhaps contentiously so. They make the delivery of skills-based classes difficult. They also render small in-house productions problematic.

Fifthly, whilst numbers vary from year to year, the gender mix of Arts Academy cohorts leans heavily towards a majority of female students. This imbalance places severe limitations on play selection, casting considerations and the way plays are produced.

The net effect of these factors – regional location, broad spectrum of student aims, young and inexperienced student profile, high intake numbers and gender imbalance – creates a unique blend of influence on teaching and directing at the Academy. It is nowhere more keenly felt than Second Year Acting students, for whom *Ebbingtide* was written.

PEDAGOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE ACTING PROGRAM

The Acting Program at the Arts Academy is designed around studio-based experiential learning. Practical core skills are developed incrementally over the three years of study: Voice, Movement, Singing, Dance and Acting. Conversely, as skills develop in students, the level of industry simulation also increases. The most significant manifestation of this is in the area of play production, or what at the Arts Academy is currently called *Theatre Practice*. In this subject, students are asked to apply skills within the context of practice-based theatrical projects or productions. In First Year, these consist of small studio showings. In Second Year, these showings become small black-box productions. In Third Year, productions become larger scale, fully produced shows.

[51] With students having very little performance experience, teaching at the Arts Academy focuses not only on skills acquisition, but is also often heavily weighted towards initiating them into the culture of professional performance and its accompanying normative behaviour.

SECOND YEAR *THEATRE PRACTICE* PROJECTS

In Second Year, focus in *Theatre Practice* shifts towards a careful study of text-based plays and acting techniques designed to facilitate their rehearsal and performance.[52] Being sandwiched between entry and exit years, Second Year is arguably, at least in pedagogic terms, the most important. It allows students, in the now familiar privacy of a small studio environment, to explore those processes of practice already seeded during First Year in a more complex and developed way, applying these skills to text-based material. Productions are low budget, in-house studio productions. Here, acting skills consolidate within a mode of practice, one where performance and enquiry *about* performance are free to coalesce. The 2014 *Ebbingtide* production was mounted as part of Second Year Second Semester *Theatre Practice* and was written for the specific 2014 cohort.

Second Year cohorts at the Arts Academy are large (usually between 30 – 35 students) and are divided into two groups for both skills classes and *Theatre Practice* classes. For timetabling purposes each group is allocated a different day for their *Theatre Practice* rehearsals. The upshot of this is that while one group is rehearsing *Theatre Practice*, the other is attending a different skills class, and vice versa.[53] This is a hugely significant point at both the level of play selection and rehearsal formats. In *Ebbingtide* it ultimately influenced the structuring of the play into two separate halves, a form that meant I could accommodate split rehearsals for each separate group.[54]

THE META-DISCOURSE OF REHEARSAL

Directors for Second Year *Theatre Practice* Projects are sometimes drawn from outside the university. Others, like me, are full-time Lecturers/Directors. This combination ensures that creative endeavour is inculcated with pedagogic instruction. Projects like *Ebbingtide* are both creative ventures and pedagogic mediums.[55]

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[52] The pedagogic frame employed is one where students are asked to contemplate the notion of style. Because of the binary division of semesters at the university this focus on style is loosely divided into non-naturalistic (first semester) and naturalistic (second semester) material. This stylistic emphasis is coordinated across all subjects of study: voice, movement, acting, critical studies, as well as acting.

[53] Often, different directors are hired to work with each group in two separate productions. In *Ebbingtide* I worked with both groups for the project.

[54] I was never able to overcome this bifurcated timetabling structure completely, although I did manage to organise a further afternoon rehearsal in which I worked with the whole cohort together. This proved highly beneficial in passages of action where the whole ensemble was onstage.

[55] There are many effects of these twin agendas on the outcome of the production. For instance, in order to help students learn more about the production side of these shows they work in small teams in the areas of

Pedagogic strands are brought together in a conscious and considered way, with a twin-focus on both arts practice (rehearsal and performance) and a more discursive pedagogy *about* rehearsal and performance. This meta-discourse runs beneath the surface of each *Theatre Practice* class and profoundly influences both the way they are conducted and the creative outcomes that result. The aims of the production (and the rehearsals that constitute its unfolding evolution) are therefore threefold: to create the production of a play, to develop skills, and to create a familiarity with the myriad processes that constitute rehearsals themselves.

These three strands – performance outcomes, skills development within the context of rehearsals, and meta-discussions *about* rehearsals – intermingle in a loose and organic way. A rehearsal will often oscillate in quick sporadic bursts between creative work and a discussion about the work. This pedagogic dimension forms a very distinct rehearsal fabric, one built not only on performative outcomes, but also around the heuristic exploration of students' knowledge and practice. Critically, too, this meta-discourse bleeds into the substantive content of the project at hand. This was particularly so in the case of *Ebbingtide*, where the material was often being shaped by the processes being undertaken in the rehearsal room. Being an adaptation, rehearsals often became about how to render a particular idea or piece of evolving text in theatrical terms. These articulations often drove creative decisions being made on the rehearsal room floor, the textures of the dramatic work being sculpted by the meta-discourse itself.

MY ROLES WITHIN THE *THEATRE PRACTICE* PROJECT

As previously outlined, my roles within this basic pedagogic framework are multiple and divergent. My formal designation at Federation University is *Lecturer in Acting*. But in *Theatre Practice* classes I rarely lecture, per se, although I do lead discussions during classes and rehearsals. The teaching modes I employ are more than lecturing would connote; in some respects more rudimentary, in others more practically sophisticated. Indeed, I inhabit multiple roles that include lecturer, acting coach, cultural mentor and in-house teaching director. In any given class or rehearsal these roles may oscillate from moment to moment. Primarily, I assist students to

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light, sound, music, costumes and publicity. This substantively influences aesthetic textures and creative decisions occurring within productions.

translate basic performance skills into the context of play production. But I also perform another adjunct role, that of a pedagogically focused director overseeing material through its various stages of rehearsal. In some respects, I am not unlike a guide, who oversees a group of journeying young artists.

THE PRACTICAL NEXUS OF ART AND PEDAGOGY

Second Year *Theatre Practice* projects have long rehearsal cycles: usually between ten and twelve weeks. Being intermingled with core skills classes, formal rehearsals with the director occur only one and a half days per week. This relatively protracted rehearsal cycle tends to dilute the intensity and momentum normally experienced during more compacted formats of production, although this is compensated for by students assimilating and understanding the processes of rehearsal more fully and deeply. Large casts also dictate that plays are often grand in scale and long in duration – sometimes longer than one evening in performance time.[56]

To compensate for the paucity of rehearsal time, we have multiple rehearsals taking place at once. I work on one scene with one group of actors on the main rehearsal floor, while other rehearsals are taking place simultaneously in different locations around the Academy – anything up to five or six scenes at any one time. Generally, students work up a draft of a scene together and then present it to me. This is worked into the general format of pedagogy, with students making performative decisions and 'offers' to the director. I then use these drafts of scenes in a more conventional directorial way, sculpting them into developed performative drafts. The net effect of this approach means that a fair proportion of performance decisions are already made by the time I look at the material for the first time.

The map of rehearsals in a pedagogically driven production can be quite different from that of a conventional rehearsal cycle. By the map, I mean the duration and emphasis given to particular activities within rehearsals. For example, a focus on naturalism may result in a heavy concentration of research and textual analysis in the early parts of a rehearsal cycle. Alternatively, a particular focus on physical embodiment – as was the case in *The Ebbingtide Project* – may result in a heavy regime of physical preparation and rehearsal. Again, it is pedagogic agendas that shape

[56] My 2009 production of *Nicholas Nickleby* at the Arts Academy ran over two consecutive evenings, and one seven hour Sunday performance.

the overall map of rehearsals.[57] Understandably, it is impossible to quarantine such pedagogic focus from final performance outcome. Often, in a pedagogically driven production the need to create good art is balanced by the equally important aims of teaching and learning. Naturally, this affects processes and the artefacts produced.

One final point on the nature of Second Year *Theatre Practice* Projects needs to be made. Performance seasons are extremely short – usually between three and five public performances in total. This is because these productions are oriented towards process and form part of a larger suite of performance events at the Arts Academy each semester. *Ebbingtide* had five performances, spread over five days (Thursday to Sunday). Very few textual or performance dimensions of the show changed over these five days. For this reason, it is important to note here that I have chosen to *restrict* my analysis of the play's development to the end of the rehearsal phase, purposefully *omitting* the production season.

PLAY SELECTION AND THE EXIGENCIES OF LARGE CAST PLAYS

One of the aims of Second Year *Theatre Practice* is to give students performance experience that simulates, in a controlled way, the kind of real world situation they are training for. Each student must be afforded the opportunity to experience both rehearsal and performance. Equitable principles also apply at the university. Professional theatre companies employ usually less than half a dozen actors, for obvious financial reasons. Play selection and, indeed, playwriting is geared for these numbers. At Federation University cohorts can be more than thirty-five actors. Choosing theatrical material suitable for these vast numbers is difficult. The high proportion of female students in cohorts compounds the problem. Generally, in a mainstream commercial production, play selection begins with a director who has a play they want to produce. Then actors are found to fill the roles. At the Arts Academy this narrative is somewhat subverted. It begins with cohort numbers and the particular gender mix of the cohort. Plays are certainly selected according to pedagogic aims and learning outcomes. But they are also governed by these exigencies.[58] The decision to

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[57] These pedagogic agendas exist at a macro level for the cohort and on an individual level as well, where individual students may be given specific performance goals (like physical embodiment or emotional connection). In this instance, too, such an agenda will impact upon that student's final performance. This in turn will influence the overall production textures.

[58] These numbers have dictated the kinds of plays I have selected to work on at the Academy, plays such as John Barton's *Tantalus*, drawing from the Greek Trojan War myths; *Nicholas Nickleby*, David Edgar's

adapt and produce *Ebbingtide*; indeed, the way it was shaped and written, was governed by these same factors.

A VERY PARTICULAR SETTING

The Ebbingtide Project was created to be performed in a very specific setting: the Post Office Box Theatre, one of the performance spaces at Federation University's Arts Academy in Camp Street, Ballarat. The Post Office Box Theatre (or Black Box Theatre, as it is also known) was formerly, as its name suggests, the main post office in Ballarat. It is a large rectangular space measuring approximately ten metres by seventeen metres.

A basic lighting rig services all studio-based productions in the space. Black curtains, a metre in from the walls, surround the space on all four sides. These run on a track and can be moved into different configurations as required by individual productions. For *Ebbingtide*, I had the curtains retained for the backstage wall, so actors could traverse from one side of the stage to the other unseen by the audience. Walls on either side of the stage were left uncurtained. The cast sat in chairs along each of these walls on either side of the playing area. They were visible to the audience throughout the performance and were free to watch both the performance and the audience. A portable seating bank is usually erected at one of the shorter ends of the performance space. The seating bank has a capacity for approximately eighty audience members comprising fourteen seats across in six rows upwards to the top of the bank.

This large, deep space becomes significant in productions where thirty or more cast members are onstage at once. As a space in which skills training occurs, it allows students to play at a great distance from the audience, with accompanying necessities of vocal and physical 'reach'. It provides depth of space, allowing good use of foreground and background. Curtains covering the back wall allow for multiple entrance and exit points for actors, serving large cast productions well. This configuration also accommodates the kind of large group physical pieces that were part of *Ebbingtide's* performance style.

As already noted, the vast cavernous space of the Black Box Theatre allows performers to sit at the *side* of the stage. In this position, they are visible to an audience, and can be observed 'observing'. Pedagogically, this element serves the

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adaptation of the novel by Charles Dickens; Mary Zimmerman's *Metamorphosis*; Nick Enright and Justin Monjo's adaptation of Tim Winton's novel, *Cloudstreet*.

purpose of allowing actors to view transactions occurring between onstage performers as well as between actors and audience. During the performance season this onstage mechanism forms part of the suite of experiential learning in *Theatre Practice*. It also has one further pragmatic purpose: it allows large numbers of actors to get on and offstage with great speed and efficiency.

What is the relevance of this site-specific description? The *Ebbingtide* play, with its theatrical rendering of long arc novelistic narrative, was created for the Black Box Theatre. It is a space that accommodates a uniquely narrative-based theatre, one that allows its story to be told upon a blank black canvas with bodies in space, unencumbered by complex set or stage machinery. It creates textures in the production that are light and portable. It also places performance at the forefront of production values: actors telling a story.[59]

The kind of theatre I make in Ballarat is partially driven by economic necessity: budgets are minimal and cover only basic props and recycled costumes over rehearsal blacks. A few hundred dollars is the notional budget. Stylised physicality, a heavy reliance on embodiment to convey narrative, to evoke place and mood, use of narrators, vocal sound-scapes, choric singing wind, weeping chorus, battles and storms materialising and dissolving in moments; all these are the features of the Black Box Theatre style. It is a style that reflects a unique cultural web.[60]

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[59] For a more complete description of the production values, I have included a copy of my director's notes for the 2014 *Ebbingtide* production in Appendix 1.
[60] For a summary of the distinguishing features of Second Year Theatre Practice Projects, see Appendix 2.

CHAPTER 5

THE LINEAR INSIDER LENS

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTER: A NARRATIVE DESCRIBING THE EVOLUTION OF *THE EBBINGTIDE PROJECT*

In Chapter 4, I described the circumstantial map that surrounded the play, a contextual bed for the creative journey of its evolution. Here in Chapter 5, I provide a composite perspective of the project, one that views the journey of the play's evolution as a linear narrative, one based on my own experience of the unfolding project. This insider narrative is composed of processes I undertook and decisions I made on the way to creating the play. All of these processes and decisions were made within a general frame of intentional action. That is, each process I undertook, each issue I confronted, each decision I made, were all aimed at producing the play that was to become *Ebbingtide*. All, in some way, were impacted by the circumstances that surrounded me. Chapter 5 gives voice to the conversation I was having with those circumstances.

My linear narrative consists of five distinct phases, each representing a clear and delineated stage of the overall creative journey of adapting the play from the novel. The five phases of the narrative are:

- Phase 1: Preliminary Contemplation Of The Novel
- Phase 2: Textual Excavation Of The *Sea Journey* Scenes
- Phase 3: Developing A Full Irish Back-Story
- Phase 4: Writing The Script
- Phase 5: Rehearsals

Together, these reflect changing activities I undertook over a period of about five years, from early 2009 – the beginning of my PhD project – until the end of the play's rehearsal period in October of 2014. This linear narrative is written from my perspective inside the work process. It is, in this respect, an insider account. As the title of this *chapter* suggests, each phase tended to roll into the next in a quite linear fashion. As the titles of the *phases* suggest, each tended to have a different point of focus from the rest. However, as with all such taxonomic division, partitioning each phase in this way belies the fact that some of the activities overlapped. For instance, whilst I excavated the *Sea Journey* scenes (Phase 2), I was also beginning to

contemplate the Irish back-story (Phase 3). Whilst I was writing the script (Phase 4), I was already thinking about how I would rehearse the material I was then writing (Phase 5).

The deepest truth here may be that such a broad-based project necessitates multiple points of focus. My purpose in ordering the chapter in this way is to give the reader some idea of a narrative that unfolded through a series of stages, each constituting a step towards the production of the final artefacts of script and performance. In order to construct this narrative, I have drawn freely from various sources ranging from the originating novel, other prose works, personal notebooks and diaries, rehearsal recollections, and travel experiences; all of which served to influence and inspire me, or simply to record what I was thinking along the way. These sources serve as evidencing fragments or, as Linda Hutcheon would have it, residual traces exhumed from inside the creative process (Hutcheon 109).

One final point, the textual and performative examples I use in this chapter represent only a sample of the full adaptive narrative. In this regard, they are snapshots, albeit ones that highlight key issues in each phase along the transformative arc of the evolving play.

PHASE 1: PRELIMINARY CONTEMPLATION OF THE NOVEL

Overview Of The Phase

Phase 1 of the *Ebbingtide* adaptation began formally at the beginning of 2009, when I first enrolled in my Monash postgraduate degree. The central activity during this first phase was a preliminary contemplation of the novel as prospective donor for the play. Loosely, this involved reading the source novel, immersing myself in the source material and musing upon issues that arose for me as adapter. This preliminary phase lasted well into the next year and resulted in strategies and decisions that would reverberate throughout the entire course of the project.

I use the term ‘formally’ in the above paragraph to signify a point where informal musings on the project crystallised into conscious effort, not only aimed at tackling the practicalities of remediation, but also at recording the processes I was

undertaking.[61] Such terms, of course, are to a degree overly simplistic. For, as both writer of the original novel and adapter/playwright, such contemplation really began some time earlier. Creative roots of the play lay, for me, deep in the heart of the novel itself. They are, after all, shaped by the same mind and the same influences.

One indication of this merged process was the fact that throughout Phase 1 of the adaptation – indeed, throughout most of 2009 and 2010 – I augmented my deep reading of the novel with re-readings of material that had originally given rise to it. I read and reread many of the sources that had stimulated and inspired me to write the original story. So, whilst I was examining the novel with a mind to adapting it, I was also reconnecting with the original impulses that had inspired it. I was both turning to the novel as source for the new work, and *re*-turning to the sources that had shaped *it*. In so doing, I was allowing them to re-shape the play. I cannot overstate the significance of these first seeds. They worked upon me as bright trails through the often-dark sky of the early stages of the adaptation process.

Revisiting my original source material for the novel also brought with it another consequence, one I had not foreseen. In writing the novel, I had made certain creative choices or decisions at the expense of others I might have pursued. Revisiting my source material in preparation for the adaptation made it very plain to me that I was giving myself the opportunity to re-examine those initial choices. As adapter, I was faced not only with reconstituting the original, but reworking its unexplored potentialities in a new medium.[62] This established a conversation between novel and play, one that was to carry profound influence in the unfolding journey of the adaptation.

A Brief Background to the *Ebbingtide* Novel

The genesis for the *Ebbingtide* story began when I was working as a lawyer in the central legal hub of Sydney's Phillip Street during the mid-nineteen nineties. To counter the long inert hours of my deskbound duties I began taking long lunchtime walks, usually in and around the central business district; one such walk ending at the Hyde Park Barracks museum in Macquarie Street. It was here I first encountered the

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[61] I was, during this time, also acquainting myself with the broader discourse of adaptation, and trying to get to the bottom of why adapters seemed to be invisible in it, which would form the basis of my argument in Chapter 2: *The Discourse of Adaptation*.

[62] This was a very personal enactment of Bluestone's characterisation of the novel as raw material for the adaptation (Bluestone viii). The complexity here was that the *Ebbingtide* novel was already steeped in my own previous decisions.

story of a group of Irish orphan girls, who had at one time been temporary residents in the building. The novel was conceived shortly afterwards, undergoing a preliminary gestation period of about five years. By 2002 I had completed a rough unpublished draft of the prose work. But, as often happens in such long arc creative endeavours, life intervened and completion of the novel was put on hold. It was not until I was considering source material for this PhD that the novel again loomed large on my creative horizon. It was only then, in early 2009, that I seriously sat down to contemplate the novel as a potential donor text for adaptation project.[63]

Twin Narrative Strands In The Novel

So, upon revisiting the novel, what *were* my first impressions? To begin answering this question I firstly need to describe something of the unique nature of both the story (or stories) the novel tells and the way in which it tells it. For this storytelling dimension strongly shaped my early preoccupations as adapter.

The novel is configured around two intertwined stories: one, about a contemporary figure, William, a lawyer who, increasingly disillusioned with his life, decides one particular day to absent himself from it. The other story concerns a young Irish girl, Bridget, who, having survived the Great Famine, travels out to Australia as part of an ill-fated emigration scheme. The novel begins at the point of Bridget's embarkation from England then works backwards, through a series of flashbacks, to tell the tale of how she came to be on that boat.

The novel wove the two stories (the contemporary William story and the nineteenth century Bridget story) one around the other, in a roughly helical fashion. One chapter of the contemporary story is followed by one chapter of the Irish orphan story. So, as we come to know William, Bridget's world also unfolds. The two characters are linked thematically: both are forced through circumstance to flee the familiarity of their known worlds; both become refugees from their own respective former lives. Often, too, images and motifs in one story thread find equivalents in the other. The novel is also peppered with small historical fragments of information relating to the Irish orphan story.[64]

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[63] I have therefore called the draft I used as the original basis for the adaptation project: 2009 *Ebbingtide* Novel.

[64] In Appendix 3, I have included an example of one of the historical fragments from the novel.

Finally, in the novel the two apparently unconnected stories merge when, temporarily displaced from his own modern world, William stumbles across the Hyde Park Barracks Museum in Sydney, Australia, which was for a time a temporary immigration depot for the Irish orphans. Standing at its perimeter, he comes across a mysterious glass wall with the names of Irish girls inscribed on it. Curious to find out more about these names, he goes inside the museum building and encounters an installation about the Irish orphans, consisting of a glass case containing a variety of artefacts and memorabilia, along with short fragments of historical documents and informing commentary:

> To William's left is another doorway leading into a dark room with a small glass case in the centre. He enters and immediately is drawn to it. There is a bonnet, patched together from a motley assortment of different cloths. The stitching is so fine it could have been glued. Near this, is an old book bound in dark cracked leather; chewed, from the looks of it, from the corners in. It is a bible – Holy. And a small section of what appears to be an old globe of the world. It is only a fragment, broken free from what must have once been a handsome looking sphere, but the faded green and blue paint on the remnant clearly denotes land and sea. There are letters of an unfinished word running off one of its green edges: Irela. The rest is missing. These and other items are spread across invisible glass shelves. They shine luminous and seem magnified by light from the firmament above; held there in suspension while the rest of the room, including him, fades into timeless obscurity (2009 *Ebbingtide* Novel 416).

At this point in the novel it becomes clear to the reader that these apparently random snippets of historical Irish famine information are, in fact, all part of the museum installation William is viewing at the Hyde Park Barracks. We realise that it is William who has pieced them together and reorganised them according to his own imagining. Fleeing from his own life, he escapes into another – Bridget's. He is the author – or perhaps adapter might be a more appropriate way of here describing it – of Bridget's story. His encounter with the historical orphan story at the museum has

triggered his own rendering of Bridget's story. He is its author, narrator and interpreter, filtering its action through his own subjective experience of it. All of the objects in the glass case – the bonnet, the bible and the globe – along with other items of bric-a-brac and historical fragments will eventually find their way into Bridget's reconfigured world.

Cutting The William Story

In 2009, when I first began contemplating directions I might take with the adaptation, it was the twin William and Bridget narratives that dominated my attention. The twin story structure, with its 'story within a story' format, worked to a degree in the novel. But I began to wonder whether its layered complexity would sit comfortably within its new medium. I felt there were two central questions that needed addressing. Firstly, did I want to include *both* William and Bridget stories in the play? Secondly, what were the potential consequences of a decision either way?

In terms of my response to the first question – whether William and Bridget's story were *both* appropriate for the play – I came to the opinion that William's was *not*. Reviewing the novel's double stranded format, it just seemed to me too complex and obtuse.[65]And, to be completely honest, revisiting the novel at this time left me with doubts about whether I had successfully melded the two story strands in *it*. These doubts only compounded when I turned my mind to using them both in the play.

The second reason for cutting William from the play concerned Bridget's story and the way it was presented in the novel. Bridget travels out to Australia on a boat in search of her sister. Whilst on the boat she remembers her old life in Ireland. We glimpse this old life through a series of flashbacks. I was reasonably confident the play could render Bridget's memories successfully. But if I was to include the William story in the play, this would mean telling *three* different stories in three different *time frames*: Bridget on the boat, Bridget remembering her old life back in Ireland,[66] and

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[65] There is another *possible* reason why I rejected the William story for the play. When I wrote the novel draft I was, like William, a lawyer attempting to escape his own lawyer life. At the time, it gave me a certain intimate satisfaction to describe a story that was close to my own. But as time passed, this same intimacy became a doubt that it was not a valid *stand-alone* tale, one worthy of including in the play. Linda Hutcheon, with her brave insistence on mining works for their autobiographical traces, would probably make much of this – as she does with Bernanos' treatment of the Carmelites of Compiegne story (Hutcheon 95 – 105). I still cannot be sure how much the closeness of William's story to my own influenced my decision to cut it from the play.

[66] The place of *remembering* for Bridget is central to her survivor's reality. Appendix 4 further discusses its place in my Irish world.

William's contemporary story. This tripartite structure would, I felt, be too complicated for the play, given its relatively short durational or running time.[67]

Finally, William's story was focussed on one male character. Its singular focus, whilst justified within its original medium, ran contrary to the prevailing guidelines of the proposed stage production. That is, against principles of equity at the university. I was writing a play for an extremely large cast, one where roles had to be written and allocated as evenly as possible.

Perhaps the deepest truth in my decision to cut William's story from the play lay in my inability to see how I could bring it to life onstage in a way that did not diffuse or distract from the Irish orphan story. With the hindsight of some seven years, my failure in this regard may simply have been the result of an overriding belief that the Irish story, with its vast panorama of plot and characters, was far more adaptogenic.[68] Any intrusion upon it would detract from a story I felt to have great dramatic potential: the Irish famine story. Ultimately, after no little prevarication, I set my course: I would cut William from the adaptation. Now, I would have to deal with the second question I had posed for myself: the consequences of this decision.

Removing William And Losing The Historical Fragments

Having made the decision to sever William from the play, I cut and pasted a new version of the novel, one with only the Irish story material remaining.[69] Perusing this soon revealed the full extent of the collateral damage I had caused to the novel's core story. Until this point, I had focussed almost entirely on whether or not to cut William from the play. I had given little thought to the *effect* of doing this.

My dilemma? If there is no William, then there is no modern day visit to the Hyde Park Barracks. And if there is no visit to the Hyde Park Barracks, then there are no informing historical fragments to help guide us (the audience of the play) through the circumstances surrounding the Irish orphan story, which was the way they functioned in the novel. But again, if there is no William in the play, what use do we *have* for the historical excerpts? I was in conflict. I had always felt these historic

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[67] I use the term 'short' here to denote the durational time the narrative takes to be told in the play (about 3 hours), compared to that of the novel (about 500 pages); an issue George Bluestone would have proudly traversed in his medium specific analysis (Bluestone 50 – 51).

[68] On this count, I find myself absolutely aligning with Mike Alfreds' criteria of theatrical adaptogenicity: strong plots, vividly individualised characters pursuing goals with intense emotions.

[69] In Appendix 5, I have included a sample of this prose form of the original Irish orphan story: First Night Below.

fragments William sees and reconstructs at The Hyde Park Barracks to be important. Removing them would surely weaken the historical ballast of the play.[70] I resolved to leave the decision of their inclusion until a later stage of development. If I could figure out a way of using them in some new form, I would. At this stage, though, I had absolutely no idea how.

Persistent Echoes: The Hyde Park Barracks

This last point is an important one. When speaking of 'decisions' along the procedural arc of adaptation – decisions like cutting William from the play – it is a trap to think in terms of absolute outcomes. William's presence, or some aspects of it, would remain in the play despite his apparent erasure. I have already mentioned the glass case William examines after first entering the Hyde Park Barracks museum. The objects he sees in it all eventually found their way into the play; some, such as the bible and the globe, becoming part of the matrix of symbols underpinning its thematic unity. To return to Plato's mimetic idea of refraction, it is possible here to see these original features of the novel existing as refracted echoes in the newly constituted version of the adaptation.

But there was one other major element in the William story that endured beyond the life of its original context: The Hyde Park Barracks building. In the play, I would never refer to it by name. It would simply be referred to as *The Immigration Depot*, where, in Part 2 of the play, the Irish orphan girls' journey ends. In the novel, the barracks building became a bridge between the two narrative strands. In the play, it would become something even more significant. It is the place where Bridget finally confronts the desperate denial she has used to survive her final ordeal in the Irish workhouse, the death of her sister, Sarah. It is a site of reckoning and a site of potential new beginning.

My own first contact with The Hyde Park Barracks was one of the clearest and most enduring influences on my own experience of the Irish story, its effect echoing

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[70] Before sitting down to write the novel draft of *Ebbingtide* I had little formal contact with historical scholarship. My interest in the plight of a group of Irish orphan girls lay in a simple and perhaps naive fascination with their story. But as a writer I was always conscious, sometimes cripplingly so, of the need to depict events accurately. Balancing this was the need, as adapter/playwright, to present my story in a way that was not merely historically accurate, but dramatically gripping. This tension coexisted with another adjunct truth: history itself is a selective narrative, or as Robert Hughes would have it, a patchwork with large and crevasse-like fissures in the fabric (Hughes xi).

through to the decisional heartland of the play.[71] Indeed, I came to view the excavated building as something of a metaphor for my own unearthing of the girls' story. It was certainly, to me, a tangible symbol of my own urge to uncover and reconstitute their lives in a fictional way. Perhaps this is part explanation as to why I chose to conclude the girls' journey in the play at the immigration depot. It represented to me a symmetrical and symbolic completion of a journey I had embarked upon long before the play was undertaken. The historical significance of the building, my own personal relationship with it, along with its presence in the play all align with Stam's view that adaptations are part of interconnected webs of influence and confluence (Stam and Raengo, 2005, 46)

PHASE 2: TEXTUAL EXCAVATION OF THE *SEA JOURNEY* SCENES

Overview Of The Phase

After cutting William from the novel, I set to work reviewing the cut and pasted version of the novel. This amounted to a stripped-down tale, one now totally focused on an Irish orphan girl, Bridget, who was travelling out to Australia on a ship. She is to be reunited with her younger sister, Sarah, who has come out on one of the earlier boats. During the voyage she recalls certain incidents in her life prior to boarding. The material fell into two distinct locations and time sequences: one set in the present onboard Bridget's ship bound for Australia (what would eventually become Part 2 of the play: *Sea Journey*); and the other, set in Bridget's remembered past back in Ireland (what would eventually become Part 1 of the play: *Ireland*).

These two distinct stories, each set in different locations, each set in their own different time frame, created a logical division for me as adapter. There was one clear story about Bridget on the boat. The other was set back in Ireland. Each, in its own way, was quite self-contained. Each presented very different sets of problems in terms of its theatrical representation. It seemed therefore logical to begin working on each as a separate adapting task, even though I knew that later they would form part of the same larger narrative.

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[71] In Appendix 6, I have included an account of my own first contact with The Hyde Park Barracks building.

I set myself two exploratory tasks. The first was to examine what difficulties the complex *Sea Journey* scenes would present. The second was to fossick amongst Bridget's memories to see what adapting issues would emerge from this very different Irish play-world. In effect what I was doing, by breaking these two separate strands of Bridget's story up, was accepting what to me was an overriding adaptation imperative. Each was very different in content and style. Each posed very different adaptation issues. The *Sea Journey* action would challenge the limits of my own adaptive medium: the capacity of a bare Black Box stage and its large cast to render a vast nautical world. On the other hand, the Irish scenes, being written as a series of flashbacks in the novel, seemed incomplete and sketchy in nature, the task being to render them onstage in a way that would be clear, complete and comprehensible to my theatre audience.

These two strands of adaptation activity began in the latter part of 2009 and would continue well into 2014. Initially, I gave my primary focus to the *Sea Journey* material because I needed to answer a fundamental question: would I be able to render it onstage? For this reason, and for the sake of a more thorough analysis of the *Ireland* material, I have quarantined each of the two strands of remediation from each other. I will deal here in Phase 2 with the *Sea Journey*. My description of the processes undertaken in evolving the Irish backstory will be the subject of Phase 3.

WORKING ON THE SEA VOYAGE MATERIAL

General Adaptogenicity Of Nautical Source Material

The *Ebbingtide* novel is set predominantly at sea. Most of the action occurs onboard a nineteenth century sailing ship. Would this material lend itself to stage adaptation? In attempting to remediate it I knew I would be interrogating not only the essential adaptogenicity of my novel's core material, but also the capacity of my specific theatrical medium to render it. I was certainly aware of other instances where productions had staged oceanic settings.[72] I also had a fair track record of directing student black box productions, so I was reasonably confident in the malleability of my adaptive medium. But I also knew that portraying a ship-bound life presented unique theatrical challenges. Potentially, I would be staging a full cast dance, a physically

[72] I am thinking here of the challenges various seafaring elements of Shakespearean plays such as *The Tempest* and *Pericles* present, along with other more modern iterations such as Orson Welles' handling of material adapted from Melville's classic prose original, *Moby Dick*.

complex initiation ceremony, the winching of a young sailor over the side of the boat. The audience would be taken up to the extremities of the ship, to the crow's nest and beyond. We would travel to the ocean's depths, witness medical procedures and share the deepest travails of a full storm at sea. I needed to know if my medium was capable of sustaining such action.

Setting Sail: Early Drafting Of *Sea Journey* Material

My plan for the *Sea Journey* material was to draft rough stage versions of scenes pretty much in the order they occurred in the novel. Each scene involved a process of problem solving, testing, translating, substituting, and sometimes rejecting various elements of the original.[73] I embarked on this strategy for a few reasons. Given the basic question surrounding the difficulties that might ensue from trying to create shipboard life onstage, I wanted tangible proof, albeit in textual form, that it might be possible.

Each chapter of the sea journey in the novel loosely corresponded to a 'scene', perhaps alluding to the fact that the novel itself was originally influenced by the powerful pull of my own dramatically oriented creative engine.[74] This allowed me to begin what I might call a conservative approach to the adaptation. By conservative, I mean I began at the beginning of the novel and worked through it sequentially, chapter-by-chapter, scene-by-scene.[75] With each chapter/scene I resolved to find a fairly simple adaptive solution, one that often involved a quite literal dramatic translation of the novel's material.[76] What I was attempting to investigate, albeit in a very preliminary way, was how the shipboard action might look and feel in its new theatrically oriented textual form.

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[73] Schon would characterise this practice as being a process of "surprise", "correction", and "adjustment" as the adaptation is worked through various stages of development (Schon, 1983, 60 – 61)

[74] I use the term 'scene' here in both a general and specific sense; general, in that each chapter of the novel uses the confined structure of scenes to present its story, having circumstance and setting as part of their structural make-up, portraying episodes of action linearly linked to other episodes of action in other scenes; but specifically, too, because the scenes in the novel contain dramatic elements, many of which avail themselves to direct and simple remediation: characters that act upon and interact with other characters within a discernible context of circumstances which, in turn, influence and impact upon them, these actions and reactions ultimately generating forward momentum in the plot.

[75] A more radical approach for these shipboard scenes would perhaps have been to dismantle the sea journey story entirely, reassembling it in the play in a completely different way. Later in the adaptation journey I would adopt a more radical approach to the Irish backstory, completely reordering and reinventing the story as I felt was required. See Phase 3 of this chapter for a more detailed account.

[76] Whilst at this point of the project Mike Alfred's *And Then What Happens* had not yet been published, I was pleased to later read that this conservative approach to adapting a novel was his preferred method (Alfreds 104).

Rendering Exterior Place And Space

So, what were some of the insights I gained from this early textual excavation of the *Sea Journey* material? Overall, the burning question of adaptogenicity was answered, at least at a textual level, in the affirmative. I felt, after writing a number of scenes in draft form, that it was possible to render onstage the exterior world of the nineteenth century ship I had created in the novel. This insight was generally ontological in nature: whether elements of the play-world *reality* could be rendered in a theatrical way.

But I was also investigating another more specific issue, whether my black box medium, with its minimalist sets and props and basic lighting and sound rigs, would potentially avail itself to rendering this reality. In the absence of a discernible set or any physical stage machinery, I resolved to write my drafts for the play in a style that *assumed* the actors would create the necessary performance ingredients to invoke the particular sense of location, space and circumstantial ambience.[77] An extract from one of the earliest attempts to draft the *Sea Journey* material – the 2009 draft – will suffice to illustrate this.[78] The action of the play has just moved from the Irish workhouse to the ship. The Irish orphan girls are newly arrived on the boat that will take them to Australia. It is both their first experience of the ship, and ours:

> *Plymouth Dock: The dormitory dissolves into a scene of busy departure and farewell. The girls are assembled on the deck of their ship; all around them, sailors (those physically present and those suggested by them) going about the business of cleaning, adjusting and preparing the ship for imminent departure. Mr Higgs, the first mate, is barking orders… While preparations continue, half a dozen men return to centre-stage, each holding a thick wooden pole. These they thread into imaginary holes, which fix the poles into a horizontal position around a circle so that it appears they are now spokes in a huge overturned wheel… the ship's capstan (2009 Sea Voyage Drafts – Prose, Play and Notes 58).*

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[77] I was also quite consciously writing stage directions that the actors could work with in their private 'off-the-main-floor' rehearsals.

[78] This piece of stage direction would later become, albeit in modified form, the opening for the scene called *Waiting to Embark* (*Ebbingtide* Script 288).

Whilst later versions of this particular stage direction would become more pared back, I discovered through these preliminary textual incursions that I could invoke aspects of the ship's deck by organising actors into various movement configurations. At this early stage of the adaptation these explorations remained speculative, contingent as they were upon the actors' ability to enact them. But what began to emerge was a theatrical style based on actors using their bodies to suggest physical dimensions of the boat. Having actors form a line across the front of the stage, for instance, might render the boat's side. Extremely high locations on the boat – such as the steerage steps or the crow's nest – could be rendered by the use of boxes, vertical or physical *lifts* by actors, combined with the reactions of other actors onstage. I was certainly using the drafting process to verify that the ship might be rendered in theatrical terms. More importantly, though, I was discovering my own way of doing it. I was finding a *style* for the play.

Confined Internality: Doctor Shannon's Diary

As I became more confident that my adaptive medium could sustain exterior dimensions of the action, I began to contemplate ways of reworking more *interior* elements of the novel. One of these involved the diary of the ship's Doctor – Doctor Shannon. Originally, the novel drew heavily upon the diary entries of Doctor Charles Strutt, the ship's doctor onboard the *Thomas Arbuthnot*, one of the early boats carrying Irish orphan girls out to Australia in 1849 – 50.[79] I always enjoyed this diary mode of narrative in the novel. It provided an intimacy that contrasted with the larger, more panoramic action. So, I was keen to explore it in the play. One scene in particular, which occurs early on in the *Sea Journey* story, highlights this interiority. It is called *Duties of Care* and is set in Doctor Shannon's cabin. In it, the doctor, now alone, speaks of his misgivings about discharging his duties onboard the boat. It is very much a private meditation conducted in the close confines of his cabin, one he shares with us:

[79] The diaries of Dr Strutt, along with statistical data about the boat and its 'cargo' are assiduously documented in Richard Reid and Cheryl Mongan's enlightening work, '*A Decent Set of Girls: The Irish Famine Orphans of the Thomas Arbuthnot'*.

> *The Doctor's Cabin – Day*
> SHANNON *(To us):* As doctor on this ship, I have been instructed by the Emigration Commissioners to keep a diary… (It's)… purpose: to provide… documentary evidence that I have discharged any duties of care… *(To himself)* Duties of care…Had they the slightest inkling of my previous 'duties', they'd not even dare… *(He stops himself. Back to us)* Still, I am diligent to the letter. Here, in this cramped cell that doubles as cabin and infirmary, wedged between narrow bunk and medicine chest, I plot and compose a Godless sermon for my abandoned flock… *(Ebbingtide* Script 291; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 1:59:25–2:00:11).[80]

Rendering Transitions Of Location

Inevitably, I was faced with the task of moving the play's action quickly and efficiently from one physical location on the boat to another. In the novel, where words are the mode of depicting action, shifts in location are relatively easy to effect: a chapter break, a new paragraph, with some informing references to the shift of location. But in the play, there was more to consider. In a *practice-based* context, I was negotiating the same issues that concerned Lessing and the medium specific theorists: issues relating to the *essentialities* of my adaptive medium and how it might effectively render changes of location on the boat. Or, viewed through a *translational* lens, I was asking how I might translate the shifts I had created in the novel into theatrical *equivalents*.

Understandably, too, I was also keen to explore how these transitions might work in a production with no set. The following extract from a scene called *First Night Below* illustrates the kind of solution I was evolving. In the action that precedes the scene, a storm has just come upon the boat, causing a sermon being conducted by Doctor Shannon on the ship's upper deck (the sermon he mentions in the previous example) to be abandoned. In the mayhem that follows, the orphan girls are hastily bundled below. But Bridget remains above decks, transfixed by the storm:

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[80] **Please Note: For simplicity's sake, all following script references from the play will refer to the final "*Ebbingtide* Script" in Part 2 of this document. These will be accompanied by corresponding counter/timing references from the "Ebbingtide DVD/Vimeo".**

Ship's deck – Moments later

Bridget is standing at the top of the steep hatchway steps: those leading to Below Decks – the girls' living quarters. Despite the imminent storm, she has not yet gone below, apparently transfixed by its fury.

MRS HANWELL *(From below)*: Come below, please! *(A wave comes. The boat heaves)* Come below, please, I say! Did you not hear me? We have to close the hatch!

ROSE *(From below)*: Are ye deaf?

NELLIE *(From below)*: We're all gettin' wet down here, ye selfish cow!

Rose and Nellie take hold of Bridget's boots.

DERVLA: Get down the hatchway steps before the next wave comes – now! *(They pull and she topples to the floor. Dervla pins her neck with a boot)*

While you're up there taking in the views, we're all gettin' wet.

BRIDGET: I'm sorry.

ROSE: Are ye now?

NELLIE: That'd be a comfort, sure.

ROSE: Bein' wet as we are from ye stupid doin's.

MRS HANWELL: Now, girls. She's down now (*Ebbingtide* Script 294; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:04:00 – 2:04:27).

At this early stage of the adaptation process I was textually developing a style of theatre that would accommodate these rapid transitions in location; in the above example, moving from *above* decks to *below* decks. I had originally envisaged a set of portable steps as a possible solution, even including them in a preliminary draft. But I knew bringing these on and off stage might create problems. My real hope was the actors themselves would come up with a more embodied solution during rehearsals.[81]

[81] Eventually, they did. The actor playing Bridget stood on a box while the other actors below decks stood behind her looking upwards to create the illusion of being *below decks*. At a particular moment in the scene Bridget was pushed forward onto the floor, the box removed, and she was instantly 'below decks' with the rest of the girls, thus creating the illusion that she had fallen down the steps (*Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:04:02).

Remediating The Novel's Linguistic Textures:
The Issue Of Figurative Luxuriance

The novel often employs heightened poetic language to invoke textures of place and state of mind. It also assisted in creating a refractory lens for the Irish story. Seen through William's eyes, the girls' reality belongs to another more heightened world. In the play, even with William absent, I wanted to retain a sense of otherworldliness on the boat, one that reflected the strangeness of the girls' experience.

So, I began experimenting with some of the novel's more lyrically descriptive passages, transforming them into spoken narrative. It might be possible, I thought, to transform them into a form of straight address to the audience. It was a gamble, I thought, having my characters speaking directly to the audience in this heightened way. It might potentially clash with other elements that were tending towards a more naturalistic playing style. But I wanted to give it a try. The following example, taken from an early *Sea Journey* scene called *Waiting To Embark*, illustrates this heightened form of direct address. We pick up the action with the girls on the ship's deck, waiting for it to depart:

> *May - 1850*
> *Plymouth Dock - Day*
> *… (Girls), from various workhouses around Ireland, are excited and disoriented.*
> GIRLS *(To us)*: Three years; thirty-six moons to prove it; in that rotten workhouse, waitin' to board a boat – The *Ebbingtide* – bound for the underside of the world!
> *… Despite themselves, the others stare out at (another) boat.*
> GIRLS *(To us)*: Look, on its main deck a motley group bound for America. Poorer lookin' types; though not as poor as us; with the bewildered faces of lost children. Families: men with arms around the waists of wives; mothers nursin' mewlin' babes; children wound into the folds of skirts; others standin' alone; all joined to the dock by coloured paper streamers; their ends held by a small group of well-wishers; wavin' God-speed; a band playin' slightly out of tune. Most have their backs to us. Some see us lookin' at 'em. And quickly turn away… (*Ebbingtide* Script 286 – 280; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo

1:52:46 – 1:54:44).[82]

Experimenting with passages like this, I began to believe that I could create the world of the ship for the audience in a way that would render it as *lived experience*. As the girls see and describe the boat moored alongside their own, we see it too. What I was beginning to challenge, even in these early drafts of the play, was Bluestone's assertion that only novels can truly generate *figurative luxuriance* – the capacity to stimulate an imagined version of something described (Bluestone 20). Certainly, when a reader scans a richly luxuriant passage in a novel they *imagine* their own version of what is being described. And, it may well be that a filmic adaptation, one that presents a literalised visual image of that passage, may hinder its audience from engaging in the same figurative imagining as the novel's reader.

But would a theatrical audience member, *hearing* the above description of the boat moored alongside, not also engage in a similar cognitive process, *seeing* the image and action in their mind's eye as it was described? I wanted to use the writing process as a preliminary way of interrogating this possibility. Contrary to Bluestone's opinion, my own experience of working in a black box theatrical style led me to believe it was the perfect medium for an audience to imagine action and locations being described. Rather than hindering the cognitive processes involved in figurative luxuriance, hopefully, my medium would enhance it.

Height, Space And Poetic Language: Aloft Scenes

I was also using early textual excavation to explore height and space, particularly how it could be combined with heightened language to produce a *hyper* stage reality. In the novel, some of the action is set aloft in the ship's crow's nest. Gale, the young novice sailor whose job it is to look for squalls of wind, observes the rest of the boat from his airy perch. The linguistic style I employed in the novel was heightened to capture his experience.

Including a reworked version of this in the play might, I thought, open a stylistic gateway, one that held powerful potential in its capacity to lift the audience beyond the more prosaic naturalism of the larger group scenes. So, I tried retaining as much of the original lyricism as I felt the dialogue could withstand. The following extract from a

[82] For a comparison between this early draft of the scene in the play and the original prose version refer to Appendix 7: *Quayside*.

scene entitled *Everything Is a Sign* illustrates the linguistic textures I was striving for. Here, Gales sets the scene for his audience, initiating us into the sacred rites of his newly elevated position on the boat:

> *The Crow's Nest – Day*
> *Gale stands in his perch, a picture of delirious joy: face up to the sky, with mouth wide open, as if depositing bubbles in the wanton wind.*
> GALE: A bright sunny morning and the sun is high. How bright, how sunny, how high I'm yet to learn. But each is a sign, signifying something. And something else are those clouds, so close I could flick 'em like milky marbles across the smooth and silken sky *(He does, laughing wildly. He opens his mouth wide)*. And this breeze, this song in my open mouth makes a sound like the conch in the Cap'n's cabin. And a breeze is a tiny wind that can blow to a Gale, which is my name, and that is a sign, if only I knew…If only I knew! *(Looking below)* This deck below me, this tiny leaf island is my realm and all upon it my subjects… Look at them: insignificant speckleens, bodiless insects with little girl heads and little girl feet. I could crush 'em between my fingers! *(He pincers them to death between two fingers – laughs wildly)* But I'm not here for sport. Oh no, I'm here to read the signs; and to keep an eye on the doctor and his fraternisin' females. Cap'n says I must wait and watch 'em, like cut glass in a shaken tube… (*Ebbingtide* Script 300; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:14:42–2 2:15: 43)!

In the novel, this action is conveyed to the reader via the omniscient narrator of the story.[83] Superficially, this play version resembles its novelistic original. Its language is similar. Its simple diegetic transference of information would appear to have changed little in scripted form. But the resemblance is misleading. For it disguises how the language has been transformed in its new theatrical context. In the *novel*, it is a lyrical piece of narration describing Gale's state of mind, delivered via the proxy presence of

[83] Who the reader of the novel will come to understand is William.

an omniscient narrator. In the *play*, it is spoken by the character, not as a thought bubble or an interior piece of musing, but straight to the audience. It is immediate, expressing directly the full gamut of wild, uncomprehending, ecstatic mystery he feels. The words are *his* and are now part of his active relationship with *us,* his audience, the secret sharers and witnesses of this experience. The new medium has transformed novelistic lyrical language into a new kind of dramatic communicative utterance.

This transformational analysis between mediums engages with a number of different theoretical areas, albeit again applied to the *practice* of adapting. Transposing Gale's poetic language in the novel into its new theatrical medium sets up a contingent proving ground, one engaging *medium specific analysis*. I was also enquiring into whether my theatrical medium could sustain these heightened linguistic textures, the kind of question that led Bluestone to postulate about *his* chosen medium of film: its modal operations, its capacities, its limitations. I was also, to borrow a term from narratologist Brian McFarlane, examining the *enunciative mechanisms* available to me in my theatrical medium (McFarlane 20).

Mention of McFarlane also brings with it another parallel enquiry I was undertaking in drafting Gale's speech: *narrative*. As I have just explained, I wanted my audience to see and feel Gale's experience, to share it with him. But at a more fundamental level, I wanted them simply to understand we were now located in a new part of the ship: the uppermost reaches of the crow's nest. From this vantage point the deck below looked like a tiny "leaf island" and the girls, like "insignificant speckleens, bodiless insects with little girl heads and little girl feet". At its most elemental level, these facts are tiny fragments of narrative, minute plot points being delivered by Gale to us. Reconstituting the speech in this way for the play I was, in microcosm, re-enacting Aristotle's own account of the transposition from the diegetic to the dramatic mode. In the novel, we are told of these plot point via an omniscient narrator. But in the play, Gale does not merely *tell* us of these narrative elements. He lives them and feels them and relates them directly to us. And in hearing them, *we* see them, *feel* them and *experience* them too.

One final point needs to be made here before moving on. In Chapter 2, I devoted some attention to the word/image divide. It lies at the heart of most critical partitioning between mediums: written, visual and embodied. Lessing's medium specific analysis created a bifurcation between the visual in painting and the linguistic in poetry. Bluestone's distinction between novel and film made the same binary distinction. The

idea of fidelity in adaption inevitably draws on similar value-laden assumptions between what is written and what is seen. But my own experience of working in the area of remediating language for stage belies such simplistic binaries. Transposed into the *dramatic* mode, the *spoken* word, once released into the theatrical space undergoes a radical transformation, one involving a communion between actor and audience; or, as Mike Alfreds would have it, a *shared* experience. Words spoken onstage fly outwards and are refracted through the perception of the audience. Thus perceived, they transform and solidify into something new, something *seen* and *felt*.

Drafting Complex Sequences Of Action: *Crossing The Line*

One of the last scenes to be drafted in this phase of the project, and certainly, in terms of degrees of difficulty, one of the most challenging, was a scene called *Crossing the Line* (*Ebbingtide* Script 308 – 314; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:41:05 – 2:53:25). Until tackling it I had worked through the sea journey narrative in the sequence it occurred in the novel, all the while accumulating a repertoire of performative elements that would combine to form the play's overall theatrical textures. So, by the time I sat down to tackle *Crossing the Line* I had plenty of drafting experience behind me. This was fortuitous. It contained elements such as whole cast action, choric movement, a play-within-a-play, quick changes of location, temporal shifts, and an underwater memory sequence, all conspiring to make it a complex adaptive assignment. Notwithstanding its degree of difficulty, these same elements also made it one of the most theatrically exploitable sections of the entire *Sea Journey* narrative. I have included an account of its rendering here because, within the overall regime of textual excavation, it stands as an adaptive exemplar.

There is a deep truth about the slippery art of adaptation, one rarely accessed by conventional commentary with its neatly binary comparative lens. It is touched on by Mike Alfreds when he describes "the walls of stories" as being flexible, porous (Alfreds 101). The inference here is that the walls between mediums, particularly those partitioning novels and plays, are often more permeable than first glance would suggest. Novels are filled with features we commonly attribute to plays and vice versa. The same features that make the novelistic form compelling and luxuriant to a reader can shine again in their newly reconstituted skin for a theatre audience.

As a novelist writing *Crossing the Line* I was consciously and unconsciously creating action that was eminently dramatic. I wanted my readers to experience the

action, to be swept along by it, to immerse themselves in it. Although creating it in the original medium of the novel, I was influenced by, and drew upon many years of experience as a maker of theatre. From the beginning of the project, although I knew some aspects of the scene would be difficult to adapt, I was equally aware that I was moulding material that, although novelistic in form, had at the core of its genetic coding my own strongly theatrical orientation. This rebuts medium specific assertions that different mediums possess separate and distinct qualities. Some novels are eminently dramatic. Some plays tell cracking stories. Such a perspective also held an equally tantalising adaptive prospect: that the novel's inherently dramatic qualities would *translate* well into its new theatrical setting, where the novel's dramatic elements would find powerful theatrical *equivalence* in the play.

Crossing the Line is composed of a complex sequence of action comprising a number of smaller sub-scenes or sections. I wanted the play to present these sections as one unbroken arc of action, each seamlessly moving its audience into the next. I would introduce the *Crossing the Line* event via one of Doctor Shannon's diary entries. As for the scene itself, my plan was to begin it quietly, something that might serve as a dramatic counterpoint to the wild raucousness of the main action to follow. In the novel, there is a small scene that occurs between the doctor and Bridget. It is only momentary and served merely to introduce the main *Crossing the Line* action. But I was looking in the play to strengthen the relationship between the two characters. So I wrote a new scene, one where we could feel a much greater sense of connection between them. This would be a prelude to the dance that would herald in the night's festivities:

> *Ship's deck – a bright summer's eve:*
> *The deck is awash with preparations for the dance. Doctor Shannon is helping put the finishing touches to the lanterns. On a separate part of the stage, Younger Bridget is on the shoulders of her father, spinning, and saying 'Star Bright' together – an echo of the earlier scene in Part 1. Downstage, Older Bridget is looking up at the night sky. Seeing her, Shannon approaches.*
> SHANNON: Star light, star bright; first star I see tonight…
> *She turns, surprised to hear him utter the phrase.*
> A beautiful evening, wouldn't you say?
> BRIDGET: Aye, Doctor, it is.

> SHANNON: And just enough Moon to welcome our friends from the deep *(Ebbingtide* Script 314*; Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:41:20 – 2:41:26).

In the novel, the character of the doctor was originally English, seconded by the emigration commissioners to be surgeon superintendent on the boat. But as I developed a firmer sense of the Irish action that would precede the sea journey, I decided to create a stronger link between him and the orphans. He would be Irish, and a doctor in one of the workhouses; Bridget's, although being one of hundreds of such girls, he would not remember her. The workhouse would, nonetheless, create a bond between them. Both, in a sense, would be fleeing the famine's carnage. I also thought it might be a good moment to remind the audience of why Bridget was on the boat:

> BRIDGET: Do ye remember me, Sir?
> SHANNON: Of course, Bridget…
> BRIDGET: No, I mean do ye remember me from before.
> SHANNON: Before?
> BRIDGET: Back home…
> SHANNON: I don't (quite follow).
> BRIDGET: You were the doctor at our Workhouse.
> SHANNON *(Blanching)*: I see.
> BRIDGET: I understand why ye wouldn't: we had little to do with each other. And there were a great many others in need. But ye tended to my little sister when she was poorly, and for that I'll always be grateful.
> *Beat*
> SHANNON: And how is your sister?
> BRIDGET: She's grand! I'm chasing her, do ye know: around the belly o' the world – all the way to Australia (*Ebbingtide* Script 308 – 315 – 316; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:41:34 – 2:42:05).

Having begun *Crossing the Line* with an intimate scene between Bridget and the doctor, I was now ready to get the evening's festivities underway. I would begin by

interrupting the conversation between Bridget and the doctor with a whole company dance:

> *There are screams of delight and instantly the deck is alive with dancing. Dr Shannon and Bridget are swirled into the action* (*Ebbingtide* Script 317; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:43:46).

As the stage directions above indicate, I wanted to fill the stage with a burst of physical action to jolt the audience into the festivities. I was also hoping the dance would provide a dramatic bridge into the main *Crossing the Line* action: a rough performance celebrating the ship having crossed over the equator; a play-within-a-play, wherein the ship's crew re-enact the arrival of Neptune and his ragged band of undersea followers, who bless the boat for having arrived at the equator, the symbolic half-way point in their journey:[84]

> *At a time convenient, seaweed attired sailors rush forward. One sailor comes forward to begin the ceremony… Framed by a kelp arch of sailors Neptune and his clan appear: An imperious Father Neptune (Cook), an enigmatically reluctant Mother Neptune (Gale) gripped tightly by her husband, and a yapping Baby Neptune, peering out from the shirt of his Father (Matey, Cook's dog). Recognising the cast, a loud cheer goes up. A space is cleared in the centre of the deck* (*Ebbingtide* Script 317; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:44:22).

I wanted this performance to be garbed in the absolutely rough-cut cloth of amateur seafaring theatrics – theatrics of a kind that would have comprised such an occasion. My aim was to lull audiences – both ship and theatre-bound – into a sense of lightness and celebration, one that would counterpoint the drama that was to follow. This would come soon enough during Gale's initiation ceremony. Harmless fun would become something more menacing. The next action would be physically difficult for the actors. So I wrote a strong written template of detail for them to work with in rehearsals:

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[84] An account of which is included in the diary of Dr Strutt onboard the Thomas Arbuthnot (Richard Reid and Cheryl Mongan's *A Decent Set of Girls – the Irish Famine orphans of the Thomas Arbuthnot* 36).

> *Sailors scrum around Neptune's wife. When this dissolves, Gale is left in the centre: bound, shirtless and blindfolded. He is picked up, tossed into the air three cheered times, lowered onto the deck and painted with a black substance (tarred).*
> TATTOO: That's it: tar him up! Bird him, lads!
> *He is tipped into a barrel headfirst and feathered (coated with a layer of feathers); then pulled from it, coughing and gasping for air.*
> What's that (you're saying), my little gull – thirsty?
> *He slaps him hard on the back and Gale falls to his knees.*
> Give him a drink, boys.
> *A bottle of water is placed to his lips. He sculls then spits it out.*
> Oh, dear – bit too salty, eh? *(Into Gale's ear)* Not long to go now, lad. *(To the crowd)* And lastly, but not leastly: ride the roiling waves to the other side! Up! Stand up!
> *He is helped to his feet. The final obstacle is a series of knee-high ropes he must negotiate. They rise up and down, simulating an ocean swell.*
> Go on now, boy: Cross the line and be a man amongst us!
> *He takes a few steps forward, urged on by the other sailors. But, being blindfolded he trips over the first rope, and then another, and another* (*Ebbingtide* Script 319; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:47:30 – 2:48:54).

As Gale negotiates the last rope obstacle, we begin perhaps the most physically challenging piece of action in the play – his dunking in the ocean. Again, I felt the physical action needed to be detailed enough in its scripted form to give the actors a clear sense of what I was requiring of them:

> *Having fallen at the last into a loop of rope, he is hoisted aloft, dumped head first over the side of the boat and is now suspended upside down before us* (*Ebbingtide* Script 319; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:49:00 – 2:49:11).

At this point, I wanted our perspective to shift to Gale's reality, deep in the cold

embrace of the ocean's icy clutch. This would prepare us for another major shift in perspective, back in time into a memory fragment, where Gale recalls an incident back in his Irish workhouse. This transition, if effected well, would provide the audience with important information about Gale's background. It was based on the story of a young Irish boy, who, being taken by staff in the workhouse to be dead from fever, was dumped into a lime pit. But he was not dead, and after some days, climbed out alive to tell his tale.[85] I had not included it in the novel, but now regarded it as another significant link between the two parts of the play, between Ireland and the ship journey:

> *He is gently laid down and we are transported to a workhouse infirmary with rows of sick children…*
> GALE: At the back of the Infirmary there was a place; rarely seen, but often spoken of by those who'd come to be in my workhouse. Some called it 'the back way', others simply 'the dead-end'. Most agreed it was the only way out of that place. There was a room, bare but for a single table. *(He is laid on the table)* On the table was a box like a coffin without a lid with a lever on one side. Pull this lever and the bottom of the box gave way to a chute beneath. This led down to an open pit on the outside wall. (*He slowly slides down the chute, coming to rest on a pile of bodies)* The pit was not yet full, so there was quite a fall from the end of the chute. That's how I broke my legs. The pit was filled with lime; and others, like me: dead from the fever, mostly. Many say it was from hunger, but that's because they weren't there… I lay in that pit for three days – dead – so I had a lot of time to think. I was not afraid: 'a better life, a deeper life, awaits me yet'… When I finally crawled out I was sure of one thing: I would never go back (*Ebbingtide* Script 320; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:49:10 – 2:51:46).

[85] I first encountered the story of the knock-kneed boy who had survived the death pit in the oral stories of famine descendants in Cahthal Poirteir's *Famine Echoes* (*Poirteir* 119 – 120). Like so many of these stories this stranger than fiction true account stayed with me for more than six years before I finally decided to work aspects of it into Gale's character background. The mystery of Gale's crooked legs would be revealed later in his pit monologue.

I had always viewed the *Crossing the Line* scene as adaptively fertile ground, a contest between potentialities and obstacles. Challenges were numerous. Questions abounded. Without the financial resources to fund complex mechanical solutions, how would we portray the winch sequence? How would we execute the change of location from the boat's deck to the ocean below and then the flashback to the workhouse? And how would we return Gale back up onto the ship's deck for the end of the scene? I wrote the draft of *Crossing the Line* without balking at a full depiction of the novel's action, along with additional details I had devised for the play. I included as much detail in the stage directions as I thought necessary to give the actors a strong idea of what I was contemplating. At this stage of the project, I was hoping that my script would find full expression in rehearsals, that my medium would mould itself to my own theatrical purpose (Carroll 42).

Common Features Of The Emerging Sea Voyage Scenes

During the long drafting process of sea voyage scenes, common features began to emerge in the writing. From the perspective of Gaudreault and Marion's *narrative mediatrics*, I was beginning to explore my theatrical medium's capacity to represent various dimensions of the novel's narrative. The physical world of the ship could be rendered without recourse to literalised scenic design and cumbersome stage machinery. Place and space could be rendered in a suggestive way, allowing the figurative luxuriance of language to replace a more literalised materialisation. Actors themselves, I hoped, along with minimal use of lights and sound, could create both panoramic and intimate textures of the play-world I was imagining.

Such elemental simplicity would provide me the portability I needed to move the action in a swift and flowing manner. Stylised movement could be deployed to signify various atmospheres such as stormy weather and becalmed waters. I could have characters respond to the immediate ship's reality, interacting with those around them in the ship's real time. Or I could take the audience inside a character's mind by having them share their thoughts and experiences with us. This would accommodate the more internal dimensions of the novel's narrative style. I could have characters relate incidents to us, either individually or in groups when a more choric effect was required. Characters could travel backwards and forwards in time. I could move the action into a memory fragment set in Ireland. I could combine naturalistic dialogue with more poetically heightened language to create different tonal textures in scenes.

These theatrical features in the emerging script were, of course, notional: they existed in an experimental script-bound state. I was playing with various theatrical ways of presenting the novel's material; all the while acutely aware that each playful whorl on the page, each stylistic sortie, would only be actualised in the testing ground of rehearsals, a sobering reminder of a later assignation in the performative cycle of the adaptation's life.

PHASE 3: DEVELOPING A FULL IRISH BACK-STORY

Overview Of The Phase

Throughout the latter part of 2009, as I was embarking on adapting the *Sea Journey* scenes, I also began a parallel investigation: an examination of the existing material in the novel concerning Bridget's Irish background. Viewed through the lens of Schon's notion that creative endeavour proceeds through a series of "bad fits", this was certainly a low point in the play's evolutionary cycle (Schon, 1983, 52). Jettisoning the contemporary William story had simplified some aspects of the adaptation process, reducing two stories to one. But what soon became apparent was that it also left a profound and difficult legacy.

Having discarded William and his story from the play, I cobbled together a draft of all the Irish material I had left in the novel, effectively Bridget's story. It was a sobering and difficult point in the adaptation journey. As an autonomous account of an individual family's experience of Irish famine life, the remaining episodes represented little more than a vague and piecemeal rendering of Irish famine life. Framed as they were in the novel within William's story, these fragments seemed to sit comfortably. Now, sitting alone, I simply did not have enough material to work with for the play. My strategy out of this dilemma was firstly to assess what I had left in Bridget's backstory; and secondly, having made this assessment, I would then attempt to construct a more complete Irish story, filling in whatever gaps I felt were necessary. It was a radical departure from the novel's subject, but one I felt I had to make. This process, which began when I embarked upon my PhD, would take the best part of four years to complete. Eventually, it would stand alone as Part 1 of the play: *Ireland*.

Examining The Remnants Of Bridget's Back-Story

To begin the process of assessing the remaining Irish story material, I first broke it down into a usable form. So I made a summary of the novel's remaining Irish fragments. My aim was to ask a few simple questions of it. What did these small extant episodes tell us about Bridget's Irish life? And how could I use them to construct a more complete story? In their present form, they looked like a series of snap-shots of Bridget's life: short glimpses of scenes set back in Ireland, remembered during her sea voyage. Occasionally, these would reveal a piece of information divulged in conversation with other characters onboard the boat.[86] It was a sobering moment. Clearly, things we knew of Bridget's life were far outweighed by those we did not. Nonetheless, they provided me with a base to work from.[87] More daunting, perhaps, was the realisation that for the play I would need to write what amounted to a completely new Irish back-story.

I began to mindfully wander through the fragments of Bridget's story before me, knowing full well that I could use them, modify them, or discard them. I searched for patterns and recurring features that might bind the fragments together. I often found myself returning to these small snippets of Bridget's life, as if they were a writing base or starting point. They gave me a sense of substantive solidity at a time in the adaptation's development when, because of my radical departure from the novel, I felt little else available.

The Tension Behind Depicting History

Re-examining the Irish famine world brought with it the feeling that I also needed to revisit some of the historical research material I had read during the early stages of

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[86] See Appendix 8 for a summary of these novelistic Irish remnants.

[87] A surprising amount of these fragments of Bridget's Irish story would eventually find their way, in one form or another, into the 2014 production of *Ebbingtide*. I would retain the two sisters and the plot thread that sees Bridget travel out to Australia in search of her sister. I would eventually use the scene where Sarah is selected to come out to Australia at the beginning of Part 2 of the play, this being the catalyst for Bridget's own journey onboard her boat. As in the novel, Bridget would have a close relationship with her father. This relationship would be central to the unfolding story of Part 1: *Ireland*. I would retain Bridget's bible for the play. The priest who teaches her to read would become a major character in Part 1. I would expand the story of how Bridget consults the bible to include her mother, who in the play would instruct her on how to use it. I would retain a scene where Bridget teaches Sarah about the equator. The 'round belly of the world' theme would echo throughout both parts of the play. I would retain the workhouse as a place Bridget would return to in recollection during Part 2. Sarah's illness would form a major plot point in Part 2. The tree Bridget sits beneath would become a major framing device in the play.

writing the novel. I had previously read accounts of the Irish orphan stories,[88] along with standard historical works concerning the impact of the famine upon the Irish people.[89] I now revisited these again. But I was most drawn to accounts of another kind, those that had at their heart, stories of the people who lived through and beyond the famine.[90]

In a way, this duality in the research material reflected a broader tension in the work I was now engaged in as an adapter. Indeed, if I am to be honest, this tension existed as a strong and powerful undertow throughout the entire adaptation project. Substantively, the subject I was writing about was historical, one whose depictions had traditionally generated great controversy. Having decided to revisit the Irish famine material for my adaptation, I was acutely aware of the need to provide some semblance of veracity. I felt I owed it not only to the people that had endured the catastrophe, but also to those who remain the beneficiaries of its dark legacy. But I was equally aware that I was writing a drama, a fictional account, one that would adhere to its own laws and truths.

First Imaginings: A Family In The Famine

As I poured over the remaining Irish material I kept returning to what seemed to be the core binding substance of my story: a family in crisis. This, I reasoned, would become the starting point for my reworking of material. I would craft my new Irish scenes giving more flesh and depth to it. I began by reviewing what I knew about them: who they were and the relationships between them, embellishing where I felt it necessary.

Both parents were still alive at the beginning of the famine. So I could build scenes where the family were together. These would be contextualised within the developing famine. The relationship between the parents would be fundamentally strong, but would be severely tested. They were both strong characters. But their

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[88] In books such as Richard Reid and Cheryl Mongan's *A Decent Set Of Girls – The Irish Famine Orphans Of The Thomas Arbuthnot 1849-1850*, and Trevor McClaughlin's *Barefoot and Pregnant: The Irish Famine Orphans In Australia.*

[89] In such works as: Colm Toibin and Diarmuid Ferriter's *The Irish Famine*, Cecil Woodham-Smith's classic early account in *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-1849*, along with Thomas Keneally's *The Great Sham*e. Alas, Crowley et al's seminal tome, *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine: 1845 – 52* was still some three years away from publication when I sat down to review the historical literature for the drafting of the Irish scenes.

[90] Fictional works like Peter Behrens' novel *The Law of Dreams*, which is set during the famine, David Thomson's novel, *Woodbrook*, which depicts life on an Irish estate during and after the famine, Tom Murphy's play simply titled, *Famine*. But also histories that brought the famine to life via stories handed down through the generations: Cathal Poirteir's *Famine Echoes* and Thomas Gallagher's *Paddy's Lament*.

different approach to life would cause conflict. Sean, Bridget's father, would be pragmatically minded, prosaic in his approach to problems. He would value the tangible over the intangible, body over spirit. Mary, Bridget's mother, on the other hand, would possess a different kind of strength, but one no less formidable. Arguably, she would be more perceptive than he, marrying her Catholicism with an understanding of *the old ways*. She passes this mixture of beliefs on to the girls. Guided by instincts and feelings, she has more than a healthy respect for their power.

Both parents will die in the famine, leaving the girls with no other place to go than the workhouse. In this eventuality, Bridget, as the older sister, will feel responsible for Sarah. In an act of significant prescience, Mary will forewarn Bridget that, in the event of catastrophe, she will have to look after her younger sister. This sets in motion Bridget's later need to follow her younger sister out to Australia. It also generates her survivor guilt. Then there is the priest, a benevolent figure, obviously close to the family. He gives Bridget reading lessons. But what role does he play in the unfolding famine? He would try to alleviate the hunger of the family and others like them.

This kind of loose creative dreaming continued for the first eighteen months of the project. All the while, I was reading and re-reading the material containing anecdotal accounts of the famine, in an attempt to reach a point of saturation with it. I found that as I continually revisited this material, I would get glimpses of an image or a fragment of a scene. Gradually, using this immersive approach, I accumulated the beginnings of my new Irish play-world. The result was a series of scenic sketches, roughly hewn with shorthand notes.[91] Reviewing this new material again revealed that there were still holes in the fabric of the cloth I was weaving. I had created a deeper sense of the family. But they seemed isolated from their surrounding circumstances. I needed to find a way of more firmly situating them, thickening their relationship with the world they inhabited.

Two Important Developments: The Brother As Gombeen And The Mediator Priest

One element that I thought had dramatic potential was the issue of *rent payment*. Clearly, when the potato crop failed, rent money would be in short supply. Payment was on each of the two Gale Days throughout the year, traditionally in May and November. I conceived of a scene where the rent collector would come to collect rent. There would

[91] In Appendix 9, I have included a list of these May 28th 2010 Scene Sketches. As with the earlier list of Irish remnants from the novel, there are a surprising number of these scenes that found their way, in one way or another, into the final draft of the play.

be an argument about the family's inability to pay. This could, I thought, be a crucial link between the family and the world outside. Some rent collectors – or 'gombeens' as they were known – were men who had once been part of the tenant community. Through choice or circumstance they had decided to work for the landlords, collecting rent from communities they had once been attached to. What if, I speculated, one of these gombeens, the one charged with collecting rent from Bridget's family, was the brother of Bridget's father – her uncle? Suddenly, the rent collection scene became charged with more complexity and dramatic potential. It also set in train a thread of discovery about the latent possibilities emanating from this richer family dynamic.

What, for instance, might the relationship between the two brothers have been like? What was their history? Deciding this was a fruitful thread to pursue I decided to weave the brothers and their relationship into the play. Other decisions followed. Liam, Bridget's uncle – the gombeen rent collector – would come to discuss rent with his brother, Sean. There would be an argument. When the famine hit, Liam would be faced with an ethical dilemma: force rent payment or help his brother's family. The evolving relationship between the brothers also altered my conception of the priest. He would know the brothers. He might even be forced to mediate between them in their dispute. These two character developments – the creation of the brother as gombeen and the priest as mediator between the two brothers – were to prove significant in the development of the play.

By July 2010, I began to feel the need to transform my loose scenic breakdown into something more substantive. My plan for drafting the new scenes was simple, perhaps even foolhardy: from the list of brief scenic sketches, write as many scenes as I could, as quickly as I could. Remediation of the *Sea Journey* scenes was underway and I felt reasonably confident with the results I was achieving. I wanted to feel the same confidence about the new Irish backstory I was developing.

Decision To Sever The Historical Extracts From The Play

As discussed previously, the decision to cut the William story from the play resulted in other collateral damage to the novel's narrative presentation; specifically, the historical extracts William had seen at the Hyde Park Barracks. Up until this point in the adaptation process I had clung to the possibility that I might still include them in the play, albeit in a different context than they had appeared in the novel. My reasons were

valid: they provided intellectual and historical ballast; and, like many adapters, I feared that deviating too far from the original would result in something less legitimate – a rather personal twist on the idea of fidelity, when one considers that I was authoring both novel and play. There was, of course, another reason for letting the historical fragments go, somewhat more pragmatic and craft-based. I simply could not find a convincing way of introducing them into the play that did not detract from the dramatic thrust of the action. So the decision was made. They had to go.

Something Is Missing. Something Must Be Done.

From the second half of 2010 until well into 2012 I followed my planned strategy of drafting the new version of the Irish scenes. As I moved towards the completion of this task, I again asked: had I created an adequate account of Bridget's life back in Ireland?

In some respects, my response was positive. It was a more complete portrait than the sparse account I had written in the novel. I had achieved some success in creating a family story that was more discernibly situated in the backdrop of the famine. The family relationships, particularly those between the parents of the sisters and the brothers, were beginning to gain depth. I felt that my decision to create the character of the brother had strengthened the broader political dimensions of the piece, certainly with respect to rent collection. I was also reasonably happy with the role of the priest, whose portrait was beginning to resemble the one I had originally conceived; being close to Bridget's family, yet caught in the middle of the personal and ideological battle between the two brothers. I had created a basic linear story, one that followed the general progress of the famine.

But other dimensions of my review were less positive. Whilst I had created a microcosmic family story back in Ireland, there seemed to be something missing. The portrait I had drawn seemed to lack completeness, roundedness. Moreover, despite the inclusion of the brother and the priest, it gave no real sense of the larger textures of the world in which they lived. By focussing on the smaller world of the family, I had somehow ignored the larger communal and social eddies that moved around them. Perhaps the worst aspect of this self-assessment was that it was still vague and inchoate.

So what was wrong? And what should I do about it? The answer, unfortunately, was as simple then as it is now revealing.

I blanch at its report.

Of all the time and effort expended in writing both the novel and the drafts of play material, I had not, ever, been to Ireland. My research – no matter how detailed or thorough it might have appeared to me – had been confined to reading historical accounts. I had delved into orally transmitted stories, those subsequently written down and published. I found these imaginatively fertile. But I had not actually *been* to the place I was writing about. Little wonder then that my fictional account of it should be so lifelessly book-bound. But here, now, reviewing my work, I had to concede that whatever strengths it contained seemed to be magnified by this overwhelming omission in my preparation.

I needed to act.

It would be misleading to characterise my response as anything quick-fire or impulsive. It came to me gradually over the following months, manifesting as a slow but certain resolve: I would travel to Ireland during the next academic year, 2013. It was an assignation that possibly always loomed as an inevitable part of the adaptation process.

MAY 2013: The Project Brief Crystallises

There is nothing like a deadline to quicken the blood and sharpen the mind. Working at a university my teaching activities are governed and framed by a variety of administrative structures and timelines. At the Arts Academy, *Theatre Practice* projects – like the one my adaptation was intended for – are decided upon in planning meetings, usually occurring well in advance of the proposed dates of their implementation. In May of 2013, I attended one such meeting and, after consultation with other teaching team members, elected to direct the Second Year *Theatre Practice* Project in the Second Semester of 2014. My nominated production was a performance season of the play that was to become *Ebbingtide*. The ramifications of this decision were significant. I now had a definite time frame for completion. The play would begin rehearsal at the beginning of the second semester of 2014, in early August of the following year, some sixteen months away. With a firm date for my production, I was now also able to make a plan for the intervening period leading up to rehearsals. The schedule I made for myself would loosely follow this sequence:

- In September of 2013, during the term break in my academic year, I would travel to Ireland for approximately a month.

- From October to year's end I would review the existing material I had in my two play-worlds, incorporating any discoveries I had made in Ireland. I would also structure the material so that it could be rehearsed in two separate parts.
- Through January and February of 2014 I would draft a new version of the Irish scenes.
- From March to the end of April 2014 I would draft the remaining *Sea Journey* scenes.
- From May to July of 2014 I would rework the play until I was satisfied that I had a script sound enough to bring to the first day of rehearsals in the beginning of August.

SEPTEMBER 2013 – TRIP TO IRELAND

Searching For Famine Footprints

My time in Ireland was almost a month; not long, but as long I could afford within my academic teaching year of 2013. I tried to keep my itinerary as open as possible, to incorporate contingent discoveries that might cause detour or delay. My research had suggested that the area where the family lived was somewhere in the central west region. I was aware that although the broader western part of the country had been badly affected by the famine, it was the southwest that had been worst hit. Landing in Dublin, I would travel across the country in a north-westerly direction, before heading south down the western coast. To record this, I would keep a travelling diary. I would take photos, a video and sound recordings.

Whilst my plan for Ireland was in some ways loose and open, the itinerary I had chosen also had at its heart a practical dimension, one that would allow me to experience enough of the landscape and country to give me a sense of the famine. I was looking for remnants of its effects. So I researched about existing famine sites that would allow me to roam freely amongst museums, workhouses, burial sites, buildings, monuments, famine related art installations, open spaces where significant events had occurred. This, I mixed with a more general impressionistic sweep, continually fossicking for any fortuitous discovery I regarded as significant: mist across a mountain face, a narrow winding road, a roofless abandoned cottage, a weeping tree on a naked hilltop, a ruined church, a blackberry covered graveyard, an odd place name, an ancient grooved field, all potentially useable in my play-world. These would punctuate the recollection of my Ireland, eventually etching themselves into various contours of the

new terrain I was crafting. Unknowingly, I was also scouring the runnels of the landscape for something else: the missing parts of the story that would become the glue for all these impressions.

Images From The Field: Significant Findings

As it transpired, my trip to Ireland in the latter half of 2013 had major bearing on the strategies I adopted for the writing phase that was to immediately follow – Phase 4. Perhaps somewhat ironically, too, whilst this sojourn was one of the greatest digressions from the carefully ordered plan I had for the adaptation, it also evidences the strongest and most personal of Hutcheon's intentional "traces" in the work.

It is beyond the scope of this linear account to microscopically examine the relevance of each and every discovery I made in Ireland. However, any truly reflective record of the shaping influences must make mention of those most significant. Their inclusion carries with it an assumption: they represent many other smaller, perhaps more obscure influences gathered during my Irish trip, omitted for reasons of brevity and economy. Some of the following examples were immediately obvious to me as I travelled around Ireland. Others began to resonate in the work only after I arrived back in Australia. Most would assert their significance in the intervening four months between my arrival home and the beginning of the central writing period in January of 2014.

A Visit To Strokestown Park And A Chance Meeting

Despite a wish to eschew an academically focused tour, my itinerary for Ireland had always included a visit to The Irish National Famine Museum at Strokestown Park. I was aware it housed a number of valuable installations on the famine. And I knew that viewing them early in my Irish visit would provide a stimulating and perhaps tactile introduction to the famine experience.

Strokestown Park House and its surrounding estate are located in County Roscommon in the north west of Ireland. It was established as a museum in 1994, after the house's then new owner, Jim Callery, discovered that the house and its contents represented a vast repository of famine information, which subsequently led to it being established as the site of The Irish National Famine Museum. The museum is divided into two parts, each being the focus for different visitor activities: the famine museum proper, which is attached to the house, lodges various historically-based installations

and famine artefacts; and the house, which, in its partially restored state, exists now as an example of an estate *Big House*.[92]

Replete with period furniture and contents, the house, along with the ghosted story of its former occupants, the Mahon family, is presented as part of the unearthed famine history. The narrative of the estate has become, in effect, a microcosm for the larger famine narrative. Of particular significance is one of its former owners, Major Denis Mahon, who inherited the estate just prior to the onset of the famine, eventually earning for him, perhaps unfairly, the dubious reputation of being one of the most infamous famine landlords. I had a vague understanding of these facts prior to visiting Strokestown Park, but had little idea of the impact they would have upon the development of my play.

My preparation for Strokestown Park had been intentionally minimal. I had purposely not arranged to meet anyone at the museum, wanting instead to visit the site with perfect freedom to explore and experience whatever it had to offer. So, on the designated morning of my visit – the second day of my Irish trip – I simply arrived, a little early as it transpired. The museum was not yet open. Deciding to wait in the small bookshop near the museum entrance, I was just beginning to familiarise myself with the famine literature on display, when a man hurriedly walked past, uttering vague apologies for the lateness of the museum's opening. I took from the earnestness of this apology he somehow blamed himself for the fact.

For some reason, mid-apology, he stopped. And we started chatting. His name was John O'Driscoll. He was, he explained, the curator of the museum. I was surprised. In a curiously un-curatorial way he bubbled with almost naive enthusiasm about the house and the stories it contained. I told him a little of what I was there for. He seemed genuinely interested. He was delighted I was visiting the famine museum proper. But I really should, he urged, "take a tour of the house". He would be leading one such tour himself in an hour or so, if I wanted to join him. As he disappeared behind a door at the far end of the bookshop, I turned to browse one of the stands of books. About chest height, one caught my eye: *The Killing of Major Denis Mahon – A Mystery of Old Ireland* by Peter Duffy.

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[92] 'Big House' is generally the term given to the residence of the estate owner.

Glimpses and Presences of an Emerging Play-world

It is hard to predict how the seemingly endless and random sequence of events that constitute our lives will later come to bear upon the decisions we make; even harder still to foresee how these same events will come to bear upon the opaque processes forming the art we create. Some, of course, simply get left behind in the cluttered detritus of momentary insignificance. Others lie dormant beneath the thin surface of unconsidered recollection, waiting like seedpods to burst forth, usually at the most improbable times. Others still, never recede but remain at the forefront of our attention, dominant and ablaze almost from the instant they occur.

I took John O'Driscoll's advice and went on the tour of the Strokestown Park house: him leading, me following. It was profound. As we moved from room to room it was as if I experienced life magnified. Time elongated, so that past became present, moments became vivid and full, objects attached themselves to sensations, spaces echoed with sights and sounds of presences, perhaps those of former inhabitants (it certainly felt like that), or perhaps merely my imaginings of them. And it was not merely presences I felt, but embodied experiences, of them, through me, in these once inhabited spaces: in the view from the windows they looked out upon, the vast tree shrouded acreage, on the stairs that creaked beneath their feet, the beds they lay in and died upon, the broken toys they cradled, the china cups they drank from and the fires they huddled by. It was only fragments, of course, these presences; nothing so complete as a whole person, or even a run of events that I could grasp as a full story; just glimpses, moments; fleeting, but too indelibly etched to forget. Perhaps more importantly, for the first time since beginning the Irish story I felt myself a presence *in* it, situated, contextualised. The portal that seemed to have allowed me to enter this domain was the house. I was observing myself as if I, too, lived in its space.

Importantly, the tangible manifestation of the Big House at Strokestown Park created a bridge between the fragments of Irish life I had begun to create and the life of a family that now lay around and inside me in Strokestown Park. In a quite vague and uncomprehending way I had been searching for a link between my family in the play and the larger world they inhabited. Unwittingly, in this early Irish foray I had somehow stumbled upon the missing piece of my own play-world puzzle. Almost immediately, it became clear to me: I could use the larger estate life as the backdrop for both my Irish family and the community they belonged to. It would be peopled by those who lived in their village or 'clachan', along with those who ruled over them in the Big House.

First Steps Towards Creating My Own Big House

Later that night, after leaving Strokestown Park with the images of what I had seen and felt still coursing through me, I began writing down impressions in my diary.[93] Clear to me now, was that the house itself could become a dramatic player. Its architectural and ethnographic division was a feature I would ultimately adopt for my own Big House. So this binary split between the two worlds I had encountered at Strokestown Park – the estate owners and its workers – came to influence both the overall content of the play and the way it would be ultimately structured.[94]

Importantly, the catalytic trigger – my visit to the Big House at Strokestown Park – had set in motion what already felt like an irreversible decision: I was going to create my own Big House in the play. It would serve to illuminate my other world, that of Bridget's clachan. It would certainly be a divided world, but one that, if handled deftly, would also define the full society of the estate. For this to happen, I would have to make these two dimensions of my Irish play-world one functioning whole. This would be achieved by creating links between them.

First Steps Towards Linking The Big House And The Clachan

What seemed possible, in the accelerated aftermath of my visit to Strokestown Park was that Sean O'Conor's brother, Liam, as a gombeen, might be the link between these two parts of the estate. Immediately, I began to think on possible ways to join the two sub-worlds. The same diary notes on that first night after visiting Strokestown Park pointed towards the idea of installing Bridget and Sarah's Aunty Anne (Liam's wife) as a kitchen servant in The Big House.[95] She could, I thought, be one of the domestic staff. Anne and her husband Liam would serve as important linking agents between the clachan and Big House worlds. They would become embroiled in the dilemmas faced by the Big House in its attempts to resolve the famine crisis. A little over three months after

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[93] "As we moved through various spaces in the house, I realised that not only were we being shown the different rooms inhabited by the owners of the house, but also those that tended to them, and, although the two must have co-existed to some degree together, (they) were also two distinct worlds... It was a bordered existence; as if those inhabiting each were quarantined off, one from the other, by the two wings of the house; the main part, where the Mahons lived… and… the kitchen and outer buildings" (Ireland Travel Diary 17/9/13).

[94] In Part 1 of the play, I decided that I would juxtapose scenes from one world (the clachan) with that of the other (The Big House). Initially, this became a way of introducing the audience to the respective characters and issues I wanted to present. Later, as the worlds began to merge with the unfolding famine narrative, it became a way to heighten dramatic momentum.

[95] "...Anne may have worked in the Big House. What if she takes the girls… to the kitchen" (Ireland Travel Diary 17/9/13)?

having visited Strokestown Park, these developments were already being incorporated into the play. Sooner still, would I begin to incorporate other elements of the Big House I had just seen at Strokestown Park.

The Kitchen

Arguably, one of the more mundane of these elements was the kitchen. So taken was I by it that I began, almost immediately, planning how I could use it in the play. Its incorporation began mere hours after I first saw my prototype at Strokestown Park.[96] I decided to make it one of the featured locations in Part 1 of the play. Bridget and Sarah's Aunty Anne would be one of the kitchen staff. This would accommodate the possibility that the girls might visit there – as they eventually did early on in Part 1.[97] The notes I made on that first night after visiting Strokestown Park made mention of a female cook. These early sketch notes ultimately formed themselves into the character that would become the cook in Part 1, Mrs Mullark. On a basic level, I thought that a large kitchen scene, one that made much of the excesses of food production for the landlord and his guests, would be a powerful counterpoint to the plight of their tenants, who were, even at the start of the play, already feeling the ravages of the potato blight. Additionally, I knew I could create a strong representation of the vastness and production scale of the kitchen using the large cast I had at my disposal, an important factor in deciding to include it in the dramatic cloth.

The Kitchen Balcony And The Tour Of The High And Mighty

There was one feature of the kitchen at Strokestown Park that particularly intrigued me: a balcony that looked down upon the main space of the kitchen. It conjured in my mind an image of its users. An architectural oddity, it seemed disproportionately dominant in the overall scheme of the house, as if its owners placed undue importance on the preparation of food. But it was not merely the food itself, but the value placed on the technology and industry of its preparation. There was something

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[96] "Something else of this domestic world … struck me… the kitchen itself… It was not to my mind that big in scale (the whole house itself could hardly be described as "Grand"). But great emphasis seemed to be placed on the technological gadgetry in it… The image I get is one of crazy activity, a hive, a cacophony; maybe we're at the height of preparation... It's a military operation being overseen by a cook. If it's a woman… she needs to be loud, relentless, tetchy, but in control, a tough old battleaxe, but one with a good heart..." (Ireland Travel Diary 17/9/13).

[97] In two scenes: *The Kitchen* (*Ebbingtide* Script 222; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 15:25) and *Tour of the High and Mighty* (*Ebbingtide* Script 226; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 20:40).

about this appealed to me: that the landlord, and/or his wife, so valued their kitchen they would install a viewing balcony *above* it, one designed to show off its prodigious modernity and scale. I also liked its vertical dominance over the kitchen, which symbolically enacted the distinction between upper and lower castes in the Big House.[98] The term the head cook, Mrs Mullark, uses to refer to the Landlord and his wife – "the High and Mighties" – derives from this idea.[99]

I also liked the idea we, as audience, would be introduced to the kitchen in the same way *I* had, via a tour. As I thought more on the possible uses of the kitchen balcony, a tour by the landlord's wife began to shape in my mind.[100] At first, I conceived of this scene as a purely mechanical device to illustrate the pride and capriciousness of the wife, her shallow vanity in showing off the kitchen to a captive band of dinner guests. But as I developed the concept of the tour I came to realise that it might be an opportunity for her to meet the two sisters, Bridget and Sarah. From here, I began to see there might be a way of deepening the character of the landlord's wife. Some landlord's wives were remembered for their kindness and generosity. What if the wife of *my* landlord were one such woman? What if she opposed the heartless regime of eviction on the estate? This could lie at the heart of the relationship between the landlord and his wife.[101]

In merely contemplating the possible use of the balcony I had already started to forge deeper strokes in terms of plot, characters and relationships. These first ruminations would reverberate long and deep into the fabric of the play. Surveying the notes I made in my Ireland Travel Diary immediately after my visit to Strokestown Park, it is surprising to me how many of these preliminary thoughts eventually found their way into the play. A few significant hours at Strokestown Park had yielded a plethora of creative decisions.[102]

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[98] Although I included this vertical dimension of the balcony into the original drafts of the scene entitled *Tour of the High and Mighty*, performing from up on a balcony was not possible in the original Black Box production (*Ebbingtide* Script 226).

[99] As they looked down upon them from the balcony, these rich aristocrats may well have appeared "high and mighty".

[100] The character would eventually become Honora Meahan, the wife of the landlord in the play.

[101] I pursued this line of thinking in the final version of the Part 1 story in the play. Although the landlord and his wife had what I considered to be a strong and healthy relationship, I developed a belief that they would nevertheless be at odds when it came to the correct strategy for dealing with the evictions and forced emigration of their tenants. Honora would find it inhumane to evict. Thomas would initially be swayed by the more pragmatic view of his estate agent, although he would discover (too late) the error of his ways.

[102] Before day's end I had decided that I would create a Big House; that I would populate it with a landlord, his wife and their cook; that I would set some of the scenes in the Big House kitchen; that the

Tunnel to the Outside World

There was one other architectural feature at Strokestown Park that caught my eye: the servant's tunnel, running underground from the kitchen to a stone wall in the yard that surrounded the back of the house. The tunnel was designed to allow servants to come and go from domestic areas of the house without being seen by the Big House residents. I found the tunnel striking because it indicated the extent – at least architecturally – to which the owners of the house would go in order to quarantine themselves from the sight of their servants. Clearly, this quarantine was not confined to the house itself, but extended outwards to the immediate grounds as well. It gave the house a feeling of fearful impregnability, like a protected compound. The tunnel seemed to be an attempt to hide, or even bury, the harsh realities domestics brought with them from outside. I wanted to include it in the play. At this point, though, it was merely a conduit to the evocation of a single image: a solitary child, listless and bored, but waiting for signs of life at the tunnel entrance.[103]

A Big House Dinner

The kitchen and the tunnel had made a deep impact on my creative slate. Already, a few days into my Irish tour, I had decided to create my own Big House. I had a few locations in mind that I might use and a few fragments of scenic ideas. But I needed something to bring them together. The solution was a Big House dinner. I would use it to establish my Big House world: its main players and the backdrop of the approaching famine. But I needed an important occasion for the dinner, one that would assemble various personages I wanted my audience to meet. Perhaps, I thought, the occasion might be a dinner celebrating the recent installation of the estate's new owner, Thomas

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sisters' Aunty Anne would work in it; that the sisters themselves would visit it; that I would find a way of counterpointing the potato dependent tenants with the super-abundance of the Big House world. Unconsciously at least, I was also opening a door into the way the estate politics would operate in the play.

[103] The child conjured by the tunnel would ultimately become the Meahans' daughter, Olivia. She would be a lonely and isolated child, one who, although privileged materially, had little contact with other children her own age. Originally conceived of as a male, I later changed this to a female in order to accommodate the large number of women in the cohort. As it transpired, the character of Olivia Meahan, the daughter of the landlord, would play a key role in linking her own Big House world with Bridget's. In a tragic twist of circumstance, Olivia would also assist the two sisters in stealing the gun that would be used to kill her own father.

Meahan, as landlord. This might also afford me the opportunity of introducing themes around management of the estate and the background of food relief.[104]

The Killing Of Major Denis Mahon

Strokestown Park had proved unexpectedly fertile creative ground. But there was another unexpected legacy of my visit, one that would make an absolutely indelible mark on the way my Irish story would progress. The book I had casually picked up in the museum bookshop – *The Killing of Major Denis Mahon* by Peter Duffy – contained an account of events leading up to the murder of the landlord who had inherited the Strokestown Park Estate as the famine hit Ireland. Flicking through it in the bookshop as I waited for the museum to open, I had no idea its content concerned the real lives of those who had lived at Strokestown Park. Nor did I comprehend the impact reading Duffy's account would later have on the adaptation.

The book's influence is not difficult to explain. As already noted, I had realised the missing piece of my existing Irish story was the setting for the community in which the family lived: most closely their clachan, more broadly the estate to which their clachan belonged. Strokestown Park had already shown me a general model for an Irish estate. But as I read Duffy's book, immersing myself in the details of its specific history, I realised I could weave elements of the Strokestown Park story into my own. There had been a murder, deriving from disaffected cottiers. There was talk of a tenant revolt. There was a priest who had been a temporary mediator between the landlord and the starving tenants.

Like illuminated threads of electrical circuitry, I began to see connections with elements of the story I had already written. Duffy's book, as historically based as it was, placed the events at Strokestown Park against the timeline of the famine's progress. I saw, for the first time, a way of placing the weave of my *own* story over the same kind of temporal frame. I could show the progressive deterioration of Bridget's clachan through the catastrophe. Like Duffy, I could situate my story against both the unfolding drama of local and national political events. I could extend my own family story to

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[104] The management of the estate is discussed in a scene following the dinner called *Post Prandial Conversation* in which Thomas Meahan asks for the new Agent's first impressions of the estate (*Ebbingtide* Script 224; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 17:36–19:00). Food relief is mentioned later in the same scene, when the priest asks Thomas Meahan to establish a Local Relief Committee (*Ebbingtide* Script 225; *Ebbingtide* DVD//Vimeo 19:38 – 20:40).

include the resentment that had festered between landlords and tenants. I could focus this resentment into one catalytic event: the murder of my landlord.

Workhouses

One of the most enduring images of my Strokestown Park tour of the museum proper was of a scaled model of a workhouse, showing neatly and economically some of the architectural features I had only, until this time, seen in photographs and read about. Workhouse scenes in the novel were part of my intended scheme for the play. I would be attempting to render action in multiple locations in the workhouse complex: the dormitory, the infirmary, *'The Dead House'* where bodies were taken, and the main entrance. The opportunity, then, to visit a surviving full-scale workhouse in Ireland was a major priority in my itinerary. I visited two surviving examples: one, a renovated hospital – St Vincent's District Hospital – in Dungarvan, County Waterford; the other, partially renovated back to its original condition and currently a small famine museum in Donoughmore, County Laois.

St Vincent's District Hospital in Dungarvan has had its *interior* radically refurbished to suit its new purpose. But it's *exterior* gives powerful impression of what inmates must have experienced approaching it as the dreaded last resort destination in the freefalling famine spiral. It is an imposing building, with its austere and forbidding grey stone facade. Viewed from any angle it emanates an overarching sense of desolate, squat foreboding; one that its social and architectural engineers evidently intended. It is not welcoming, despite recent attempts to make it so. Neatly cropped grass spread across its forecourt and the discretely curving paths that meander to its entrance do little to soften the glib impassability of its harsh, angular simplicity. It is an edifice designed to accentuate division: male from female, adult from child; its unadorned bifurcation separating one from the other in perfect, symmetrical mirror image – right against left.[105] The model at Strokestown Park Famine Museum was similar, but nothing in miniature could adequately prepare me for the full brunt of radical repellent bleakness it exudes.

Operating as a workhouse from 1853 to 1886, the other Donoughmore building was overtaken by an agricultural cooperative in 1927, later becoming an agricultural

[105] The overall aesthetic of the building apparently aligned perfectly with the aims of its originators. Smyth notes, "the workhouse system was designed as a deliberate deterrent to repulse the able-bodied population and to ensure that only the truly destitute would seek relief in those heavily regulated institutions" (Smyth in Crowley et al 124).

museum, and finally, as the Irish famine became more culturally significant, a famine museum. At the time of my visit, parts of the building were still being renovated back to authentic famine semblance. But unlike its counterpart in Dungarvan, the Donoughmore building has retained much of its original *internal* textures. The dormitory I visited there was on the right-hand side of the main entry wing and was originally home to the boys in the workhouse. An identical wing on the other side had been used for the girls' dormitory. Behind these wings, further towards the back of the building, were identical ones for adult women and men; all segregated.

The dormitory was surprisingly small, about twenty-two metres long and eight wide. It had been designed to house about fifty boys. Numbers swelled to three or four times this during the height of the famine. The room was without furniture or adornment, an open space with a bare board floor. There were no beds of any kind. Simple straw mattresses would have been strewn across the floor, shared by as many as could fit on them. There was no toilet. A single bucket at one end would have served hundreds. Above our heads were a series of wooden joists running across the top of the room. It was completely bare and open, almost barn-like. As if to compensate for this, the roof framing had been completely lime-washed, its overbright whiteness continuing down over the walls and window frames.

It was late afternoon and already light had begun to drain from the room. I walked to the window facing the outside. There was a small courtyard below that led to the front gates of the workhouse; beyond this, an open field stretching to a sagging stone fence – freedom, I thought; and the old life gone. Suddenly overwhelmed, I turned and walked to the other side of the room, this time looking out through one of the small rectangles of smoky panes into the workhouse complex. Directly below was a small yard. Opposite was another wing – the men's. Over to my left, somewhere, beyond a line of grey buildings that blocked my view, were the women. It was oppressive, unrelenting. As a young lawyer, I had visited a few high security prisons. This was little different, perhaps worse when one considers the disease that ran amok amongst its inhabitants. A hundred metres away, across on the other side of the wing I now gazed out upon, was the infirmary. Beyond this, the Dead House and the lime pit, which was the ultimate destination for many who passed through its front gates.

Prior to going to Ireland I had spent a fair amount of time reading up on workhouses. But being *in* one was something else again. Being there in that Donoughmore dormitory, being corporeally present *inside* it, looking out that window

through the segmented pane of glass, I was somehow given access to another version of it: raw, visceral. About four months after returning from Ireland, as I sat down to write the rehearsal draft of the play, I recalled my experience in that Donoughmore workhouse. It would fuel many dimensions of the workhouse scenes I was to write.[106]

A Tree in a Cemetery… A Church High on a Hill

> Drumcliffe Cemetery, County Ennis: A beautiful day… with a clear blue sky and the kind of countryside that stretches upwards into the ether…. The cemetery itself was carefully laid out… The plot… backed onto a stone fence, which was covered in blackberry bush, with clumps of berries lacing up and over the edge (with)… a single stone marker… (indicating) 2,000 had been buried during the famine… We walked around the… cluster of trees, and looked out over one of the grandest views in that part of Ennis; beautiful pasture land, divided by low stone walls and varied hue of grass and crop… Our backs were to the tree… We walked down to the ruins of a small church. There was no roof, just sky above… with… what looked to be (the remains)… of a small stone altar. Someone had prayed here. Someone preached… here… a priest kneeling at the altar, being visited by women in desperate need of help. Something about this place on the hill sticks... (Ireland Travel Diary 23/9/2013).

My time in Ireland during the latter part of 2013 was brief. But it was composed of an infinitely rich vein of momentary impressions. They would travel with me back to Australia, revealing themselves without ceremony or pronouncement during the long drafting process leading up to rehearsals. Drumcliffe cemetery, described above, would form of one of the central emblematic pillars of Part 1: *Ireland*. It also serves as a symbol for the way these impressions became powerful elements in the play. The

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[106] The kernel of Gale's story in Part 2: *Sea Journey* would lie in his experience at the workhouse. His fall into the lime pit from the Dead House would arise out of my view from the window on that afternoon at the Donoughmore workhouse (*Ebbingtide* Script 320; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:50:25). The dormitory itself became a focal point for the early scenes in Part 2. It would begin with Sarah being selected to travel out to Australia in *Selection Walk* (*Ebbingtide* Script 284 – 285; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 1:47: 09). The next scene, *Ocean of Dreams,* would feature the image of a dormitory at night, something I was keen to exploit with the vast numbers of female cast members (*Ebbingtide* Script 285 – 286; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 1:49:25).

church I describe in this entry, or my version of it, would become the site where Father Brennan preaches, where he offers hope to desperate women who call on him for help during the famine's worst winter.[107] The tree would be Ma's tree: the still centre of the family's universe.[108] Bridget's brother, Diarmuid, would be buried there. Her mother, Mary, would initiate her into the mysteries of her faith beneath its sacred boughs. Sean would ultimately bring Mary's limp body there in the closing moments of Part 1.[109] Like the tree, Bridget would somehow endure the ravages of disaster, beginning and ending her story there.[110]

PHASE 4: WRITING THE SCRIPT

Overview of the Phase

Phase 4 initially involved a process of gathering together all the information I had for my play and organising it for the full drafting process. I was, for the first time, looking hard at various deadlines that loomed on the creative horizon. On my return from Ireland to Australia I began mapping out the schedule I would need to implement in order to prepare the play for production in October of 2014. It was then early October of 2013. Working backwards in time: the play would be performed at the end of October 2014; rehearsals would begin in August of that year – I would need a rehearsal draft by then; I would need to begin work on a draft of the full play script in January of 2014. This gave me three months to prepare for writing the script – Phase 4 of the work process.

Taking stock of the adaptation's progress to that point I reasoned that I had the kernels of two connected stories: one, about an Irish family on an estate during the famine; the other, a sea voyage about a group of famine orphans focussing on one orphan, Bridget, who travels out to Australia in search of her younger sister, Sarah.

I felt that these could be run together in roughly chronological order over the same performance evening. There was a natural linking point between them: the workhouse. I would end the first part of the Irish story there, with the two sisters having no option but to enter into it. The second half of the story would begin with Sarah being selected to go

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[107] *The Delegation* (*Ebbingtide* Script 265 – 266; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Video 1:19:50 – 1:21:39)
[108] *Ma's Tree* (*Ebbingtide* Script 226– 228; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Video 30:15 – 34:00)
[109] *Bury Us Both* (*Ebbingtide* Script 272 – 273; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Video 1:42:30 – 1:44:54)
[110] *Sweet Silence* (*Ebbingtide* Script 215; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Video 1:50 – 3:50) and *Clear Indication* (*Ebbingtide* Script 338 – 339; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Video 3:23:14 – 3:23:37)

to Australia. Bridget would follow her out some time after. I felt reasonably confident with the latter sea journey material. It most closely followed the novel's action, and I had already adapted a fair proportion of it. The Irish famine story was less developed. Because of this, together with the fact that it began the overall narrative arc of the play, I resolved to begin work on it first. Solid reconstruction of the Irish back-story began in earnest during October of 2013.

PREPARING TO WRITE THE DRAFT OF PART 1

Peopling My Irish Play-world

I left Ireland with the strong impression that I could create a microcosmic Irish world similar to the one I had glimpsed at Strokestown Park. It would take the form of a small community of tenants, a clachan, to whom Bridget's family would belong. The clachan would in various ways be dependent upon the landlord and his Big House. So there were two parts to this Irish play-world: The Big House and the clachan. I now turned my mind to a more complete inventory of the characters that would inhabit each. I was acutely aware during this phase of creating characters for a full cast of more than thirty actors. As I did this, I began to think on how the flow of events might involve them.

The Big House

I eschewed the creation of a dominant landlord figure, in favour of one who would be relatively inexperienced in the role, one Thomas Meahan. Like the Strokestown Park scenario, I would install him at a time when the famine was just beginning to make its presence felt. This would occur just prior to the opening of the play. He would hire an Agent, Charles Hunter, to oversee the running of the estate and would rely heavily upon him for advice about its future.

I would begin the play's action at a precarious moment in the famine's progress: one crop had failed with the fate of the next unknown. I would add into this situation the fact that British administrators had given over responsibility for famine food relief to local committees, which were often run by landlords like Thomas. Honora Meahan, his wife, would be considerate about the welfare of those tenants under her husband's charge. She would be compassionate, showing a natural empathy towards them. This would bring her into conflict with the Agent, who would view her compassion as a fundamental block to his plans for the estate. Instead, he would advocate radical

reforms: forced evictions for those unwilling to pay rent and subsidised emigration for those willing to seek a new life in North America. Single-minded, pragmatic, ruthless, he would be part-organiser, part-henchman, part-little Napoleon, interested in little but a practical solution to the problems of the ailing estate.

Into this mix I would bring the Catholic priest, Father Brennan; the same priest that was associated with Bridget's family. He would see himself as an ally and spokesman for the clachan community, the person most capable of representing their interests at the local food relief committee meetings. He would be their natural advocate and feel it his duty to oppose any measures that were not in their best interests. He would, in the absence of anyone better qualified, take it upon himself to oversee the distribution of local food aid to the tenants. In the event that food supplies ran out, he would set up a soup kitchen.

Father Brennan would be a vital link between the two worlds of rich and poor on the estate. He would have a fierce and unwavering allegiance to his starving flock. But in order to meet his ongoing obligations to them, he would be forced to negotiate with the newly installed landlord, who is himself just coming to grips with the economic ruin of the estate he has just inherited. Perhaps more significantly, his single-minded sense of social justice would fast bring this priest into conflict with the Agent.

The Clachan

By this stage of the project I had already gathered together a core nucleus of Bridget's family: her two parents, Sean and Mary O'Conor, and her younger sister, Sarah. To this I had added a brother to Sean, Liam, and his wife, Anne. Liam, in his position of rent collector, would be working for the landlord. Liam's wife, Anne, would be working in the Big House kitchen. This core family unit would provide one of the central fulcrums in the dramatic action of Part 1. Liam's allegiance to the clachan would be pitted against his allegiance to the landlord who employed him. Sean and the other clachan members would see Liam as a traitor, an attitude that would only grow stronger as the famine progressed. Bridget's mother, Mary, and Liam's wife, Anne, would not make natural enemies. Rather, it is the circumstance of Liam's employment that creates difficulties between them. At the beginning of the play, we will see Anne's closeness to Mary's two daughters.

Working outwards from this core nucleus of family members, I began to turn my mind more to the dynamic that might exist within the broader clachan. To heighten the

stakes of the tension between the two brothers I would install Sean as both clachan elder and its leader. This would potentially involve him in another kind of conflict. His responsibilities to the clachan and its future would be pitted against his natural sense of brotherly duty. With respect to the clachan more generally, I began to think more on the kinds of dynamics that might have existed within its small, but complex community.

Clachan Divisions And Molly Maguire

I had, throughout the evolution of my Irish scenes, always wrestled with the issue of tenant militancy during the famine. That is, whether resentment towards English landlords would have resulted in covert acts of insurgency or even overt incidents of uprising. Various accounts of local resentment exist.[111] But there was a central question that remained for me: given the acute food shortage and the precarious relationship between cottiers and their landlord, would tenants have been inclined to acts of militancy? Historically entrenched oppression and weakened bodies from food shortages must have inhibited such behaviour in some places. But Duffy's account of events in Strokestown Park led me to believe that it was entirely possible tenant resentment towards authority could become volatile, even strong enough to make an attempt on the life of a landlord.[112]

The key to this militancy lay in the possibility that clachan attitudes towards militancy may not have been uniform. Factions within clachans may have held different views on tenant activism. Certainly, there would have been general dismay at the sight of seeing Irish Corn being shipped along their roads to overseas locations while those around them starved.[113] But would everyone have been in agreement about how to respond to this? I wondered whether differing views might have been divided along generational lines. Militancy would have been generationally entrenched, perhaps even being regarded as a rite of passage among young males who were coming of age. But at

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[111] In *Paddy's Lament* Thomas Gallagher describes animal thievery by tenants as desperate acts of people who would normally have shunned such behaviour (Gallagher 33); In *Black Potatoes* Susan Campbell Bartoletti chronicles causes of uprisings (Bartoletti 136-150); In *Famine* Tom Murphy writes of the anger generated by locals seeing cartloads of Irish corn being taken to Irish ports (Murphy 25).

[112] Duffy describes some of the major socio-political elements that contributed to the killing of Major Denis Mahon, these combining to create a distilled perfect storm of malcontent amongst clachan members on the estate (Duffy 1 – 164).

[113] I eventually had one of the younger, more militantly minded characters, Declan, argue his case for militant action in an early Part 1 scene called *Let Us See Molly*: "Are we not bein' attacked now: with people droppin' from hunger as we watch cartloads of our own corn and oats disappearin' on ships" (*Ebbingtide* Script 220; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 11:50)?

such a delicate time, with the responsibility for famine relief being given over to landlords, the older members of the clachan may have been less inclined to activate.

To accommodate this division within the clachan I decided to create two generational factions: three elder men – Sean (Bridget's father and clachan leader), Owen (his friend and father to a young firebrand, Martin) and Thadeus (Owen's father-in-law and Martin's grandfather); these would be counterbalanced by three younger men, led by Martin (Owen's son) and Declan and Fergus (both Martin's friends).

Not too many years before the famine, Daniel O'Connell had toured across Ireland with his 'Monster' meetings advocating reforms for a New Ireland that were based on peaceful means. Significantly, he had ventured across to areas in the central west of the country, where I was situating my own Irish story.[114] This opened up another possibility. Perhaps, I speculated, a number of the older men in the clachan had been at one of these rallies. Perhaps they had taken some of the younger men with them. If so, it would have been part of the collective memory of the clachan. But there may have been differing interpretations of what O'Connell had actually said on the podium. Perhaps the older men may have heeded O'Connell's call to a more politically moderate position. But what, I wondered, would the younger men think of this?[115]

This line of reasoning urged me to consider the precise moment at which I would pick up the famine narrative in the play. If I wanted to create a landlord who – like Major Denis Mahon at Strokestown Park – had assumed responsibility for the estate just prior to the deepest onset of the famine, then the clachan members would have little knowledge of his potential response to the food shortage. This would add weight to the elders' argument not to agitate prematurely, at least not before seeing how the new landlord responded to developing circumstances, a kind of 'wait and see' approach. But what if their calls for patience fell on deaf ears?

Before I could answer this question, I needed to interrogate another issue. If there were elements of militancy in the clachan, perhaps advocated by the younger men of the group, what would it look and sound like? This led me to a group who called themselves the *Molly Maguires*, one of many versions of secret society that abounded across Ireland

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[114] Duffy even makes mention of O'Connell's meetings in Roscommon town in 1843 (Duffy 46 – 47).
[115] A discussion of the Monster meeting and the various interpretations of Daniel O'Connell's "call" becomes the centrepiece of debate between the younger men and the elders in the final production script of the scene *Let us see Molly* (*Ebbingtide* Script 219 – 220; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 11:00 – 12:00).

at the time.[116] Although origins for the name of the organisation are obscure, less so is the means for their forays of mischief and mayhem.[117] Bound by a pact to unsettle, if not unseat, the powers that trod daily upon them, the Molly Maguires – or *Mollies*, as they were sometimes called – consisted mainly of small, disparate groups of men from local clachans, who went about, sometimes in women's clothing, committing small but significant acts of civil and criminal disobedience. The image of these nightly forays presented an unusually powerful image. Having clachan members engage in this kind of militancy opened up various dramatic possibilities. But I still needed a concrete event as a catalyser to focus the dramatic action.

Blooding

Blooding is an ancient activity involving taking blood from the side of a cow. It was used during times of food shortage as a way of providing sustenance to hungry clachan members when all other forms of nutrition had failed. Bloodings were traditionally undertaken by certain designated clachan specialists, and were conducted both legally and, on occasions, illegally, as in the play. I decided my blooding would be the triggering event that would launch the play into action. In the play I decided to make Martin's grandfather, Thadeus, the clachan specialist in this ritualistic task. Martin has watched his grandfather undertake the procedure, but has never actually performed it himself. But he would decide, against the advice of the clachan elders, to undertake the risky venture. It would be, at least in the minds of its three young perpetrators (Martin, Declan and Fergus), an important coming-of-age gesture, demonstrating their capacity to provide food for the clachan in its hour of need.

The Murder of the Landlord

Being reasonably happy with the general overlay of characters I was assembling for the Big House and clachan worlds, I began to think more deeply on creating an event that would bring the Irish part of the story (Part 1) to a close. The event that I kept returning to as the ultimate outcome of the Irish story was the murder of my landlord. It had always struck me as pointlessly tragic that the landlord at Strokestown Park, without

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[116] Duffy notes that the Molly Maguires were merely one of many manifestations of tenant malcontent that had become historically entrenched at the time of the famine's outbreak (Duffy 30 – 32, 55).
[117] Although the name *Molly Maguire* has various possible origins, Duffy notes that most stem from the same story: a poor woman, who was evicted by a cruel and heartless landlord, is avenged by the Mollies (Duffy 55).

being particularly malicious or malevolent, should have become the victim of a plot hatched by a group of distraught tenants. His coming to power at this precise moment in Irish history seem to cast him perfectly as the target and emblem of centuries-long intergenerational Irish resentment.[118]

I wanted Bridget's father, Sean O'Conor, to be the perpetrator. I did not want it to be a perfectly executed killing. I had an idea that Sean and the landlord, Thomas Meahan, would never meet in the play. But their paths would cross in one fateful moment I was conceiving as an ill-executed shooting.[119] But both, in their own way, would share the dual mantle of victim and perpetrator. Both would be swept into each other's path by the fateful current of the larger famine tide. As yet, I was not sure how I would move the events of the play to this final end-point. But I had fragments of various plot elements that would loosely begin with a blooding and end in the murder of the landlord at the hands of the clachan leader.

Political Dimensions: The Relief Committee

Historical accounts of the Great Famine often employ a political lens to trace both its origins and trajectory. Cecil Woodham-Smith's seminal account, *The Great Hunger – Ireland 1845-1849*, for example, sheets much of the blame for the famine on the mismanagement by consecutive English Governments of the period. Other more contemporary accounts, such as the monumental *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine* by Crowley et al, place politico-historical markers at the core of their coverage of the event. Many accounts focus on local food distribution as one of the problem areas of local governance during the famine; particularly the way responsibility for food distribution was vested in local relief committees.[120] I was aware from these accounts that such committees often comprised landlords and other local dignitaries. The possibility of

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[118] Major Denis Mahon was ultimately murdered by a group of men claiming retribution for injustices committed during his time as landlord, although one suspects he was as much a scapegoat for the accumulated resentment of injustices perpetrated over a much longer period of time. Duffy's account of Strokestown Park certainly mounts a compelling argument that oppression in the district went back many centuries (*The Killing of Major Denis Mahon* 1 – 57).

[119] My solution was to have Sean *intend* to shoot the Agent, Hunter, who is, in his view, the reason for the inhumane treatment suffered by his clachan. But all does not go to plan.

[120] Cecil Woodham-Smith, for example, in The Great Hunger, explores this as a macro-political issue in great depth (Woodham-Smith 61 – 171), whilst Crowley et al in *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine, 1845* use a much more localised lens to explain the unravelling of famine management, exploring its effect within different local provinces around Ireland (Crowley et al *52, 281 – 459*). Cathal Poirteir in *The Irish Famine* deals with the issue as an isolated factor of causality (Poirteir 123 – 134).

portraying committee proceedings at various stages of the famine struck me as potentially useful for the play.

I was also familiar with Tom Murphy's early play, *Famine,* which contains a long relief committee meeting scene in which the implementation of food distribution policy is heatedly discussed.[121] The scene indicated Murphy's view that local politics was one of the causal factors of the famine. And yet to my mind, however powerful, the scene appeared oddly gratuitous to the central action of the play: more didactic device than organic dramatic generator. The key to the inclusion of such a scene in my play would lie in having central characters be part of proceedings, each perhaps representing different voices on the estate. I also began to contemplate that there might be more than one single meeting. If it were possible, I thought, to populate these meetings with the players who we had come to know during the rest of the play, then I could use these meetings to punctuate the progress of the famine itself.

JANUARY TO FEBRUARY 2014 - DRAFTING *PART 1: IRELAND*

Writing to a Plan

From early January to the end of February 2014, I began working on a full draft of the Irish scenes. These consisted of an amalgam of early family scenes I had written and new scenes I was planning to add to them.[122] I created this sequence to establish for the audience both Clachan and Big House worlds early on in the play. It would also allow me to familiarise myself with the characters I was creating, knowing that I could then go on to develop them in the scenes that followed. This sequence of scenes also followed, roughly, the progress of the famine. I would write new scenes according to the planned sequence, slotting them alongside the existing family scenes I had written earlier in the process. This would give me an opportunity to amend existing characters, adjust plot anomalies, and develop new plot threads as they emerged. Collated in this way, it was my hope that the sequence would also trace an inevitable arc towards my planned major end-point for Part 1: the killing of the landlord.

It is important to note that at this point in the creative journey I still did not know exactly how I would tie up all the elements of this murder thread. But I *did* have an event to work towards: a roadside ambush. Sean O'Conor, Bridget's father, would be the perpetrator. He would shoot the landlord, only to discover that the real object of his

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[121] First performed at the Peacock Theatre, Dublin in 1968.
[122] For a full list of these Irish scenes under consideration in January 2014, see Appendix 10.

bullet, the Agent – Charles Hunter, was still alive. I wanted Sean to be wounded fatally in the skirmish. Before arriving at this end-point, we would see an already weakened clachan face head-on the return of the blight, and the total failure of an English governed relief scheme to offer any meaningful response to their situation. We would witness the dissolution of Bridget's clachan, through hunger, disease, eviction, and forced emigration. Part 1 would end with Bridget and her sister entering the Irish workhouse. I would pick up the Part 2 action there.

Daily Activity, Whimsical Discovery

I worked on what would become *Part 1: Ireland* for two months. Predictably, I did not always follow my intended sequence. At times, when I was facing a particularly challenging scene, one where I felt either creatively blocked or was unable to continue for any of a number of reasons, I simply chose to work on another.[123] On other days, I would purposely confront one of the most difficult scenes, just to make a start on it. This was my way of accommodating the shifting flow of energy and ideas that were inevitably part of the writing process. I would begin in the morning, usually by revising work I had done the previous day. I found that revision allowed me to gain a degree of immersion in the material. Later in the day I would usually begin work on new drafts of, as yet, untouched scenes. This daily process of revision and first contact continued throughout.

During this intense writing period I was able to work through most of the scenes I had laid down in my scene breakdown. Perhaps more importantly, though, I was also able to succumb to the unfolding *whimsy* of discovery that formed the basis of the process. I use the term 'whimsy' here purposefully. Put simply, there were myriad unforeseen discoveries that I made during this drafting period, each in their own way impacting upon the play. In a very real way, each discovery was an enactment of *intentional action*, with its capacity to move moment-by-moment through the changing

[123] I wrote the first committee scene, for example, very early on in the writing process, even though it did not come until quite a bit later in my proposed sequence of scenes (*1st Relief Committee Meeting*: *Ebbingtide* Script 240 – 243; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 41:58 – 47:33). I had been thinking about the scene in the days before I began drafting Part 1. For no particular reason on this day, very early in the drafting period, I began transposing my ideas into my notebook. It was early in the day, and I thought I would make whatever notes I could, knowing that actually writing the scene could be some days away. But as I started writing down my thoughts – key ideas, snippets of dialogue and the like – it soon became clear to me that the scene was beginning to 'write itself'. A beginning point to the scene spontaneously appeared – in this case the appointment of the landlord to the position of chairman of the committee – and the rest of the scene soon followed. By day's end I had a draft of the scene that remained pretty much as it was in the final performance draft of the play.

contingency of the evolving work. I was adjusting continually to circumstances as they arose – adapting. It is impossible to overstress the significance of these unplanned deviations. They arose unexpectedly and gave rise to a string of associated threads in the emerging work. One scenic example will suffice: *The blooding*.[124]

Best Made Plans… Comedy in *The Blooding*

I had originally intended for *The Blooding* scene to be a serious, highly dramatic scene about a group of young men (Martin, Declan and Fergus) who illegally extract blood from a neighbour's cow in order to stake their claim as future providers for the clachan. The undertaking, as I originally envisaged it, would be risky but ultimately successful. I wanted the audience to feel the full weight of what was at stake for the young perpetrators. I had just finished the opening clachan scene of the play, where Martin – the young firebrand of the clachan – challenges what he sees as the elders' conservative views on the Big House.[125] This scene suggested that Martin was an angry young man, one hell-bent on proving his willingness to rebel against his oppressors. He would be, I thought, representative of the more radical younger generation. The blooding would be a test for him and his two accomplices, a rite of passage that would, in their minds at least, finally prove them worthy of due respect in the eyes of their elders.

But then I sat down to write *The Blooding* scene. And something quite unexpected happened. As I noted earlier, militant incursions by these Molly Maguires were often undertaken by men dressed in women's clothing.[126] I wanted my characters to begin the scene in this garb. It seemed theatrically interesting. And I was keen to see what would happen if this were so. I also wondered whether such a risky enterprise might have been assisted by drink. When I started to write, these two factors – the women's clothing and the drinking – pushed the scene into something much more comic than I had anticipated. Like all writing projects, drafting became a way of road-testing new elements. I was using the writing process as a way of exploring the characters. I was discovering them *through* the writing. The more I wrote, the more comic the blooding action became, especially the opening. [127]

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[124] *The Blooding* Scene (*Ebbingtide* Script 228 – 231; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 24:00 – 28:08)
[125] *The Gathering* (*Ebbingtide* Script 215 – 218; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 3:56)
[126] Duffy notes that this convention of wearing women's clothing had by this time become almost ritualistic, stemming from many previous incarnations of rebels (Duffy 53).
[127] *Liam's Field – Night:*

When I looked over what I had written I began to see qualities in the characters that were far more human and interesting than those I had initially conceived. Martin had become the serious leader; Fergus, the incompetent fly in the ointment; and Declan, the loyal mate and mediator between the other two. The event, too, had transformed. It had become a trial for three young men who were still emerging from the awkward shadow of adolescence; both a serious challenge and a chance for a bit of fun, a skylark. If, I thought, Martin has only ever *seen* his grandfather performing a blooding, this would be his undoing. The dangerous act of defiance – the blooding – despite best intentions would not be heroic, but comically inept.

At this point another major development occurred. If the blooding was bungled, might they not be discovered in the act? If so, who would discover them? Logically, it would be the owner of the cow. And who might own a cow? Someone obviously more privileged than the clachan members. Might it not, I wondered, belong to Liam, Sean's brother? He certainly qualified as a well-to-do neighbour. This would also provide strong moral ballast for the blooding. As rent collector, Liam had betrayed the clachan by becoming part of the Big House. Martin and his accomplices would certainly feel morally justified in stealing the blood of his cow. And what if the cow died as a result? This would give Liam cause to visit the clachan seeking retribution. It was a tantalizing prospect. Such a confrontation would quickly allow the audience to witness how the clachan felt towards Liam as traitor and gombeen.

I would ultimately decide to weave these developments into the fabric of the Irish story, along with a roughly penned letter the three young men leave behind them at the scene of the crime as a kind of calling card.[128] Liam would confront the clachan with it

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Three men stagger and cavort to the centre of the space, clumsily negotiating obstacles en route. Their progress is made the more arduous because: it is night; they are dressed in poorly fitting women's clothes; they are drunk - not paralytic, but bravely so. At first it is hard to make out who they are. As the dialogue begins, it becomes all too obvious.
FERGUS: Ohhh! *(Falling over)* Ah, jaisus – split me drawers!
Much hilarity; finally they settle.
DECLAN: Hand us the poteen, will ya?
Fergus produces a small drinking flask from under his dress. Declan takes a swig and passes it on.
FERGUS: Well, I must say, I never thought I'd ever be gettin' such comfort from a change of clothes.
MARTIN: Aye, it's the 'liberation' old Daniel O'Connell never speaks of in his speeches.
FERGUS: Ye know, I think I'd rather be a Missie than a Mister.
DECLAN: Yeah, you're a real natural, Ferg. Like ye was born to it, eh, eh?
He pokes Fergus a few times which initiates wrestling.
FERGUS: Look out, watch me little titties! Never know when I might be needin' em!
Fergus and Declan continue to explore their new anatomies as Martin stands and breaks away. (*Ebbingtide* Script 228 – 229: *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 24:00 – 24:43).

[128] Duffy notes that various letters expressing sympathy with the Molly Maguires found their way into the hands of neighbouring landlords subsequent to the murder of Denis Mahon (Duffy 167).

in support of his accusation that the perpetrators must have come from amongst them. A careless remark from Liam to the Agent about the botched blooding would set off an inexorable train of events leading to the landlord's death. The catalyst was the *botched* blooding, a scene that arose through a series of unplanned discoveries during the writing of it. These, and hundreds more like them would shape and determine the entire narrative of Part 1.

MARCH TO MAY 2014 – DRAFTING *PART 2: THE SEA VOYAGE*

By the end of February 2014 I had a draft of what was effectively half the play – *Part 1: Ireland*. What I had produced in about eight weeks was a story spanning Bridget's life during the famine years in Ireland, covering the events leading up to her and Sarah's entry into the workhouse. Importantly, it was a self-contained story, one that could be rehearsed and performed as a stand-alone entity. I would leave the final formatting decision with respect to the two halves of the play until I had completed Part 2. But having Part 1 in this form now gave me the option of rehearsing and performing each part separately.

From here, the writing timeline to completion was tight. Rehearsals started in early August – some six months away. I would need the two months before that – June and July – for revision. This gave me eight weeks to finish a draft of Part 2. I began by taking stock of my current progress with the *Sea Journey* material. I had written roughly half the sea voyage scenes I intended for the play. I was comforted by the fact that I now had a solid Irish back-story to draw from. This, and the fact that most of the sea journey scenes still to be written already existed in novelistic form.

I drafted the remaining *Sea Journey* scenes throughout March and April of 2014. Looking over drafts of the two parts, I paused to review what I had created. It was a full-length play of some one hundred scenes. In terms of the sea voyage, I was satisfied that the novel narrative had transposed reasonably well into its new theatrical medium; relieved too, that it seemed to follow on quite smoothly from the Irish material in Part 1. Being in two distinct parts, it could be rehearsed with two groups of sixteen student actors working on separate days.

JUNE TO JULY 2014 – UNIFYING THE WORK

I was not, at this time, completely committed to presenting the play in two distinct parts: Part 1: *Ireland* before interval and Part 2: *Sea Journey* after it. Each part, I reasoned, could still be interwoven with the other over the evening, although this would create problems with time slippages backwards and forwards. By far the easier option would be to keep each part separate. This would certainly make it easier to rehearse with two groups, two casts. But if I was to present these two separate parts of Bridget's story over an evening, I would need to properly unify the work. So I began looking for ways to cohere it.

IMAGES, MOTIFS, THEMES

The Tree

One of the central images in the novel was of Bridget sitting beneath a tree with her young sister, Sarah. The image is presented as a simple memory fragment, recalled by Bridget on the orphan boat taking her to Australia. It is an evocation of a life lost, one recaptured in remembrance.[129] The play would ultimately be framed by this image of Bridget sitting at the foot of the tree that we would come to know as Ma's Tree. I would work to strengthen its place at the literal and figurative hub of the O'Conor world. Bridget's father, Sean, will plant it. He will dedicate it to his wife, Mary, as a natural marker of his love for her. It will be a place where Bridget will learn the mysteries of her mother's faith. Bridget and Sarah's brother, Diarmuid, will be buried under the shade of its branches. Having brought Mary's body there, Sean will die there himself at the end of Part 1.

My time in Ireland at the end of 2013 had left two strong arboreal images with me. A tree in the Drumcliffe cemetery near Ennis, with its towering presence amidst the bent gravestones of two thousand famine victims, became the impressionistic template for my own family tree in the play. Similarly, a striking sculpture in the grounds of the Sligo hospital – the site of a mass children's famine grave – with its trunk bent sideways by the wind, spoke to me of the deep-rooted endurance of those that survived the famine. I wanted the tree in my play to resonate with similar power. It would be, for

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[129] "I will remember this moment forever. I am looking up at the mid-afternoon sun through the mottled light of an autumnal tree, sitting cross-legged with my back against its trunk. You are here with me – a sister lying in my lap. We listen to stillness; anticipate rustling air; watch colliding patterns of tree and sky" (2013 *Ebbingtide* (Girls' Story) – Progressive Prose Rewrite 1).

Bridget, a place she would return to in her mind, a place she would draw strength from, and a symbol of the redemptive power of love recalled.

The Bible

In the novel, Bridget carries a bible with her on her journey out to Australia. It is one of the few possessions she has, one of the few tangible reminders of her past. Whilst there is mention of her having been given it by a priest, its full relevance is never really explained. Importing it into the play gave me the opportunity to more thoroughly explain its place in Bridget's life. I came to regard this refashioning of novelistic material for the play as part of the ongoing conversation occurring between the two works, one that as novelist and adapter I was eager to engage in.

In one sense, I wanted the bible to represent the faith embedded within its mystical pages, a faith that will be tested by the unfathomably conspiring sequence of horrors that became the famine. But for Bridget, the bible also holds the prospect of hope beyond dissolution. I wanted her to have it throughout the play. It would be a kind of companion, one in which she could consult and commune. It would be referred to in the play's first moments. The priest will teach her how to read it. Her mother will show her how to use it as an instrument of divination. In Part 2, she will cling to it, desperately trying to make sense of prevailing circumstance, its primitive power of prophecy bringing consolation against reasonless fate. She will consult it, desperately at times, in the way she has been taught by her mother. Finally, in the last moments of the play, in a scene entitled *Clear Indication*, she will admit to its limitation in being able to decide her future:

> BRIDGET: I've consulted the bible here, about whether I should go over the mountains with you tomorrow, Doctor. But it doesn't seem to be helpin'. You might say I'm a little stuck (*Ebbingtide* Script 338; Ebbingtide DVD/Vimeo 3:22:35 – 3:23:05).

The Round Belly Of The World

When researching for the novel I read a lot of nautical material. I wanted to understand what those who came out to Australia on early boats would have felt and experienced. One idea that kept recurring was of travelling *around* the world, something

that must have been strange and otherworldly for refugees like the orphan girls fleeing the famine in Ireland. I began to think of ways of describing it. To me, the world was itself like a giant being, whose 'belly' was being traversed. It was a powerful image, one that I was keen on retaining for the play. I thought it might form part of a suite of other celestial references.

So, in *Part 1: Ireland*, I included an early scene called *E-qu-at-or*, in which Bridget explains to young Sarah the concept of the equator.[130] She describes it as being a line looped around the belly of the world (*Ebbingtide* Script 239; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 40:30). Early in *Part 2: Sea Journey*, during a scene called *Underway*, the orphan girls tell us that they are edging their way around the rim of an "unimaginably large world" (*Ebbingtide* Script 291; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 1:58:25 – 1: 59:20). I would reinforce this image with the inclusion of references to the North Star in both parts of the play. Bridget is not the only character making reference to the round belly of the world. Captain Black is hell-bent on finding the quickest route to Australia.[131] His obsession with getting there in record time coincides with the mid-nineteenth century nautical discovery of Great Circle Sailing, in which sea journeys were being re-routed to perilous southern latitudes in order to minimise travel time. For Captain Black, the mysteries of the round earth contain dark and inimical secrets. I decided to include this thematic construct from the novel because it captured a very different perspective of the round belly theme. In a scene called *Short Cut*, Black quizzes Gale late at night in his cabin about the view from his porthole. Eventually, the boy stumbles upon the correct answer – the moon.[132]

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[130] *E-qu-at-or* (*Ebbingtide* Script 239 – 240; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 40:20 – 41:57)

[131] Black's obsession with finding the quickest route to Australia was not unlike that of Bully Forbes, a contemporary ship captain. Don Charlwood makes the point that obsessions with speed, and their preparedness to go into deep southerly latitudes, often led these captains into great conflict with ship surgeons, whose responsibility was to ensure the safety of passengers. I would use this in drawing the relationship between my own Captain Black and Doctor Shannon in Part 2: *Sea Journey* (Charlwood 165).

[132] CAPTAIN: How is it?
GALE: Waning crescent at fifteen to twenty above the horizon.
CAPTAIN: Yes: the horizon… cunning bitch.
He releases the boy. Gale slumps into the chair. Black moves to the porthole.
She was staring you in the face and you hardly noticed her. That's the way she is. She'd like you to think she's nothing but a straight little line at the edge of the world; holding the sea and sky apart for us to slip between. *(Wryly)* But she lies. That line out there – that's just her slippery sleight of hand. She's round, boy; round and full like a belly… (*Ebbingtide* Script 311; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:34:20 – 2:35:14).

The Moon

The image of the moon is integral to the scheme of symbols in the novel. It was always my intention to include it in both parts of the play. It is omnipresent in the world of the clachan. In one of the first scenes in the play, a scene called *The Gathering*, clachan elder Thadeus includes it in his clan story. The moon frames his ancient world: "One night under a slip 'o moon, they crept up on our moat-round castle" (*Ebbingtide* Script 215; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 4:40). A few scenes later in *Let Us See Molly*, ruminating on the causes of Martin's militancy, Sean speculates, "(is) it the moon gets ye so excited" (*Ebbingtide* Script 219; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 11:12)? In the scene called *The Blooding*, Martin mentions that the moon is coming up, something Fergus places great import in: "That's a bad sign, that is – full moon" (*Ebbingtide* Script 230; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 26:40). In Part 2, it is the ever-present moon that pulls Sarah out of this life. In the scene *The Hand of God*, almost at the point of death, she feels the inevitable pull of its intractable force: "I can almost feel it pullin' me. It's a strange sensation" (*Ebbingtide* Script 338; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 3:21:50). Even the name of the boat upon which Bridget travels is comprised of a non-existent compound word that describes, in its own way, the effect of its mighty power: *Ebbingtide*.

Ebbingtide

Originally in the novel, Ebbingtide was the surname of the contemporary character, William; so named because it described the ebbing flow of a life in retreat. But the term also referred to Bridget's life. As an Irish orphan, she was part of the tide of emigrants that resulted from the famine; a tide that pulled the surviving Irish diaspora on to their new lives. It was an idea that I felt also ran through the *Sea Journey* material, with its concomitant ideas of journeying and navigation. In 2014, whilst unifying both parts of the play, I would continually return to the idea of an ebbing tide. I wanted the audience to link the idea of a tide of people moving away from their beloved homeland with the broader concept of progress embedded within English famine policies at the time.

Viewed through this very particular prism, the potato crop failure and its resulting famine become an almost prescient opportunity for land and social reform. The tide of progress that will result from reform becomes inextricably linked to another more potent and pernicious concept: that God, in his almighty wisdom, has brought about the famine in order to create a better new world. This conflation of natural disaster, providential

causation and Darwinian evolution lies at the heart of such notions.[133] In terms of the play, the tide of progress that will result in mass evictions and forced emigration is both historically opportune and cosmically sanctioned. The Agent on the estate, Mr Hunter, elaborates these ideas materialised as policy. The new world, he declares in the scene, *The Plan*, is waiting to be populated. The tide of people flowing to it cannot be stemmed (*Ebbingtide* Script 251; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 57:00 – 58:58).

Solving Sarah

In the novel, Bridget and Sarah survive their parents, who die in the famine. The girls enter the Irish workhouse together. Whilst there, Sarah is selected to travel on one the early emigration boats bound for Australia. But she dies from choleraic fever just prior to boarding her boat. The novel reveals her death only at the very end of the story, after Bridget's own boat arrives in Australia. Until this point, we believe Bridget's version of events: that she is to be reunited with Sarah in Australia.

The revelation about Sarah's death occurs in a short passage where Bridget flashes back to her time in the workhouse.[134] Once revealed, we understand that Bridget has created a *fantasy* of reunion, one borne out of her inability to cope with the truth about her sister's death. Sarah is the last link with Bridget's old life in Ireland. And with grim determination she clings to it. Bridget's story is one of survivor guilt. I had always considered Sarah's death to be central to the work. But I felt the novel never satisfactorily resolved it. I saw the adaptation as a chance to revisit the issue. I have already referred to the adapter's conversation between novel and play. Rarely was it more strident than during my contemplation of rendering Sarah's death in the play.

In the novel, Bridget is finally forced to confront Sarah's death when, having arrived at the immigration depot in Australia, she makes the mistake of enquiring after her sister. In terms of her fantasy of reunion, this enquiry is a perfectly reasonable one. But the matron to whom she makes the enquiry looks up the depot's records and discovers no such girl as Sarah ever boarded the boat Bridget claims she was on, *The Earl Grey*. This provides the trigger whereby Bridget must finally face the reality of

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[133] Duffy notes that Charles Trevelyan, British Treasury's Permanent Assistant Secretary, and the man charged with distribution of Irish famine relief funds, believed that the famine was the benevolent hand of Providence come to end the "evil potato-based system that had caused the island to be overpopulated, indolent, poor and violent" (Duffy 77).

[134] I have included the novel's version of Sarah's death in Appendix 11.

Sarah's death back in Ireland; that her story of their reunion is nothing but a confected fiction.

For the play, I would retain this basic scenario of revelation. But it needed more thickness, a strengthening of its psychological underpinnings. In the play's draft I had made some inroads into achieving this. I had written almost a completely new Irish story in which the history and bond between the two sisters were much more clearly etched. To this, I would now add another ingredient: Bridget's parents would already have lost a child, a boy, Diarmuid, in an earlier potato blight. Early in the play, during the scene *Ma's Tree*, Bridget's mother, Mary, would extract a promise from Bridget to care for her young sister.[135]

Sarah's Presence On The Boat: Living Letters

In the sequential ordering of the play's action, Sarah dies in the workhouse in Ireland. But I wanted the audience to believe Bridget's fictional version of events: that Sarah had come out on one of the early boats bound for Australia, and that the two sisters would be reunited there.

My early research had uncovered an important historical source book: *Oceans of Consolation* by David Fitzpatrick. The book is a compilation of letters back home by Irish emigrants who had come live in Australia after the Great Famine. What captured my imagination about these letters was the disjunction between the Irish life they had left behind and the one they painted of Australia to relatives in Ireland. The letters were awkward and oddly muted, as though time and distance had blurred memories and intimacies. And I was curious about the dramatic potential of such missives, curious and wary.

In my experience, presenting letters onstage often results in static action. At worst, watching actors read letters can be boring, tedious. But I also began to wonder whether it might be possible to strengthen Bridget's fantasy of reunion – and our belief in it – by having Sarah write letters back home to her sister, so that it would appear as if the two sisters had been corresponding. I would set this up by having Sarah promise to write

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[135] MARY: On a clear day, you can almost climb into the clouds and see to heaven… *(Darkens)* And now ye brother's here, lookin' after us from beneath…Diarmuid… Diarmuid *(A little boy appears from within the trunk of the tree)*. It was a bad winter… and he was only a little boy. Such things, they come…. *(She cries. The boy returns to the trunk of the tree)* And then there was you. *(Suddenly serious)* I get feelin's. Ye must look after ye sister, no matter what may come. She's different from you. Promise me ye will… Promise.
BRIDGET: I do. I do… (*Ebbingtide* Script 234 – 235; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 32:50 – 33:56)

back to Bridget when she arrived in Australia.[136]

But I needed *more* than letters. I needed Sarah to be present as Bridget received them. The audience would see Sarah as Bridget imagined her to be in her fantasy. Sarah would speak them out aloud. They would tell us of her life in Australia. But, of course, being confected by Bridget, someone who had never actually been to Australia, they would be an amalgamation of references to their old life back in Ireland, mixed with idyllic fantasies of her new life as Bridget imagined it to be. Being both the letters' recipient and creator, I would have Bridget participate in their rendering. The letters would come alive.[137]

Disclosing Sarah's Death

The next step was figuring out how to present Sarah's death. In the novel, the disclosure occurs in a short passage where Bridget visits Sarah in the workhouse infirmary. It is a memory fragment. Sarah dies in Bridget's arms. In my script, I had already written a short scene at the beginning of Part 2 in which the sisters are in bed together in the workhouse. In this scene, Sarah, who has just been selected to go to Australia on *The Earl Grey*, resists leaving without a promise from Bridget that she will follow out after her. After some coercion, Bridget finally agrees to go, establishing for the audience the plot thread concerning the sister's reunion in Australia.

My idea for the disclosure of Sarah's death in the play was simple. In the last few moments of the play, directly following the moment when the matron of the immigration depot reveals to Bridget that the government records show no evidence of Sarah ever having been on a boat to Australia, I would insert a reprise of the earlier workhouse scene. This would function as a flashback to the beginning of Part 2. The scene would be played again, with the dialogue replicating that of the first version. Only in this second version, in its newly reprised form, Sarah dies.[138]

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[136] This promise would be made in the scene *Ocean of Dreams* (*Ebbingtide* Script 286; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 1:51:42)

[137] The first of these occurs in the scene *Letter to Bridget: A Special Place to Pen* in Part 2:
Sarah is sitting under a tree, writing a letter home to Bridget. Bridget watches her. At points, the letter almost becomes a conversation between the two of them.
My dear Bridget, I can hardly contain my excitement with at last being able to write… (*Ebbingtide* Script 296; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:06:40).

[138] SARAH: Bridget, come soon.
BRIDGET: I will.... I will…
It is the moment of Sarah's death. Bridget lies with her a moment longer, before Sarah and the bed dissolve (*Ebbingtide* Script 338; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 3:22:10 – 3:22:20).

PHASE 5: REHEARSALS

AUGUST TO OCTOBER 2014

Overview of the Phase

By late July 2014 I had worked the play into a basic rehearsal script. At this stage of the process I had come to the view that I would present the play in two distinct parts: Part 1 - *Ireland* and Part 2 - *Sea Journey*. In this form, it could be rehearsed by two separate groups, as the cohort would be divided; a form that could be book-ended together and modularised as one evening's performance; one that, hopefully, was coherent enough to be understood by the cast who were eagerly waiting to rehearse it for the next eleven weeks. So, with script in hand, I entered the rehearsal room. Walking across this threshold meant I would now be playing some very different roles in the project. Certainly, I was author of the original story and adapter of the playscript. But I would also be *director* of its first production, and *coach* to the young performers who were now first acquainting themselves with the work. Importantly, too, I would also be *curator* of the play's transition into its ultimate adapted form – performance.

The transition from page to stage, from script to embodied performance, is one of the most distinct punctuation points in the evolution of any theatrical production. In a theatrical *adaptation*, one with novelistic origins, this transition is even more layered and profound. Getting the adapted work 'up on its feet' begins a very different kind of enquiry, one quite distinct from those text-bound ones preceding it. Each element of the reconstructed work must be tested in its new physical milieu, scrutinised according to the laws governing its sentient audience, held accountable to one overriding question: does this element work in its new remediated setting? It is a physical proving of Gaudreault's idea that mediums *wrestle* with their subject. In my rehearsal room, this elemental encounter involves active testing on the rehearsal room floor.

There will not be space enough here to describe my encounters with every element in the phase. Rather, I will cite two specific examples that, in their own way, represent hundreds of others in the vast catalogue of rehearsal processes and decisions. Perhaps oddly, they both concern the rendering of animals: a cow and a dog. Each, though, demonstrates the type of transactions and transformations that led to decisions being made. Each involved the way my theatrical medium rendered content: its properties, its capacities, its enunciative mechanisms, its strengths and limitations. These rehearsal

room decisions took place daily, hourly, momentarily, throughout rehearsals. Needless to say, each rehearsal in the cycle brought about changes to that original rehearsal script. Each increment of change, coupled with all the others along the way, circumscribed the long arc from text to performance.

The Cow in *The Blooding*

Writing a scene in which a group of young men extract blood from a cow – *The Blooding* – was always going to pose challenges in rehearsals. The scene features – in the reality of the play – a live cow. The old theatrical adage, "never work with children or animals", holds some practical merit here. Rendering a cow, living or otherwise, was always going to prove difficult. The issue, in this instance, was not so much changing the written draft, but finding theatrical ways to realise it in performance.

As part of my introductory remarks to the cast on that first day of rehearsals, I gave quite a detailed pre-emptory speech outlining that there were many pieces of action that would, in my estimation, prove difficult to render onstage. They would require tricky conjuring and resourcefulness. I would, I said, rely upon them as pro-active actors and co-creators, to flesh out how action should be staged and rendered.[139]

In response to this preamble, the three actors involved in *The Blooding* scene brought in a version in which they seconded another actor to be the cow. This rendering brought with it both benefit and difficulty. The cow – Daisy – took on, as one might expect, a particularly *human* aspect. The actor, quite naturally it seemed, imbued her with distinctly human traits, those quite appropriate to the situation. This was all well and good. But the effect of this embodiment was too comic. He was a strong vocal and physical mimic; so good in fact, that it made it difficult to focus on anything *other* than his brilliant mimicry.

To lessen this dominance, we then tried a version in which the actor initially established the cow through embodiment: making movement and sounds of the cow. Then, at a designated moment, the actor playing the cow was taken out of the scene, whilst still making his cow *noises*. The hope in doing this was to initially establish the cow in the audience's mind as an embodied presence, before transforming it into something that could continue in their imagination.

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[139] As I explained in Chapter 4, this preamble concerned not *just* the rendering of various dimensions of my play, but was also part of the pedagogic brief: to train the young actors in making strong, pro-active offers on the rehearsal room floor.

To achieve this, the actor walked onstage from his cast position – sitting along the left hand wall – to a position downstage left of the other actors. He carried a chair with him, but made the noises of the cow and interacted with the other actors as Daisy. This interaction began at the very moment the three young men first spotted Daisy in the paddock. It was decided, after many attempts, that the actor who was playing Daisy would retain some of his cow features: her mooing, her wariness of the approaching men. The actor playing Martin would then cautiously approach her and put an imaginary rope around her neck. All the while he and Daisy would be interacting with each other: man and fully embodied beast.

Having established the cow's presence, there would then be a *severing* of the actual embodied actor playing Daisy, and the beast we would then *see* in our mind's eye. Martin would lead the *imaginary* Daisy to the centre of the stage for the blooding. But the actor playing Daisy would not follow. Instead, he would remain seated in his chair downstage left, in the same position he had been in when Martin put the imaginary rope around his neck. For the rest of the scene, he would continue *as if* he was in the scene, mooing and interacting with the other actors. But they would now imbue the space at the centre of the stage with Daisy's much larger imagined presence. This severing of *embodied* cow and *imagined* cow allowed the audience to focus on the action occurring in the centre of the stage. The problem of the live cow was solved.

The Dog

In the novel, one of the characters onboard the boat, Cook (who is, indeed, the ship's cook), has a tiny, excitable dog called Matey. The dog resides in the capacious environs of Cook's shirt, one of the many indications of mutual adoration between them. More importantly, the dog is integral to the action on the boat; a lightning rod for the enmity that develops between Captain Black and the rest of the boat's inhabitants. I knew that rendering the dog, in any form, onstage would be difficult. I even tried, at various stages of the adaptation process, to remove it from the story altogether, but was never happy with any of the alternatives I came up with. In truth, I suppose, I simply wanted the dog in the play. I liked his character. I liked his relationship with Cook. I liked his sheer canine theatricality.

But actualising him onstage was quite another matter. For starters, we see him in the novel through a microscopic lens, a device designed to highlight the intimacy

between Cook and dog.[140] Additionally, the climax of Matey's narrative thread, which occurs during *Crossing the Line,* involves the dog being kicked over the side of the boat by Captain Black (*Ebbingtide* Script 314; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:52:37 – 2:53:05). Staging this would require a number of different elements, all conspiring successfully together: establishing the dog's physical presence for the audience, creating discernible, detailed and truthful relationships between the dog, his master and Captain Black, and the clear rendering of the physical action.

The Dog Enters The Rehearsal Room

The actors' first response was, predictably, to have a live dog in the show – many apparently owned eminently suitable examples. Closer enquiry revealed that initial enthusiasm overbore practical scrutiny. None seemed to fit the bill. So as a pragmatic interim strategy I sent the actors involved away into private off-the-main-floor rehearsals, hoping they would come up with a solution. At this point, we had already seen some initial success with the cow, so I was hopeful.

But when the actors returned with very few tangible results, it was clear I needed to make an offer myself, even if just to get the ball rolling. Initially, I suggested having the actors endow the space where the dog was supposed to be with certain attitudes and reactions. This, I thought, along with dialogue evoking the dog's presence, might be sufficient. This would also stylistically replicate the kind of line we were taking with the cow. But various attempts yielded little. Some weeks passed. The actors seemed flummoxed. The suggestions I came up with offered little assistance. After some weeks, and still no real sense of a dog, I went back to considering a play without a dog in the story.

Resisting A Man/Dog Rendering

One day around this time, someone suggested we get another actor to play the dog. It was an obvious fix, having the dog embodied in human form. But one I resisted. Our earlier attempts at a fully embodied cow seemed to diffuse its theatrical potential.

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[140] "The dog detached itself from her boot and took a running jump at… Cook. Still in mid-air… Cook turned just enough to allow the dog to land on his hip and climb inside the space created between shirt and vest. Once inside, it swivelled, stuck its head out and invited Bridget to do the same. To reward the feat… Cook brought a piece of bread from his pocket and stuffed it into the dog's open mouth" (2013 *Ebbingtide* (Girls' Story) – Progressive Prose Rewrite 73).

Literalising it seemed to kill off our audience's capacity to *imagine* it. Additionally, I was afraid the result would be comic, something that would diffuse the big climax scene where Matey is kicked overboard. In the end, I had to concede that unlike the dog, rehearsal is its own master. Time was running out. We would try using an actor in the role.

Man / Dog

In the novel, the dog first appears in a scene set in the ship's galley. But in the play I wanted the audience to meet him earlier, to establish him as a bona fide presence on the ship. So I added a section of dialogue in the first scene onboard the boat, where the captain, having just boarded, inspects the crew. Moving down the line of crewmembers, he arrives at Cook. Perceiving the silent face-off between Captain Black and Cook as a threat, the dog growls from his master's shirt.

The first rehearsal after deciding to try an actor as the dog, Dylan, one of the cast members, volunteered for the role. He was relatively small, mobile and a reasonably good mimic, qualities that seemed to avail him to the task. We started conservatively. Dylan, as the dog, just sat on the side of the stage in his cast chair position – making dog noises that synchronised with the onstage action, whilst the two other actors in the scene – Captain Black and Cook – reacted to the imaginary space where the dog was supposed to be. We ran the scene a few times. Minor improvements resulted, but the scene was fundamentally lifeless. Quizzed on this, the actors reported they were still having difficulty endowing blank space with the presence of the dog. Clearly, I was still resisting full embodiment by the actor. Now, without any other obvious options, I relented and asked Dylan to come onstage and try *being* the dog. In truth, I still regarded this as an interim rehearsal aid that would suffice until we found a better solution.

But things did not go to plan. From the very first moment the other actors saw Dylan as the dog, they began to interact with him, and, perhaps more significantly, he with them. The dog was instantly recognisable as something dog-*like* but oddly anthropomorphised. He was a presence, not only embodied, but one possessing a clearly discernible *character*: not quite human, but not quite dog either. Moreover, Dylan's interaction with the other actors instantly became *real*. Suddenly, all those in the rehearsal room watching were forced to confront a complex ontological conundrum, one comprised of a hybrid amalgam: an actor playing a dog who thought himself a man.

Overcoming a theatrical problem in rehearsals often gives rise to other unforeseen, but related, ones. If we were to use Dylan as the dog, it seemed somehow best to declare it to our audience. Without it, the play seemed to lurch into a different style. I cannot explain fully *why* this was the case with the dog and *not* the cow. Perhaps it was because Matey's relationship with Cook was more fully drawn. In any event, it was decided that Dylan should signal to the audience that he was playing the dog. This would effectively create two 'dog' realities: one, where Dylan was *playing* the dog; and another, where he is *explaining* the dog *as the actor*. In this second reality, Dylan makes it clear to the audience that he is both playing himself (the actor) *and* the dog.

If we could establish this double reality for the audience, it would potentially allow us to solve some other issues. If, for instance, we were to have Dylan occupying two realities – as man-actor and dog – we would inevitably have to deal with *transitions* between the two: when the actor transformed into the dog and vice versa. Solving the man/dog transitions would hopefully also cement in the minds of the audience that the dog was a character in the play. So, following shortly on from the decision to use Dylan as the dog, I suggested to the actors that we add a piece of dialogue that might explain this device. And we began to rehearse.[141]

A Dog In Space: Shirt Transitions

Reasonably confident that we had established the 'double reality' convention of the man/dog, we then set about solving another related issue: the dog usually resides *inside* Cook's shirt. In the novel, this is accomplished in a quite straightforward way. Information about the dog and his whereabouts is transferred to the novel's reader via omniscient narration. But rendering this theatrically was always going to be more complex. Essentially, what this amounted to was being able to signal to the audience when the dog was *inside* the shirt and when he moved *outside* it. In other words, when the dog was transitioning from one place to the other. For clarity's sake, I'll call these *shirt transitions*.

The first kind of shirt transition was a *dismount*, where the dog alighted from inside Cook's shirt onto the ground. This usually occurred when the dog felt the need to greet someone or to defend his master against a potential enemy. The second kind of

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[141] The amended text became: *An actor henceforth playing the dog enters*.
DOG *(To us)*: A growl emanates from the cook's shirt *(Growls)*, which is the usual residing place for his tiny, beloved dog (*Ebbingtide* Script 289).

shirt transition was the opposite – a *mount* – where the dog moved from the ground upward into the safe confines of Cook's shirt.

A good example of these transitions occurs in a scene set outside the ship's galley – M*eat for Mess Nine* (*Ebbingtide* Script 301 – 302; Ebbingtide DVD/Vimeo 2:16:38 – 2:18:18).[142] What we discovered was that it was necessary to establish for the audience that the dog could be both embodied by Dylan as actor *and* in imaginary space as the dog onstage. In other words, we needed to establish an ontological state of duality, whereby the audience could believe that the dog was going to be *literally* embodied by an actor, and *figuratively* portrayed in blank space onstage. The key to the dog's presence both onstage and, indeed, in the play itself, rested squarely on the process of his evolution in rehearsals.

The Dog's Demise

Despite early misgivings about using an actor to portray the dog – its tendency to render dramatic action uselessly comic – I was quietly pleased with the progress of the dog during rehearsals. Always, though, in the back of my mind was the climactic scene involving the dog's death: where the dog is kicked overboard by Captain Black. The danger of reducing it to something comic was real and inbuilt into our current mode of portrayal. Already, in the early dog scene rehearsals we had invited the audience to laugh at moments Dylan was creating. And then there was the problem of trying to stage the action.

The dog's death occurs during the scene *Crossing the Line* and brings many of the plot threads to an inevitable crescendo (*Ebbingtide* Script 321; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:53:00). A brief description of the action belies the difficulty involved in staging it.

Having winched the young sailor, Gale, over the side of the boat as the last test of his initiation, the winch gets stuck. Freeing it causes the boy to be catapulted up and out of the water, crashing him headfirst onto the deck. The shocked crew then crowd around the now inert body of the boy. The doctor calls for some space around the body. Captain Black angrily intervenes. He grabs Cook, shoving him roughly backwards onto the deck. This brings about a swift and vicious rebuke from the dog, the resulting confrontation between he and the captain leading to him being kicked overboard. I thought the basic dramatic template in the rehearsal script was reasonably sound. Its theatrical realisation,

[142] For a detailed description of both the mount and dismount we evolved in rehearsals of *Meat for Mess Nine*, see Appendix 12.

though, would need to be clear and detailed if it were to capture the latent drama in the script.

The initial moment of conflict was relatively easy to establish. The Captain's shove of Cook saw him spreadeagled downstage left. From earlier rehearsals, we knew that this would be a good position for Dylan's entrance as the dog: from his actor's chair on the prompt side of the stage. His entry from this position meant that, from the audience's perspective, he travelled across the line of Cook's body, creating the effect that the dog was jumping out of Cook's shirt – *the dismount*.

Having solved the spatial issue surrounding the dog's dismount from Cook's shirt, we then needed to establish clearly for the audience the action that was to follow: the fight between the dog and the captain. We decided that although Dylan had entered the space *as the dog* (apparently emerging from Cook's shirt to defend him), as soon as he arrived at his onstage position (downstage-centre) we would have him then quickly transition into his narrator role, by standing to address the audience as *the actor playing the dog*. This, we hoped, would again establish for the audience that Dylan was going to both *be* the dog and the actor *describing* the dog, a convention we had established from the dog's first appearance in the play. For the remainder of the scene he would oscillate between these two roles. Rehearsing the action a few times brought forth the following dialogue:

> DOG *(To us)*: In an instant the tiny dog's vengeance explodes upon the throat of his master's attacker (*Ebbingtide* Script 321; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:52:35).

At this moment, Dylan again transitioned from actor/narrator to dog, dropping to the floor on all fours, swivelling around to confront his master's attacker (Captain Black) for the fight.

An Abstract Fight

During rehearsals, the fight between Captain Black and the dog evolved through a series of discussions, private rehearsals between the actors, and further main floor rehearsal refinement with me. The evolution of the fight moved from a literal rendering, where both actors engaged physically with each other, to its ultimate form, which was much more abstract. By 'literal' here, I mean the two actors literally engaged in physical

combat *while* Dylan described the action. But this simultaneous describing *and* enacting seemed to blur the lines of the double reality we had created for the dog. Put simply, the physical action seemed a tedious way of doubling up what was being described.

After much trialling, we came upon the idea that perhaps it would be better for the two actors to never physically contact each other, instead enacting the fight with each combatant being isolated in their own separate space. We reasoned that we could run the fight in small increments of action, with Dylan *alternating* between describing and enacting. We also realised that if this stylised version of the fight were to work for our audience, we would need to have each action and reaction between the two combatants very carefully synchronised. The desired effect would be such that, even though they were quite a distance apart, it *appeared* they were making physical contact with each other.

Eventually, Captain Black gets the upper hand and throws the dog onto the deck. Through rehearsals it was decided that Dylan, as the dog, still in his own personal sector of the stage, would respond by throwing himself down onto the ground. He then transitions quickly into the actor, looking to the audience to explain:

> DOG *(To us)*: Momentarily stunned, the dog tries to re-gather and come again (*Ebbingtide* Script 321; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:52:45).

Dylan then transitioned back into the dog again, turned – as the dog – upstage and moved a few metres upstage towards the Captain. The inevitable turn of events has occurred. The movement of the dog to "come again" sets in train the final sequence of the dog's demise. When it becomes clear that the dog is about "to come again", Cook tries to intervene. But it is too late. The Captain is already moving towards the dog.

The Kick Overboard

Up until this point in the scene, the central rehearsal issue had revolved around clearly establishing the various increments of action for the audience, replete with man/dog, dog/man transitions from Dylan. But now, we had arrived at the fateful moment of the kick. We needed to render it clearly. And we had to do it in a way that would not comically undercut the dramatic impact of the moment. After trialling options, we settled upon a version that would contain narration by Dylan inside a frozen

moment or freeze frame. This begins with Cook's attempted intervention. He says 'Matey, no!' and the action freezes. Dylan then rises to his feet, and turns slowly to face the audience. Then, as narrator, he calmly describes what is happening to the dog:

> DOG: But the Captain doesn't wait for a second assault. With one swift, carefully placed boot, he kicks it off the deck and into the dark sea swell beneath (*Ebbingtide* Script 321; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:52:50).

At this moment we briefly return to a real-time enactment of action. Captain Black kicks the space directly in front of him; that space inhabited by the dog in *his* reality. He kicks the dog in the direction of the audience, up and over the side of the boat. No one else onstage responds. We are back inside the moment of watching and narrating. Like the rest of us who inhabit this moment – other actors onstage and audience – Dylan, as narrator, solemnly watches the imaginary body of Matey flying through the air and into the ocean below. Realising his part as the dog has come to an end, he walks offstage to resume his actor's chair. Only when he is back in the chair does the onstage action resume.

The dog's demise was depicted using a combination of stylistic solutions, each a response to theatrical challenges arising during rehearsals. The fight between Captain Black and Matey was depicted using choreographed and highly stylised movement and isolated action in different parts of the stage. Action was augmented by narration describing the action, delivered by the actor playing the dog, who was both *in* the scene and *describing* the action contained within it. This narration was used in tandem with quick transitions between *embodied* dog and actor *describing* dog. Real time action of the dog being kicked overboard was rendered with frozen moments and responses from other actors onstage. As reported, I was acutely aware that deciding to portray the dog using a live actor could potentially undercut the climactic moment of the dog being kicked overboard. I believe this was successfully avoided.

The two examples I have used to illustrate activities during this final phase of the play's evolution – the cow and the dog – demonstrate the importance of considering rehearsals part of the long evolutionary arc of adaptation. In the first instance, solutions to the problems posed by the cow were solved on the rehearsal room floor without significant amendment to the script itself. When it came to rendering the dog,

rehearsals brought forth not only embodied solutions to the action described in the script, but significant script amendment as well. Rehearsals were filled with both types of developments.

The myriad decisions made during this phase were absolutely fundamental to the way both script and performance developed. In this respect, the rehearsal room floor as transformative testing ground was no less a part of adaptive explorations than earlier phases involving purely textual amendment. It is significant to add that although these explorations effectively ended at the rehearsal stage of the work, given *different* performance conditions – such as a non-pedagogically focussed production, a long run of the play and a smaller cast of professional actors – these adaptive explorations may have continued well into the performance season.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTER

In Chapter 1, I outlined 5 distinct areas of enquiry emanating from *The Ebbingtide Project*: critical currents and the omission of the adapter, the insider model, the impact of surrounding circumstance upon the work, the transformational arc of *Ebbingtide*, and the significance of an adapter account within the broader discourse of adaptation. This conclusion provides a summary of my findings in each of these areas.

Firstly, I discuss textures within the existing critical terrain of adaptation that have restricted potential developments. Then I provide a summative account of my insider model, its dual lens approach and the mechanisms that enable its critical penetration. I examine the impact of circumstances that surrounded *The Ebbingtide Project*: how the environment in which I wrote the play dictated rhythms of my work, how the pedagogic brief and site-specific exigencies helped shape the work, how being author of the novel *and* adapter of the play affected decision-making and created a unique coloration of 'fidelity'. I provide retrospective analysis of the overall transformative arc of the project, opining on the 'laudability' of decisions. Finally, I reflect upon the significance of insider accounts and, with reference to my own findings, the potential developments that may occur within the field.

CRITICAL CURRENTS AND RESTRICTIVE TENDENCIES

In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I investigated the major currents flowing through the critical discourse surrounding adaptation. I began with some preliminary observations about the broad field of adaptation study: that although it was bubbling with intellectual ferment, it was also habitually checking its own pulse; this inherent insecurity emanating from a perception that it is the bastard offspring of an ill-fated marriage between literature and film studies. These comments are worth re-noting here, as I lay *The Ebbingtide Project* down within this large and lumpy disciplinary bed.

Adaptation theory has for too long allowed itself to play the marginal outsider struggling for disciplinary legitimacy. Insecurity has driven many of the agendas within its development. The apparently never-ending preoccupation with fidelity is

one. The need to garb analysis in the appearance of scientific objectivism is another. Bluestone's early claim for a methodology that rigorously examined his filmic *specimens* through microscopic superimposition was innovative and admirable. But scratch the skin of McFarlane's narratological project, some forty years later, and we still find the same aspirational imprimatur of *objective* truth. Murray's claim that adaptation theory is still suffering from methodological stasis holds some truth here.

As diverse as it is, the discourse surrounding adaptation still needs to open its critical aperture to encompass the different *types* of adaptation that actually exist. Historically, we still seem locked into a novel to film paradigm. The term *adaptation* has almost become synonymous with this single genre. In this respect, I have been heartened by the recent contributions of theatrical practitioners like Janis Balodis and Mike Alfreds, who together, form a very interesting and promising composite of creative, critical and practical theatrical wisdom. Proportionally, though, across the broad terrain of adaptation theory, theirs are still voices in the wilderness.

Significantly, too, despite Murray's observation that adaptation study is giddily reflexive, it still suffers from the scarring of its annexation to its parent field of English literature. Its critical inheritance of dissolving authorship – the legacy of Barthes, Foucault, Wimsatt and Beardsley – along with generations of intertextually oriented theorists, has resulted in a strangely blank reluctance to admit adaptation practice and the voice of the insider into its critical arena. This may, as Gay McAuley observes, simply be part of a more general resistance to allowing creators and their messy processes into the neat confines of critical analysis. But in the specific domain of adaptation, I would venture another possible, or perhaps adjunct, reason for this exclusion.

One of the traits of disciplinary insecurity I have observed – one, again, arising from the innate sense of illegitimacy buried in its genetic code – is its overzealous preoccupation with viewing itself as the next great teleological project. This tendency views any new innovation as cancelling out all that went before it. In advocating a sociological model, for instance, Murray gives swingeing criticism to the case study, the comparison and text-based analysis: as if killing off these existing modes of analysis were necessary in order for her new frame to gain critical traction. Similarly, the advent of relational ways of looking at adaptation, ones that rely on notions of authors being 'dead', have proved strongly resistant to allowing adapter intent into critical frames.

But adaptation theory is not a religious crusade. It is an academically focused field of study with a long and diverse history. Not a young bastard offspring, but a mature and legitimate one. Rather than leaving dead critical carcasses by the side of its developmental superhighway, it would do well to take stock of the vast array of analytical instruments it has already amassed. Perhaps doing so would open up the possibility that one of the long neglected areas of critical ferment lies in the intersection between critical analysis and creative endeavour.

The Ebbingtide Project, with its aperture squarely set at the voice of the insider, lies at the oscillating point of this intersection. In my earlier discussion of medium specific analysis, I made mention of Noel Carroll's view that mediums are more fluid than we often consider them; indeed, that they *adapt* according to the *purpose* for which they are being used. By way of analogy, I would argue that the discourse of adaptation is a kind of medium, one that can morph and adapt to suit new forms and purposes, the intentional voice of the adapter being one. To return to our Darwinian metaphor, perhaps the result of adaptive evolution is diversity, not holocaust.

THE EBBINGTIDE PROJECT **AND THE INSIDER MODEL**

It was a natural development for me in *The Ebbingtide Project*, having located the critical lacuna of the missing voice of the adapter, to then construct a model capturing it. This created the second domain of investigation, the insider model. To penetrate deep into the recesses of creative decision-making one needs to look further than the opaque skin of the artefact. One needs to consciously reflect upon the creative practice that took place *during* the work. The real issue here lay in constructing a model that would capture both the creative decision-making inherent in the endeavour and the informing context in which these decisions were made.

The Ebbingtide Project creates two lenses for analytical penetration. Its *circumstantial lens* situates the project in its creative setting. It describes the mix of circumstances that formed the creative brief. It provides an informing framework around the intentions I had, around the decisions I made and the actions I took. It illuminates the causal relationship between context, process and outcome. In this respect, it resembles Murray's broad based sociological model, which examines factors influencing adaptations, adjusted to the smaller and more localised industry of my own theatrical adaptation.

The other perspective involves a longitudinal study of the play's evolution, *the linear insider lens*, capturing, in its first-person voice, the volatile gestational journey of the play through the eyes of the adapter. Its penetrative power derives from my own proximity to the volatile regions of creative decision-making – my own arts practice. It is a proximity that provides transparency into the deep regions of creative decision-making. It harnesses the technical knowledge of the adapter plying their craft within the shifting terrain of theatrical adaptation. The acuity of this linear lens is that it reflects the play's *own* genesis. It is at once neat, ordered, well planned, timely, pragmatic, messy, divergent, digressive, alternatively doubtful and optimistic, arriving miraculously at its uncertain destination with precarious, breathless poise.

The Ebbingtide Project is a closely observed *case study*. It makes *comparison* between different aspects of the novel and the play. It employs *close textual analysis* within the specific context of remediation. It uses *medium specific analysis* to explain the logic behind transformational decisions. It uses an overarching trope of *translation* to describe the way aspects of the novel found *equivalence* in their theatrical counterparts. It discusses *narrative structures* in the novel and the ways these were modified to suit the play. It borrows from the *sociological turn* to describe the context in which the adaptation took place. All of these different instruments are drawn from existing frames of adaptation. *The Ebbingtide Project's* point of difference is that they are being used with a new critical focus: creative process. The voice of this process is the adapter as *creative insider*. The premise for this research is that creative process, the decisions that comprise it, and the intentional action of the adapter can be used as the basis of critical exploration.

THE IMPACT OF SURROUNDING CIRCUMSTANCE UPON THE WORK

In *The Ebbingtide Project* surrounding circumstances functioned as a *creative brief*, impacting upon almost every aspect of the work. From the outset of the project, I had a vague idea that this would be so, but could not have envisaged how all-encompassing the relationship between circumstance, process, and outcome would be. Having time to reflect upon the project has given me certain insights into this relationship.

To begin with, the long arc of my own drafting of the script – working in short bursts for a gestation period that spread over a number of years – really evolved out of my own academic rhythms as a teacher and director of student productions. Teaching

twenty to twenty-five contact hours a week resulted in a writing regime that was specifically designed to fit into the 'spaces' around this weekly teaching routine. For me, this meant writing primarily on weekends and holidays. Working in this way influenced the kind of play I produced.

The *Sea Journey* scenes, for example, evolved slowly and were worked in a very literal kind of way. The conservative adapting approach I took to them arose, in part, from a need to find a way of keeping the immersive flow of writing within this intermittent regime. Working through the novel's maritime material in a very ordered and literal way seemed the best method for achieving this. The Irish story, on the other hand, evolved more quickly and was the result of a sporadic and compacted work process[143]. The different stylistic textures in each of the two parts of the play may indeed reflect the two very different approaches I took to them, approaches that arose out of the time limitations imposed by my work situation at the Arts Academy.

Rehearsals were conducted according to university scheduling. Within the university's yearly cycle of two semesters, students undertake one production per semester. Rehearsals for these are run in conjunction with daily skills classes and take up only one and a half days of their learning week. This meant that the rehearsal cycle for *Ebbingtide* was spread over ten weeks. I wrote the play with this kind of temporal rehearsal frame in mind. The play's structural form – with upwards of one hundred short scenes – was designed to fit in with this fragmented rehearsal format. Writing short scenes meant that I could more easily manage them during the rehearsal phase of the work.

I also drafted the play in a modular form – whereby scenes could be either omitted or worked in different sequences – to give me greater freedom in rehearsals. I was consciously writing a work that could be literally pulled apart and worked on by multiple groups of actors in different rehearsal spaces. I wrote the play in two separate halves to accommodate the two different student groups I knew I would be working with. Script drafts were also heavily notated with stage directions, consciously designed in this way to give the young actors clear indications of action I intended. I hoped this would assist them in their private off-the-main-floor rehearsals. The ultimate length of the play was partly due to the nature of the source work, a long

[143] Whilst my first forays into the Irish family scenes were undertaken early on in the project, my Irish world was very much determined and shaped in the three weeks of my crammed Irish sojourn during university term break of September 2013. The full draft of *Part 1 – Ireland* was completed in my Christmas break of 2013 – 2014, some three months after this.

prose narrative. But it was in equal measure due to the performance situation I was writing for, a cast of more than thirty student actors with a high percentage of female actors. This factor was augmented by principles of equity operating at Federation University, which meant that roles needed to be written and distributed as evenly as possible.

There is an adjunct point to be made here. As a performance educator, I try to create productions that utilise actors' bodies. Producing this kind of theatre has become almost second nature to me. This imperative is ably assisted by budgetary constraints. Performative textures of my productions orientate around fast-moving scenes, where large numbers of bodies arrive and disappear in an instant, as different locations and atmospheres manifest and dissolve. The Black Box Theatre space in Ballarat enabled and assisted this stylistic dynamic in *Ebbingtide*. It also allowed me to texture the play with strong elements of figurative luxuriance. These are the powerful ingredients of theatre stripped to its essential minimum. A tree in a cemetery, the claustrophobic space in a doctor's infirmary, the giddy heights of a ship's crow's nest, a phaeton moving along a country road, a workhouse dead-pit; all were conjured by actors through action and dialogue. This kind of theatrical portability is a manifestation of the crossroad between panoramic action, pedagogic imperative and economic necessity.

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOURCE NOVEL

It is impossible, of course, to consider the influence of surrounding circumstances without factoring in the influence of the most intrinsic governor of the project: the source novel. The fact that I had written it meant that I had an unusual degree of intimacy with it. No doubt, this intimacy was a major reason for me using it as the basis for the play. But, of course, there were others. I wanted to write something relevant to the current refugee situation in Australia. The story was, I felt, strongly resonant in this regard. I also needed a story that would lend itself to the theatrical situation into which I was writing the piece: thirty young student actors. Being the novel's author and parent I was acutely acquainted not only with its form and substance, but also its potential strength as a theatrical donor. As I argue in Chapter 4, the novel was already encoded with a strong theatrical imprimatur. This clearly played a large part in my final decision to use the story as the source for the adaptation.

The generic term 'source novel' has particular significance here. To me, being

creatively inside both novel and play, I had a rather unique vantage of both. In this sense, I am the voice of a unique conversation between the two works. Add to this the fact that the novel, being unpublished, was still in some senses an unfinished work, and the complexity of the relationship between the two deepens. What I was dealing with as an adapter in *The Ebbingtide Project* were two works that were essentially fluid in composition. Or rather, I was evolving a play from a novel that was, to me, still fluxive and unfinished. This, in no small degree, gave the relationship between the novel and the play its uniquely open complexion. It enabled me to see the novel as both *origin* and *point of departure*.

For instance, I always regarded the story about a group of Irish orphans travelling out to Australia on a boat as integral to the play. From the outset, it formed a strong locus for my adaptive work. It was an *origin*: a place of beginning. And yet, early in the project I realised – with respect to the Irish famine story – I would need to diverge, and diverge radically from the account I had written in the novel. This posed an adaptive dilemma. If I were to create a rich account of this part of Bridget's story in the play, I would need to regard the novel's account as a mere *point of departure*. And I did, in the process creating an entirely new world from the few small fragments of Bridget's story the novel contained.

The dilemma I describe here is one faced by most adapters: how faithful to be to the original. In my case, it created what I can only describe as a rather peculiar tension in the work. On the one hand, my need to be faithful manifested in a quite literal translation of the original sea story, one that eventually became Part 2 of the play. On the other hand, a radical departure from the original Irish background story eventually resulted in Part 1 of the play. This latter impulse towards variance was no doubt aided and abetted by the status of the novel as unpublished work. Being unpublished and therefore, in my mind, unfinished, seemed to give me more licence to vary from the account I had written in the novel.

AUTHOR *AND* ADAPTER

The tension between faithfulness and variance from an original source text is resolved according to context and proclivity of individual adapters. If we accept that no adaptation can keep perfect fidelity with its original – as I do – then we must also accept it will therefore contain degrees of both faithfulness *and* variance. But being

author of the novel and adapter/creator of the play, how different was my own experience of this fidelity issue?

Fidelity in conventional critiques of adaptation is derived from the audience's experience of the novel as a *known t*ext. Viewing the adaptation in this way, as a bad object, was never going to be an issue in *The Ebbingtide Project*. Whilst my audience may have been familiar with the general background of the Irish famine, the novel's story – Bridget's story – was unknown to them. They received it as a *cleanskin* narrative. So I was free from the stigma usually attached to a conventional framework of fidelity.

And yet fidelity nonetheless pursued me in ways I had not foreseen. As author/adaptor, I was both defender and liberator of the novel. I enacted this conflict constantly. In the play, for instance, I found myself wanting to retain the linguistic lyricism of the novel's sea journey. I justified this by arguing – to myself – that I should retain it in the play because it was inherently part of the heightened textures of emotional displacement the girls were experiencing on the boat. If it had been part of the novel, then surely, I reasoned, it must also be part of the play. In retrospect, I am not at all sure about the decision. When I made it, I was already drafting scenes for the earlier Irish material with a much flatter, more prosaic style. I knew these would ultimately clash with the *Sea Journey* scenes, but I imported the lyricism anyway. I never resolved the issue, at least not to my satisfaction. Looking back, my defence of its stylistic inclusion may have stemmed from my overly close proximity to the novel's material. As its author I chose to defend it, rather than face what felt like the much more difficult decision of letting it go.

The decision shows a novelist's inclination to keep faith with the original. This kind of fidelity is personal, intimate. It involves making decisions that barter between one's own relationship with both originating text and the adaptation. As an adapter, I made many decisions like this. Some were right. Some were wrong. I tried to keep my adaptive compass headed towards creating a new work that would stand on its own merits in its new performative environment. But a natural inclination to protect the original was ever-present, at times overbearingly so.

THE TRANSFORMATIONAL ARC AND THE VOICE OF THE INSIDER

Chapter 5 contains a linear narrative account of *The Ebbingtide Project*. It provides strong evidence that it is not only possible to record the voice of the insider, but that such a narrative may yield strong illumination into the longer gestational arc of adaptation and the processes that comprise it. Perhaps more significantly, such a narrative injects the all-important dimension of creative decision-making into critical thinking. My linear account suggests that it is possible to break this transformational arc into distinct phases, albeit with an understanding that some may overlap or occur simultaneously. Each phase reflects a range of different concerns, those relating to the subjects arising from that particular activity. Sequentially, they move inevitably towards the final artefacts of script and performance. Taken together, they form a matrix of decision-making that forms the creative underlay of the work.

Leaving Phase 1 aside for a moment, what significance do the *other* phases have in the adaptation scheme? In Phase 2, with its focus on a quite literal rendering of the novel's sea voyage material, I was concerned mainly with issues of style and remediation. In one sense, this phase and its content, being the most conservative in its adaptive approach, more closely resembles the kind of commentary usually associated with conventional accounts of adaptation. It deals with stylistic dimensions: how elements of the novel found their theatrical equivalents.

Phase 3, on the other hand, deals more with the larger issues of the new Irish famine story and decisions involved in composing it. This particular sub-story of the linear narrative reads quite differently to the preceding phase. Its textures belong almost to a different kind of journey, one not merely concerned with remediation, but with devising new work. I note, with some irony, that although the formulation of my new Irish world was the area of greatest trepidation for me as an adapter, the tone of this phase, more than any other, is filled with the excitement of new discovery, of journeying to uninhabited territory, of surprise, and oddly synchronous happenstance.

Surprisingly, too, although Phase 3 concerned the greatest departure from the novel, it also contains some of the deepest insights into the mind of the adapter. It exposes the greatest degree of fallibility, with the realisation that the Irish world I had thus far created was, indeed, lacking. Ironically, the most desperate of decisions emanating from it – the decision to travel to Ireland in search of *my* Irish world – was also what I now regard as one of the most important. From it, came the clachan, the Big House, and the entire foundations of Bridget's back-story. The textures of the

narrative in this phase are filled with rich veins of inspiration and causation, showing links between events, impressions, images I was experiencing, ideas I was developing and what would effectively become the creative bedrock of the first half of the play.

Phase 4 exposes the actual process of stringing story threads together. It is a portrait in miniature of the actual drafting process: the preparation to write, bringing together various elements and plot threads, the daily grind of writing, the unexpected digressions and diversions from the writing plan. Finally, this phase shows the caressing of material to structural form and thematic unity. It deals with the issue of Sarah and her story resolution, how this arose from the novel and the solution I proposed. More than anything, it shows how certain decisions I made in the novel – decisions I was never entirely happy with – were given new life and form in the play. How other symbols, like the moon, the globe and the tree were all transposed into the play's performative world.

Finally, Phase 5 describes the movement from textual draft to rehearsal. Rereading it, I am vaguely amused by all the effort that went into creating what amounted to a few animals onstage. I am also struck, in a different and quite profound way, by how much the production owed to the student actors who brought it to life. Transposing a novel into a play always poses representational issues, none more so than a play setting much of its action onboard a nineteenth century sailing ship. In this respect, the rehearsal phase was an adaptive testing ground. I owe much to the boundless energy of the student cast who so willingly threw themselves into the task.

In this discombobulated overview of each phase, I have mysteriously left Phase 1 until last, for a reason. It demonstrates very clearly how each phase can affect others that follow. It also illustrates how adaptation often resists the neat and well-intentioned ordering of adapters. Phase 1 was *meant* to be a simple appraisal of the novel's adaptogenicity, a preliminary survey of the novel as a donor text. But something quite unforeseen occurred. Looking at the novel's twin narrative structure led to me cutting William from the play. This decision had significant impact upon *all* later stages of the project.

I had originally intended to take a quite linear approach to reworking the novel: adapting it chapter-by-chapter, scene-by-scene. But cutting William from the story exposed the weakness of my existing famine story. Suddenly, in 'unchartered waters', I resolved to rewrite new famine material for the play from scratch. At the same time as I was doing preliminary planning for this, I decided to begin a more conservative

approach to the existing sea voyage material. So what had been a simple plan for a single linear pathway of adaptation soon became a twin-threaded activity, one that effectively forged the shape of phases 2 and 3.

Why did I take this twin approach? Reviewing my linear narrative account reveals conflicting impulses at play. Clearly, I was aware that cutting William from the play would have serious repercussions. Yet I had no real idea what these repercussions would be. My response to the high degree of uncertainty this radical departure from the novel engendered in me was to seek out the 'safe ground' of the novel's sea voyage. Working on the *Sea Journey* scenes at this point was a way of maintaining confidence in the project itself. So, whilst I began formulating my new Irish material for the play – a relatively *unknown* enterprise – I quelled my adapter insecurities by reworking the *known* material of the novel's sea journey.

What do I make of this dual impulse of seeking refuge in the familiar in order to assuage my fears of departing too radically from the original? Well, superficially, I was probably responding to a simple maxim: the best-made plans of adapters often go awry. More interestingly, though, I think it demonstrates the real nature of creative decision-making: that it is highly fluxive and prone to contingency. Procedurally, the creative practitioner must keep moving and adjusting to the unexpected twists and turns that are part and parcel of the evolving work; 'adapt' might be a better term.

LAUDABLE ACTION?

Anna Pakes' notion of *intentional action* is apposite as a way of describing my work processes and the decisions that comprise it[144]. A creative endeavour like *The Ebbingtide Project* has intentional action at its heart. By this, I mean that artists act intentionally to create their art. These acts are often a result of incremental decisions being made along the procedural pathway. Each decision is measured against potential outcome. This is where the concept of laudability comes into play. Each creative decision is subject to a progressive assessment of laudability. At decision-making junctions the artist asks one of a number of questions, each related to the issue of laudability. Is it a good decision? Does it solve the issue at hand? What is the likely outcome of it for the work? Will it create a better fit for the play?

My adapter narrative reflects this progressive laudability testing. In its broadest

[144] I refer here back to Anna Pakes' conceptualization of intentional action in Chapter 3, in which she uses it to frame phronesis in creative decision-making (Pakes para. 4).

form, my intention was to create a stage play from a novel I had written, one that would be performed by a group of student actors as part of their second year of study. Each and every action I took over the entire duration of the project, each and every decision I made along the way, was designed to serve this end. At this most basic of intentional levels the project was, I suppose, a success: I adapted my novel, I created a play script and it was rehearsed and performed by the group of students I intended it for. But on a deeper level, I ask myself other related questions: Was it the play I intended to write? Was the creative process effective? Were the creative decisions I made during it the right ones?

Was it the play I intended to write? In some ways, yes, in others, no. One of my original intentions was to write a play that would resonate with contemporary conversations about refugees. In this respect, the play that emerged from the long process of adaptation was thematically close to the one I had envisaged. In other ways, though, diverging so drastically from the novel's focus on William, ultimately led to a fairly radical departure from the play I had originally conceived.

Perhaps a more significant question should be: did this radical departure diminish the play? The answer to this, at least from my perspective as insider, is that it did not. Cutting William from the play certainly stymied one potential thread of action, one that might, for instance, have led to a contemporary narrator. But it also set in train a whole new area of creative research: the Irish story. In the long run, focussing on the Irish strand of the story opened up many more avenues of dramatic possibility than it closed down. *Part 1: Ireland* was certainly the stronger for my having to delve more deeply into the Irish famine world. It opened up a richer, more populous Irish world than the original novel offered. This certainly served me well within the context of the large cast I was writing for.

But was the creative process I undertook to write and rehearse the play effective? Well, again, the answer is not so simple or clear-cut. I spent a lot of time early in the writing process drafting the *Sea Journey* scenes, which came sequentially in the play later than the Irish famine material. As I explained in Chapter 4, I did this because I was uncertain as to whether the novel's maritime material would work in its new theatrical medium. Looking back at it, I perhaps should have simply assumed that it would. If I had, I would probably have confronted the shortcomings of my famine material earlier in the piece. Focussing on this earlier, might have allowed me to work on events sequentially as they unfolded in the play, rather than in reverse, as I did. But

this line of reasoning is ultimately hypothetical, and the gift of hindsight deceptive. I might just as well argue that working on the *Sea Journey* scenes first better equipped me, and gave me the confidence I needed to write the new famine material from scratch.

Another point on the 'imperfect' process of evolving the play: in the middle of 2013 I reached a crisis of faith. I had done my best to develop my Irish world. But whatever processes I had undertaken did not seem to be bearing fruit. The decision to travel to Ireland came more out of desperation than anything else. I had no real plan with it, beyond a vague hope that it would help me to fill in some of the blanks in my Irish story. Strangely, perhaps, it was this act of desperation – along with a few random and unexpected experiences during the first few days of my trip – that set in motion a string of major developments in the play's evolution.

In this respect, perhaps the most *laudable* dimensions of my process could simply be summed up as those where I was able to yield to the unexpected invocations of chance and instinct, the fateful convergence of luck and inspiration. Perhaps the broader point here is the metric upon which we judge process. Is it to be assessed on the basis of its neatness and developmental completeness, or even its prophetic ability to foresee and head off potential mistakes before they occur? Or is it some other standard, perhaps its capacity to cater for contingency and the messiness that inevitably seem to flow from creative endeavour? I would argue something more akin to the latter.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AN INSIDER ACCOUNT WITHIN THE BROADER DISCOURSE OF ADAPTATION

The problem with conventional outsider accounts of adaptation is the opacity that results from the distance between creative decision-making and critical commentary. Insider perspectives bypass this distance by providing commentary that is embedded in the creative act.

But for the insider, time can create opacity too. Viewing the DVD of the final Second Year performance of *Ebbingtide* a while back, I was struck by how time had dulled the memory of an event that once felt so intimate, so close. I lived and breathed the play's evolution. And yet, watching the performance on the small screen of my laptop seemed to reduce the experience. It might have been the DVD itself: so rarely do they capture the moment and immediacy of theatre. Watching, I felt an odd mixture

of familiarity and estrangement. Familiarity, because every word, every move, every theatrical nuance amounted to a decision I had made, each decision the product of careful consideration and negotiation. Estrangement, because many of those decisions were now fading from view, their ghosted residue now inhabiting the two-dimensional space of this vastly inferior filmic record.

As an artefact in a completely different medium, the DVD will suffice as a resembling product of what took place, both on and off the rehearsal room floor. But, like its counterpart – the performance script – it really gives little insight into either the processes that evolved over the long gestational arc of the play's creation, or the thousands of decisions that were made to produce it. On this front, even with the volume cranked up, it is eerily mute. Discussions of adaptive process must come from a different source. Even a cursory read of my linear narrative reveals dimensions of process usually hidden from view. Read against the circumstantial map of *The Ebbingtide Project* a complex and, I think, useful analytical portrait emerges, one that potentially opens new vistas of critical exploration.

REFLECTIONS AND PROJECTIONS

Looking back over the project I can but reflect upon some of these possible seeds of critical exploration, hoping they may find new life beyond the pages of this dissertation. In conclusion, I will briefly mention some of the more obvious.

The circumstantial perspective I used to define the context of the project could bear a different kind of examination. For my purposes, I chose to limit my study to particular factors that I felt most strongly influenced the evolution of the play. A more narrowly focussed study, might choose a different matrix of circumstance. It would be possible to draw a circumstantial map that was either wider and/or sharper in relief. It might also be possible to narrow down the field of exploration in order to isolate different circumstantial dimensions of the work, dimensions such as use of space, working with large casts, crafting narrative-based work within the black box medium.

In terms of my linear insider perspective, I chose to make a longitudinal sweep over the long arc of *Ebbingtide's* genesis. I arranged this into phases to depict the various evolutionary increments of its whole creative arc. A narrower locus of examination might also bear luscious critical fruit.

In Phase 1, for instance, much could be made of the first impressions of the novel upon the adapter; how these impressions find their way, in various forms, into

the final work. Any of the elements I cover in Phase 2 could be singled out for individual attention: working with lyrical language; converting diegetic narrative into staged action; exploring figurative luxuriance in the two mediums; transposing psychological states into embodied physical action – all of these are potentially rich ores of insider material. In Phase 3, I describe the portent of my 2013 Irish experiences and their impact upon the way Part 1 of the play developed. A differently oriented study, one focussing solely on the lived experience of the adapter, might choose to illumine the complex web of autobiographical traces running through the entire play; or, as I recounted in Phase 4 with respect to *The Blooding* scene, the higgledy piggledy map of unplanned developments and happenstance that form part of most writing days. Finally, in Phase 5, I describe a few representative examples of the way rehearsals influenced the textures of the play. This lens could ably be deployed in critical exploration of the nexus between script and performance, and the collaborations that forge them in the latter stages of evolving theatrical adaptations. I have purposely not touched upon the performance season in my production. The season in Ballarat was brief and little development of both script and performance took place within it. But under different circumstances, where the performance season was considerably longer, this could usefully be incorporated into critical insider frames.

Perhaps, here, in a tone mixed with excitement and lament, I will conclude hypothesising about potential future developments in insider perspectives of theatrical adaptation. Suffice to say, *The Ebbingtide Project* may be over, but the new critical terrain it inhabits will, I hope, continue expanding for some time to come.

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APPENDIX 1:
PROGRAM NOTES FOR THE 2014 PRODUCTION OF *EBBINGTIDE*

The Nature of 2nd Year Theatre Practice - Projects

Theatre Practice, or 'Projects' as it is sometimes called, is a strand within the 2nd Year Acting Program that facilitates a practically based application of other skills strands in the course. In the relative safety of a studio-based learning environment, students explore the processes of rehearsal and performance with a view to developing their professional practice. The production you see tonight is very much focussed on actors developing elements of their craft. To accomplish this, the stage has been stripped bare. What remains is a studio piece, or a 'Black Box' show - a bare stage with actors on it. Production elements – set, lights, sound, costume, props – have been pared back to a minimum. You'll notice that roles have been doubled and the work is configured around the use of bodies, voice and space. All of this is part of the learning process for the actors and forms the style of the studio piece. Working in small teams, students are asked to participate in the decision-making process involved in each element of the production. The emblematic costumes over basic black rehearsal gear, movement, music and sound, poster, program notes have all been evolved through this collaborative ensemble method. The aim is to allow students to explore all of the dimensions that contribute to creating the performance.

The 2014 Project: Ebbingtide

I first came across the story of a group of Irish orphan girls who travelled out to Australia during the Irish Famine, when I was visiting Sydney's Hyde Park Barracks; which was, for a time, an immigration depot for them. More than four thousand women – many still in their mid-teens – were brought out to this country on specifically assigned emigrant ships. The majority, through famine-related circumstance, were already part of an ailing and overcrowded Irish workhouse system. The story of their sea-journey stayed with me; and, as I began to ponder what it must have been like, another question began to take hold: what cruel circumstance had led them to the workhouse? The play you see tonight is the result of such enquiry. It is not history as such, although much of it draws on events purported to have taken place. But is rather the creative and dramatic imagining on such possibilities. Thirty-one 2nd Year Actors in training have joined me in this endeavour; who, confronted with a basic script in the first week of rehearsal, have added their individual and collective imagining to it. The result is a play in two parts: Part 1 – depicting the Irish story during the Great Famine and Part 2 – portraying the orphan's ship voyage out to Australia. For teaching purposes, the students have been divided into two groups, each responsible for one of the parts. The groups rehearsed separately and in whole ensemble sessions. The work has been hard, intense and, I think, fruitful. For their boundless energy, resourcefulness and application in bringing this new work to life, I thank the 2nd Year Company wholeheartedly. Please enjoy the fruits of their labour – Ross Hall

APPENDIX 2:
DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF SECOND YEAR *THEATRE PRACTICE* PROJECTS

- Creative dimensions of the production are fused with pedagogic agendas
- Rehearsal schedules must conform to school timetables: split rehearsal groups
- Staged in the Post Office (Black Box) theatre at Federation University's Arts Academy
- A large black rectangular playing space encapsulating actors and audience
- Space surrounded by black curtains or bare walls
- Multiple entrance and exit points for actors
- Budget of less than $200 (excluding wages for myself and technical crew)
- Casting decisions subject to principles of equity
- A large cast of up to thirty-five actors
- Actors performing multiple roles
- Minimal set design and props
- Actors perform in basic stage 'Blacks', with minimal costuming being used emblematically
- Use of narrators to accompany other stage action
- Use of group 'chorus' elements
- Dominant stylistic theme of embodiment: bodies employed to denote animate and inanimate objects; to evoke place, mood, time, weather, elements of space
- Strong use of vocal dimensions: soundscape and singing
- Multiple points of onstage action; with localised focus of action occurring simultaneously around the space
- Actors onstage throughout the performance – watching from the sides of the stage as action unfolds.
- Actors contributing to design, set, costume, sound, music
- Actors forming part of collaborative explorative team with respect to textual development and performance evolution

APPENDIX 3:
AN EXAMPLE OF AN HISTORICAL FRAGMENT FROM THE *EBBINGTIDE* NOVEL

The narrative of the *Ebbingtide* novel was peppered with historical fragments, which would ultimately be contextualised for the reader when William arrived at the Hyde Park Barracks museum. At this point in the story, we realise that these historical fragments form part of an installation there describing the Irish orphan girls' plight during the famine, and their subsequent journey out to Australia on emigration ships. In the novel, these fragments served to create historical veracity. The reader would also ultimately come to understand that William was using them to construct his own imagined narrative about one of the Irish orphans: Bridget. Following, is one such fragment:

TROUBLE ON SOME OF THE EARLY BOATS

The decision to emigrate young Irish girls from workhouses to Australia had at first seemed a good idea. The workhouses were horrendously overcrowded and the Colony was in short supply of both indentured servants and eligible wives in waiting. But all did not go to plan. There was trouble onboard some of the early ships laden with the girls. Word had been leaked to the press that some had been unruly on the boats. Married women and prostitutes were alleged to be among them. On one of these early ships, The Earl Grey*, a Surgeon Superintendent, handpicked by the English Emigration Commissioners themselves, had let the girls run amuck. To make matters worse, he made a fuss about it. There was a very embarrassing public inquiry. To compound matters, elements within the colony, already sensitive about the wholesale importation of Irish Catholics into the country, seized upon the occasion to publicly denigrate the scheme. Many were beginning to question the political wisdom of such an endeavour* (2009 *Ebbingtide* Novel 29).

APPENDIX 4:
THE PLACE OF REMEMBERING IN *EBBINGTIDE*

One of the most persistent thematic threads running throughout the entire *Ebbingtide* endeavour was the idea that the emigrant experience consisted of two lives: one life *before* emigration and one *after*. Most powerful was the thought that the emigrants' new life was pervaded by memories of their old one back in Ireland. This begged the question: what must those memories have been like for these Irish orphan girls, inculcated as they were with the unthinkable horrors of the famine? The answer, for me, lay in a single observation made by Patrick O'Farrell in *The Irish in Australia*: 'remembering was more important, more real, than any futile effort to imitate or re-create what has existed at home' (O'Farrell 20). This idea would find its ultimate expression in Bridget's determined effort to fashion memories that would assuage her own grief.

In order to give Bridget's memories flesh in the play, I began exploring different forms these memories might take. The most significant source of inspiration in this regard was David Fitzpatrick's *Oceans of Consolation (Personal Accounts of Irish Migration To Australia)*. Fitzpatrick's history is one of personal voices and the letters Irish emigrants wrote back home to Ireland. The correspondence is brimming with nostalgia, the deep yearning of understated longing and the pragmatic acceptance of separation as the cost of new life. Conspicuously absent from the letters Fitzgerald has compiled are the replies and correspondences from 'home'. They are simply blanks in the narrative.

The notion of family members, their lives separated by time and distance became a central concern to me as I began to piece together early impressions of the orphans and their story. This led to the idea of two sisters separated by 'oceans of consolation,' an idea that would find its ultimate expression in the play. And it was letters back home that would be one of the dramatic forms of expression between them. In Part 2 of the play I would decide to use the letters home as a way to generate Bridget's motivation to come to Australia – in search of her sister, who had come out on an earlier boat. Letters from Sarah, I decided, writing back to her sister from Australia would become a key dramatic device.

APPENDIX 5:
A SAMPLE OF THE ORIGINAL PROSE VERSION OF THE IRISH ORPHAN STORY

First Night Below

'Come below, please.'

There was no intention to disobey Matron, but the wave had already taken hold, its magnificent power dismantling any attempt to control its effect upon her. It was approaching from the stern, beyond the Captain, beyond the helmsman, so high and wide it held no depth or motion, appearing like a giant… mountain… from out of nowhere. For a moment, the horizon lifted as the mass of it peeled back a portion of the sky. Then the boat freefell into the valley at the foot of it, and lifted them into a screaming heaven.

The Captain thrust back his head and laughed.

'That's it, man: dead before, dead before! Straighten. Straighten.'

'Aye, aye, Captain,' replied the helmsman, his body coiled and spinning the wheel to keep them running before the swell.

Rain began to fall, its first splatters plonking onto the wooden deck. The Captain blinked as drops hit his face and opened his mouth, allowing them fall onto his tongue. Satisfied with the taste, he took the newspaper from under his arm and tucked it inside his coat.

'Come below, please! Did you not hear me? We have to close the hatch.'

Matron's voice sounded more urgent, but despite best efforts lacked sufficient conviction to break the spell the storm had over the girl. The swell was rising and everyone had been brought below.

Still, Bridget wavered at the hatchway stairs.

Something gripped her left boot; strong enough to indicate Matron may have had a change of heart, or at least strengthened her resolve.

'Didn't you hear? We're all gettin' wet down here'.

Her foot was prised free of the step and she fell backwards into the darkness. There was no sense of her body during its flight, or where it landed, only darkness, warm woollen air and the smell of pine and tar mixed with vomit (2009 *Ebbingtide* Novel 67).

APPENDIX 6:
THE HYDE PARK BARRACKS
An Irish Story Unearthed and Exhumed

My first contact with the story of the Irish orphan girls was at the Hyde Park Barracks in Macquarie Street, Sydney, in the late nineteen nineties. In many respects, I owe the building itself a great debt. For it was the way my first contact with the story was experienced that later shaped both the novel and the play version of *Ebbingtide*. It was a place I would revisit on multiple occasions throughout the writing of the *Ebbingtide* play. In fact, the building itself can lay claim not only to my own initiation into the girls' lives, but that of the Australian public at large as well.

During the nineteen eighties, a decade or so before I had first entered through its front doors, the then derelict building had been scheduled for a complete renovation. But as building work commenced – as walls were peeled, as foundations were unearthed – it became clear that the collective memory inside its architectural shell was somewhat more vast and intact than the contracted builders might reasonably have expected. Within the frames of its walls, beneath the ancient sinewed boards of its floors, remnants of the many generations of the building's previous occupants began to be brought forth – as building renovation became archaeological excavation.

The explanation for how these articles came to be lodged there was as boggling as it was simple. It appears that for almost the entire life of the building (some hundred and sixty odd years) its regular human residents had been living alongside another sort of tenant – rats. Their proclivity, it seems, was not only to cohabitate, but also to collect, bowerbird fashion, as many of their neighbours' personal possessions as would fit into the crevices of the building's structures. The result was a repository of related objects – clothing and personal possessions of unimaginable scope and intimacy. As was quickly apparent, these items, along with the records of the many uses of the building, now represented a series of three-dimensional snapshots of early Australian life. What had begun as a simple renovation, now became an archaeological eureka moment – a building and its contents as time capsule.

The decision to turn the Barracks building into an architectural/historical repository/museum was a significant one. Until the exhumation of the historical artefacts the Irish orphan story had remained relatively obscure – if not a deliberate act of systemic erasure. But with the establishment of the museum a raft of material

surfaced, chronicling the Irish orphan girls and their occupation of the building during its time as an immigration depot. Perhaps as significant as the story itself was the way in which it was presented by the museum and the way I first experienced it – as an installation.

The work then, in this regard, became not so much an historical rendering as the transitory viewing of a story uncovered, held up to the light, examined and reflected upon. The original novel tried to capture the fragmentary nature of this first encounter, something the play still reverberates with. The novel's central character, William, enters the museum housing the installation in much the same way I did. The girls' story comes to him in fragments and images. Like me, he will try to piece together an older nineteenth century reality from existing pieces of bric-a-brac: those belonging to the girls. But time has had its way. The pieces are fragile and encased in lit glass, like the recovered remnants I first saw in the Hyde Park Barracks museum on that day of first contact.

Stylistically, I was interested in the way these assembled fragments might manifest in the play[145]. I began to see these fragile reminders of past lives as briefly glimpsed 'moments', moments that could be suspended in the glass case of memory. In *Ebbingtide* moments become suspended still points in the play. Faced with the extinction of her life in Ireland the central character, Bridget O'Conor, clings to the fragments she can remember of it. But like all memories, they are fragile, partial, and fading. As such, she clings desperately to them. Her first and last words in the play came to be: 'I will remember this moment... forever'. The lens of the moment becomes the dramatic unit of action externally and internally experienced. Theatrically expressed, moments are used to create overlapping dimensions of reality – past, present and imagined.

[145] As it transpired many of these fragments of first contact with the Irish orphan story found their way into the play: the bible is Bridget's constant companion on her sea voyage out to Australia; the bonnets became prominent signatures of the girls' sea clothing; the globe is positioned as a central motif in the Captain's cabin in Part 2 of the play.

APPENDIX 7:
PROSE VERSION OF *QUAYSIDE*

Earlier, quayside, with a cargo of more than a hundred Irish orphans safely onboard… (the ship) stood in readiness. There were two boats at the dock, neatly arranged end-to-end. Alongside (the orphans' boat) stood a larger ship, more obviously segregated than that of the girls, but clearly, like them, about to set forth. On its main deck a motley rabble stood looking bewildered. Some were in small family clusters; men with arms around wives, mothers nursing mewling babies, siblings wound into the folds of filthy skirts. Others, clearly without family, simply stood by themselves. All wore the expression of dazed, helpless children. Above, on the poop, richer cabined passengers were attempting a somewhat braver face, nonetheless huddled together in an over-tight wad, looking uncomfortably joyous and oddly overdressed for the occasion. Women fluttered handkerchiefs attached to palms at a crowd down on the wharf. Strands of brightly coloured paper coiled from land to ship, from ship to land. A uniformed band played music, a little too clanging, a little too gay (2013 Girls' Story – Progressive Prose Rewrite, 18).

APPENDIX 8:
REMNANTS OF BRIDGET'S IRISH STORY RETREIVED FROM THE NOVEL

- Bridget and her sister Sarah end up in a workhouse, where a Government Inspector comes to select girls who will be given assisted passage on a boat going to Australia. He chooses Sarah, the younger of the two girls. Presumably, the girls have come to the workhouse as a result of the famine. Like the other inmates of the workhouse the sisters are famine orphans.
- Later that night Bridget and Sarah discuss Sarah's departure. She doesn't want to go without Bridget, but her older sister convinces her it might be the only chance she has to get out of the workhouse. She only agrees to go when Bridget promises to follow her out to Australia on one of the later boats.
- Bridget has a bible. She is being taught to read from it by a Catholic priest, who knows her family.
- Bridget is on the boat. She states explicitly that her intention is to be re-united with her sister when she gets to Australia.
- Bridget carries the bible with her on the boat out to Australia. She consults it as a kind of divining instrument. She has been taught to do this by her mother.
- In a memory fragment of their old life before the workhouse, Bridget remembers teaching Sarah about the equator, giving her a kind of geography lesson on the 'round belly of the world'.
- Bridget remembers good times in Ireland, like being held aloft on her father's shoulders. They look up at the night sky and see the North Star. She claims it as her own, much to her father's amusement.
- Bridget remembers her mother's funeral.
- She remembers looking at her father's dead face.
- She remembers sitting under a tree with Sarah's head in her lap. She watches as a leaf falls to earth from the tree. It is a moment – one she vows not to forget.
- Bridget remembers visiting Sarah in the workhouse infirmary. She is led there by one of the workhouse sisters. She tells Bridget that her little sister, Sarah, is very sick. Bridget gets into bed with Sarah and holds her. They look up at the moon in the window.

APPENDIX 9:
MAY 28TH 2010 IRISH SCENE SKETCHES

- Scene: Early potatoes; the family are gathered; will they or won't they be right; 'bless them'.
- Scene: Landlord's man comes to warn father of the rent's due; there's another crop which he'll use to cover the rent; some sort of confrontation; rent must be paid, but they've not money and everything depends on the new crop coming through without the blight.
- Scene: Chicken coop; sisters talk about the equator; 'it's a line, silly'.
- Scene: Mother and Bridget at the seaside; family picnic before the famine; they speak of an argument between father and rent collector (an old friend).
- Scene: Bad potatoes; blue fog; 'It's the fairies, is it'; everything's gone bad; counter to early potatoes; again, maybe the family are all involved.
- Scene: Mother and Bridget; bible scene; instructions on a life.
- Scene: Bridget on Father's shoulders; North Star.
- Scene: Mother dies; father calls for a coffin; carries her on his back.
- Scene: Capstan Mill.
- Scene: Beggars on the roadside as man comes past.
- Scene: Workhouse; girls watch as bodies slide into lime pit.
- Scene: Father's forced to work on the road gang.
- Scene: Mother is sick; bury me under the tree.

  (*The Ebbingtide Project* Rough Working Notebook:
  Workbook 1, 85)

APPENDIX 10:
FINAL SCENE BREAKDOWN OF IRISH SCENES IN PHASE 4
JANUARY 2014

The following order represents a rough scenic breakdown and sequence of scenes under consideration:

Community gathering: O'Conor - Mulmitchell story is told

Grand dinner at Big House; Kitchen and

Tunnel scenes

Blooding scene and aftermath

1st Committee Meeting: Meahan

Scene between brothers (Sean and Liam) – traitor and loyalty to clachan

Rain scene; Mary's worried – a bad omen

Food depot scene

Blue Fog; the blight's back – crop failure

Eviction notices to quit

Clachan gathers to discuss

Sean pleads for his clachan

The Agent's Plan: evictions and subsidised emigration

Mollies attempt to steal gun – it's missing

Mollies bash Agent

Food depot's closed

Delegation of women to priest

Meahans leave for London in winter – London Correspondence

Leaving for Canada

O'Conor eviction

Mary's sick in scalpeen

Sisters steal turnip tops from Liam's place

Meahan returns – 2nd Committee meeting

Fever

Phaeton attack; roadside ambush – murder of the landlord

Sean on the hill

Workhouse Gates

(*The Ebbingtide Project* Rough Working Notebook 3, 80)

APPENDIX 11:
PROSE VERSION OF SARAH'S DEATH DISCLOSURE

The following scene takes place in the Irish workhouse. Bridget and her younger sister Sarah lie together:

All night I've watched over you, little one; while the moon watched over us. Its first brilliant slither crept into the Infirmary window like the promise of a smile. Now, it fills the frame of the window and is so big, so round, so bright I can hardly bear to look at it… (But you) You look so peaceful. Light sweeps across your face… tiny beads of sweat above your lip have evaporated… I search for signs of air flowing in and out, but can find none. I put my ear to your chest and hear nothing but the silence that roars between clanging bells… There's no breath. There's no beat of heart. No tide whatsoever. And your skin has cooled to the temperature of light. This is the moment of passing... And you have passed and I have not. The moment freezes and I'm trapped within it. There's no way out, no way forward... Except to deny it. The moon has stolen you from me (2013 Girls' Story – Progressive Prose Rewrite 364-365).

APPENDIX 12:
HOW THE DOG SHIRT TRANSITIONS WERE EVOLVED IN REHEARSALS OF THE SCENE *MEAT FOR MESS 9*

In the following action in the scene *Meat For Mess 9*, Bridget has come to have a piece of mutton cooked and a teapot filled with water. Ever protective of his master, Matey intervenes:

> *Ship's Galley – Day:*
> *Bridget stands at the galley entrance holding a large teapot in one hand and a piece of raw meat on a hook in the other. From inside: the sounds of pots and pans being roughly thrown about, merry singing, gruff cussing and the shrill bark of a small dog…*
> BRIDGET *(Holding out the teapot)*: Ye're supposed to fill this too.
> *A low growl emanates from his shirt.*
> COOK *(Warning)*: Matey…
> *Growl diminishes.*
> *(To Bridget)* I'm afraid you'll have to speak a little more kindly, or there'll be trouble…
> *The dog leaps onstage and comes at Bridget in a wild barking frenzy* (*Ebbingtide* Script 301; *Ebbingtide* DVD/Vimeo 2:17:06 – 2:17:17).

The above piece of action presented a number of staging problems, the major issues being how to render the *dismount* and *mount* of the dog from Cook's shirt. We blocked the scene near the edge of the stage so we could get Dylan, the actor – as Matey – onstage quickly and economically. We found in rehearsals that the magical appearance of the dog from out of Cook's shirt worked best if Dylan leapt from his offstage chair – situated quite close to where Cook was standing – onto the main stage floor. This would signify to the audience that the dog had leapt from the shirt: a trajectory that was spatially similar.

To strengthen this effect for the audience, Cook would mime the dog's position in his shirt, warning him, 'Matey…' after the initial 'growl'. We also found that

having Dylan 'growl' in full view of the audience – from his cast chair position – allowed the audience to understand the dog was momentarily both *in* the shirt *and* embodied by the actor in the chair at the side of the stage. In other words, the dog was in two places at once: inhabiting both his 'realities' simultaneously. Having established this connection between Cook and the imaginary dog in his shirt *and* Dylan in his chair as the man/dog, we were free to effect the movement of the dog from the shirt. The imaginary dog leapt out of the shirt onto the floor. At the same moment, Dylan leapt from his chair. Both landed in exactly the same spot onstage. The two realities fused. Dylan, now on his haunches as a fully embodied representation of the dog, barked wildly at Bridget. The dismount from the shirt was complete.

The sequence of chiding and barking interactions between the dog and Cook was again the product of evolving rehearsals. The elaborate sequence of interaction was designed to show the close intimacy between man and dog:

> Matey, no... *(One bark)* Nooo… *(One bark)* Back here… *(Dog protests)* Go on, get back here – Eee-up *(Dog jumps back into his shirt)* Good boy *(Dog licks up under Cook's shirt and actor disappears)* You'll get used to him. He means no harm. *(To the dog)* He's a good boyyy! *(More licks – he laughs)* (*Ebbingtide* Script 301; Ebbingtide DVD/Vimeo 2:17:17 – 2:17:40).

Throughout this sequence of action, Dylan and the actor playing Cook interacted as part of a joint reality onstage. When it came time for the dog to jump back up into Cook's shirt – mounting into the shirt – Dylan turned to look up at Cook from his floor position as the dog. At Cook's command, 'Eee-up,' Dylan quickly sprang up to a standing position directly behind or upstage of Cook. For a fraction of a second he was obscured from the audience by the larger form of Cook. The effect for this moment was that the dog had just leapt up into Cook's shirt; a momentary *collision* of realities, where it *seemed* the dog was tucked safely back in his usual place of residence. Dylan kept moving in a slow gliding tempo to his cast position a metre or so away at the side of the stage. His final interaction with Cook – the licks – were done from Dylan's position in the offstage, but visible, chair.

APPENDIX 13:
PERSONAL *EBBINGTIDE* DOCUMENTS CITED IN THIS DISSERTATION

2009 *Ebbingtide* Novel

2009 *Ebbingtide* Sea Voyage Drafts – Prose, Play and Notes

2013 *Ebbingtide* (Girls' Story) Progressive Prose Rewrites

Ebbingtide Script – 22rd October 2014 Final Draft

2009 – 2017 *The Ebbingtide Project* Rough Working Notebooks (Books 1 – 5)

2013 Ireland Travel Diary

THE EBBINGTIDE PROJECT:

The Missing Voice of the Theatrical Adapter

ROSS HALL

PART 2: THE PERFORMANCE PROJECT

EBBINGTIDE ARTEFACTS:

1. The DVD/Vimeo Of The Final Performance Of Ebbingtide – October 26th 2014
2. *Ebbingtide* Script – 22nd October 2014 Draft

ARTEFACT 1 - FILMIC RECORD OF THE PERFORMANCE

Electronic: *Ebbingtide* Vimeo of Final Performance of Ebbingtide – October 26TH 2014

http://www.vimeo.com/204977965/

Password: bu2017

Hard Copy: DVD of the Final Performance of *Ebbingtide* – October 26TH *2014*

PLEASE NOTE: THE DVD IS LOCATED ON THE BACK INSIDE SLEEVE OF PART 2.

Please Also Note: Counter/Timer References for both DVD and Vimeo are the same.

ARTEFACT 2:

EBBINGTIDE SCRIPT

22nd October 2014 Draft

Ross Hall

Part 1: Ireland

LIST OF CHARACTERS

FIVE-MILE CLACHAN

SEAN O'CONOR - Clachan elder

MARY O'CONOR - His wife

BRIDGET - Their eldest daughter

SARAH - Their youngest daughter

LIAM O'CONOR - Sean's brother

ANNE O'CONOR - His wife

OWEN FEENEY - Clachan elder and friend of Sean

MAINE FEENEY - His wife

MARTIN FEENEY - Owen and Maine's son

THADEUS MCCANN - Maine's father

DECLAN - Friend of Martin Feeney

FERGUS - Friend of Martin Feeney

ESTATE

THOMAS MEAHAN - Landlord of the estate

HONORA MEAHAN - His wife

OLIVIA MEAHAN - Their daughter

CHARLES HUNTER - The Agent of the estate

FATHER FRANCIS BRENNAN - A local Catholic priest

DR EDWARD SHANNON - A local doctor

MRS MULLARK - Big House cook

LLOYD CHAMBERS - a local merchant; MRS SYMES - a clerk; JOHNSON - Bailiff; BIDDY - a servant; WORKHOUSE MATRON; WOMAN ON ROAD

TILLING

Clachan members slowly till the fields of their blessed potato crop.

Lighting change

SWEET SILENCE

The tree in the cemetery – Day:

Bridget leans against the trunk of a tree. Sarah lies with her head in Bridget's lap.

BRIDGET *(To us)*: I will remember *this* moment. *(Looking at Sarah)* I will remember *this* moment *(She looks up)* and *this*. I'll not forget. *(Closes her eyes; opens them again)*…I 'm lookin' up at mid-afternoon sun through the mottled light of an autumnal tree: our Ma's tree in the cemetery; sittin' cross-legged with my back against its trunk. Sarah and I are together. And together we listen to stillness; anticipate rustlin' air; watch collidin' patterns of tree and sky… A gust of wind blows across us, makin' a gust shape in the tree. Inside this, I see somethin' fallin'; from Heaven, I think, because it falls so slowly. It becomes somethin' else, somethin' more recognizable: a flower dislodged by an invisible hand. It comes… it comes… tiltin' and slidin' through blue space. It is from the pratae – an early bloom from our blessed potato crop, caught by the wind and thrown into the sky. Ye reach for it *(Sarah does)* - without even openin' ye eyes, ye reach for it – and cradle it in ye hand, as God against all harm.

SARAH *(Giving it to Bridget):* (It's) for you. Put it in ye bible.

BRIDGET *(To us):* I will remember *this* moment … and *all* moments. I'll not forget them.

Lighting change

THE GATHERING

Clachan (village) – night:

A small gathering of people sit around an old man – Thadeus McCann, an elder.

THADEUS: Two mighty clans, O'Conor and Mulmitchell, did battle all throughout the ages, until our clan, the O'Conors, claimin' this place as rightfully theirs, drove out those connivin' Mulmitchells with a victory loud and strong. Twenty years passed in banishment and exile; until, together with the followers of Maguire, they did conspire to take back our land. One night under a slip 'o moon, they crept up on our moat-round castle. But word had flown before 'em. We O' Conors had already fled. But in our haste, one had been forgot. A mere babby in swaddlin' wrap had been left behind. Unaware, the Mulmitchells torched the old fortification. Now, hear, amidst the

cracklin' flame, that poor babby's plaintive cries circle the pitiful sky. But all was not stone. One amongst them – a giant of a man by the name of O'Murray – was moved by the little one's plight. *(As he recites, others quietly mouth.)* There was a warlike giant, among the listenin' throng. He gazed with face defiant, on the fire bright and strong. He rushed into the castle, and up the rocky stair. But alas, alas, he could not pass, to the burnin' infant there. Up in the burnin' chamber, forever died that scream. The fire sprang out, with wilder shout; a fiercer, ghastlier gleam. It raged and burned, and burned all night; o' hill and dale and hollow. It wept the plaintive air itself, and beckoned all to follow; until at last its vengeance spent, all silence was it then; and sank upon its grief and gloom, and all was dark again.

The story hangs upon them. Having completed his storytelling, Thadeus sits, recovering on a chair.

SEAN *(Finally)*: Well spun, ol' man; well spun.

THADEUS: It's the tale, not the tellin'.

MAINE: It lifts and lowers all at once.

THADEUS: True enough, true enough.

SARAH: Oh, how the little one always dies with the flames lickin' the sky so.

SEAN: Surely, it's sad, my girl. Surely it is.

MARY: With each tellin', how it lives again!

MAINE: Aye, Mary, and with it the lessons it begs for each and every one of us. Oh, how strongly I felt the blessed mercy of the giant O'Murray: seein' as he does that a life from any clan is worth the savin'.

The rest respond to her insight, as they do to others that follow.

MARY: Aye, and I feel all the warrin' souls somehow knitted together by the loss of that little one.

MAINE: A comin' together, ye mean, Mary?

MARY: Aye – how could ye not be so moved?

MAINE: It's a thought, Mary; and a good one too.

SARAH *(Standing)*: I see… I see…clouds, all snowy white fillin' the bluest sky that ever blessed the earth!

BRIDGET *(Matching her)*: I see… angels hoverin' with wings like the sails on tall ships!

Applause and appreciation from all at the grand vision the girls have conjured for them.

THADEUS: And you, Sean; what do you see in the story?

SEAN *(Playfully withholding)*: Ah, well now, I'm not sure if I'm ready to divulge. *(The others urge him on)* Alright, if you insist: for me on this occasion, I see how futile fightin' can be when it's just for fightin's sake.

Others respond to this wisdom. But Sean catches a disdainful look from Martin, Maine and Owen Feeney's son.

What about you Martin, what do you see in the story?

MARTIN: Well, I can't say I agree with these lessons others're findin' in it. Who are they supposed to be for, exactly?

OWEN: For all of us, boy – all of us here in this clachan.

MARTIN: For us all?

OWEN: I should think that was pretty obvious

MARTIN: Not to me, it isn't, Fa.

THADEUS: Settle yourself, boy. (There's) no need to be contrary.

MARTIN: I'm not, Gram!

THADEUS: Then hold gently with your Fa and me.

OWEN: He's alright, Thad. It's only a story when's all said and done.

MARTIN: But if there are lessons to be learned from such tales, best we all understand 'em, though, surely?

MAINE: Martin, ye grandfather's right here. Shush you. You've had ye say now and that's the end of it.

OWEN: The boy has a right to ask, Maine.

SEAN: Aye, he does. So I'll ask you again, Martin. What lesson do you draw from it.

MARTIN: One quite the opposite to others here, I think.

SEAN: And what might that be?

MARTIN: That there's a cost to fightin', sure. But if the fight's for somethin' rightfully yours - ye land, for instance - then it's worth that cost.

SEAN: Are we still talkin' about the story, or somethin' else entirely?

MARTIN: I think those that stand up for 'emselves stand tallest. *(To Owen)* You're always sayin' that, Pa; sayin' we shouldn't let others *own* us. Those Meahans, for instance, up there in the Big House.

THADEUS: Ah, jais, don't bring 'em up, will ye?

MARTIN *(To his grandfather)*: Those Meahans come over with that devil Cromwell, that 'thrice cruel butcher and human bloodsucker' – I heard ye use them very words,

Gram - they come over and took this land right from under us; robbed and skulled us, slandered and deviled our ways; all the while buying 'emselves favour by cuttin' up our land and givin' us crumbs in return! So all's I'm sayin' is sometimes some things is worth fightin' for; is what I take from ye stupid story now.

The others are shocked by this unadorned display of passion.

Lighting change

WE'LL KNOW SOON ENOUGH

Clachan – Night:

The three elder men are standing around talking after the gathering. They are looking up at the sky.

OWEN: Mild…

SEAN: Aye…

OWEN: More stars'n we can deal with.

SEAN: And more comin', they say. Not so sure about the rains, though.

OWEN: Got a feelin' for it?

SEAN: I'm not sure.

THADEUS: The weather's been kind. At least there's none of that fog, so. I'm sure it was the fog had somethin' to do with the crop failin' last year. But as I say, the weather's been kind.

SEAN: We'll know soon enough.

THADEUS: Aye, we will, we will.

OWEN: Sean__

SEAN: It's alright, Owen.

OWEN: The boy meant no harm. Lettin' off steam is all.

SEAN: I know. I invited it.

THADEUS: He's young.

SEAN: And seen a lot for his tender years.

OWEN: We all have.

THADEUS: (He) made a few fine observations on the Big House, though.

Beat

OWEN: Have we heard anythin' from Liam about them up there?

SEAN: Not much – havin' had old man Meahan officially declared mad by the wife, this nephew of his, Thomas Meahan, jumps straight in to declare the whole estate his for the askin'.

THADEUS: What do we know of him?

SEAN: Not much, comin' as they do from England. Liam's Anne told Mary there's a big welcomin' shebang for 'em up at the Big House tomorrow night. I've not been invited, mind; but our girls might manage to slip a glance by sneakin' in the back way to see their Auntie Anne.

Beat

It's the new Agent we need to keep an eye on.

THADEUS: I heard he's been snoopin' around askin' questions.

SEAN: A lot rests on his view of things. We can but hope.

OWEN: If things go bad again, there's talk of feedin' us corn from America.

SEAN: Wouldn't go holdin' ye breath.

OWEN: No…

Beat

OWEN *(Conspiratorial)*: Spoken to Molly lately?

SEAN: Haven't had much occasion to. But I'm sure she'll be watchin' how things progress. She'll be there if we need her…

Martin and two other younger men appear.

Lighting change

LET US SEE MOLLY

Clachan – Night:

The three young men come forward.

SEAN: Ye brought some friends to the party, Martin. That's a nice surprise. (Good) Evenin', boys…

MARTIN: We've been waitin' for the call, Sean.

OWEN: Boy…

MARTIN: It's important, Father.

SEAN: The 'call'?

MARTIN: Ye said yeself it was a callin'.

SEAN: I'm not quite sure what ye're referrin' to, Martin. Is it the moon gets ye so excited?

MARTIN: *You* got pretty excited not two years past, when Daniel O'Connell himself stood in front at us at that Monster meetin'.

SEAN: The Monster Meeting; that's right, I remember now. You were on ye Pa's shoulders, dribblin' like a wee babby.

OWEN: I remember, Sean.

MARTIN *(Ignoring this)*: Have ye forgotten. Don't ye remember, Fa: 'There will come a time when all will rise to the cry of Old Ireland and Liberty'. You had a smile on ye face and a tear in ye eye. Don't deny it!

SEAN: I also recall he spoke of 'peaceable means' to achieve it.

OWEN: 'Virtue and goodness': they were his words, boy.

MARTIN: And what of his call to arms? O'Connell said to us: 'if there is any man here who would not fight if attacked, let him speak'?

DECLAN AND FERGUS: Aye, Sean.

DECLAN: Are we not bein' attacked now: with people droppin' from hunger as we watch cartloads of our own corn and oats disappearin' on ships?

SEAN: What's this to do with us?

FERGUS: We heard ye talkin' just now. All we're askin' is for a piece of it. We want to play our part.

SEAN: Perhaps it's just the thought of wearin' of a nice dress and bonnet makes ye so enthusiastic. *(To the other two)* That it, boys: joining Molly's got its other attractions?

OWEN *(To the younger)*: Go home.

MARTIN: Stop treatin' us like children, Father! Ye been leadin' Molly around these parts since before we were born. *(To Sean)* Ye can't deny us.

THADEUS: That's enough! (Know) ye place, boy!

SEAN: It's alright, Thad. *(Addressing Martin)* If ye ears are as good as ye say, ye'll have heard we're waitin' for the dust to settle on the new Landlord and his Agent: he's the right arm and brains.

DECLAN: Come on, Sean, people are fallin' where they stand.

FERGUS: While we starve, there's carts filled to the brim with oats headin' for the ports.

THADEUS: Twenty three yesterday by the High Road – two more than the day before, one less than the day before that.

OWEN: Each with a pack of between four and six mangy peelers – them mounted soldiers – ridin' by each wheel.

The young men are shocked by this detail.

SEAN: There's more to this than you know. We wait.

Lighting change

TUNNEL SCENE: YOU CAN'T COME THIS WAY

The tunnel at the back of the Big House – Early evening:

A girl is standing at the entranceway to a servants' tunnel running from the back of the Big House to the kitchen. She is playing hopscotch, with as much enthusiasm as an only-child can muster. She is being watched by Bridget and Sarah, who giggle and reveal themselves, before trying to pass by unnoticed.

GIRL: Where do you think you're going?

BRIDGET: Down this tunnel.

GIRL: This tunnel's only to be used by servants and domestics.

Beat

Of course, if you're guests for our dinner, then you'd best enter the house by the front door.

BRIDGET: We just need to go through this tunnel, so.

GIRL: Ah, servants and domestics?

BRIDGET: Not exactly.

GIRL: Then you can't go past.

SARAH: What were ye doin'?

GIRL: Playing hopscotch – why?

SARAH: So that's what all the dancin' about was?

GIRL *(Slowly)*: Yes…

SARAH: And what's wrong with ye mouth? Ye lips hardly move when ye speak – like ye been kissin' bees. And ye sound like an eejit. (*Bridget shushes her.)* Well, it's true. She does.

GIRL: No I don't!

SARAH: Ye do.

BRIDGET: She's not from around here – that's all.

GIRL: Yes I am… mostly.

SARAH: Ye don't sound like it? Where are ye from?

(Olivia hesitates)

She doesn't even know – must be the bees.

GIRL *(Pompous)*: Who are you, I might ask?

SARAH *(Mocking)*: Who are you, I might ask back.

GIRL: Never you mind. You can't go through this tunnel and that's that.

BRIDGET: But we have to.

GIRL: Why?

SARAH: Our auntie.

BRIDGET: Our Ma's sent us to see our auntie.

GIRL: And who might that be?

BRIDGET: Anne O'Conor: she works in the kitchen.

SARAH: For them gobshiten Meahans, the dirty soup sippin' Protestants they all are.

GIRL *(Stung)*: I see. Well, it's not a good time. She'll be busy with all those guests arriving. There's a dinner, didn't you know?

BRIDGET: We've been sent.

GIRL: I know, by your mother. Well, you still can't pass; not without a password anyway.

Beat

I could give you a clue.

They all smile.

Lighting change

THE BIG HOUSE WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS

Interior of the Big House – Early evening:

Esteemed guests are assembled in the living room of the Big House. They are about to be called into dinner. Expectation for the night ahead is high. A glass is spoon tinkled by the newly installed landlord, Major Thomas Meahan.

MEAHAN: Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of my good wife, Honora and, I: welcome to our humble abode. Now, without further ado: please, charge your glasses, make yourselves known to each other, and with as much 'bon vivant' as you can muster follow me in to dinner!

Rapturous applause, instantaneous celebration and a hasty dissolve.

Lighting change

THE KITCHEN

The Big House kitchen – Early evening:

The kitchen is ablaze with frantic action. Kitchen staff who are preparing food, dodge and weave around the crowded space. Rising above it all is Mrs Mullark the Head Cook, who, clearly in her element, cuts a swathe through lesser mortals.

MRS MULLARK: No, no, not that one: THAT ONE! Turn it over… TURN IT OVER! Who put all this skitter here in my kitchen to trip over? GET RID OF IT! *(Clapping as she moves)* Everyone on ye toes, please. Ye never know when the new High and Mighties'll come callin'. So KEEP LIVELY…! *(Seeing Bridget and Sarah)* Where in the molly coddlin' world…? *(To all)* What are these two loiterin' females doin' in my kitchen?

ANNE *(Battling through the melee)*: Sorry, Mrs Mullark; these are the two girls I told ye about, remember?

MRS MULLARK: What?

ANNE: The girls I mentioned, Mrs Mullark: my sister's girls. Ye said they could come and see the kitchen if they were quiet.

MRS MULLARK: Did I?

ANNE: Don't ye remember?

MRS MULLARK *(Vaguely)*: Oh, maybe I did, maybe I did… But timin', Anne: timin'. We're about to go up with the mains… *(To the girls)* Oh, alright then, let me take a look at ye. Oh, they're nice enough. Who did ye say they belong to?

ANNE: My sister-in-law, Mary O'Conor.

MRS MULLARK *(Impressed)*: O'Conors, ye say? Nothin' but royalty here. *(Indicating the balcony)* Next time, come through that way with all the starch and bows. *(Cackles)* Alright, sit down over there and shut ye little gobs. Off ye go, then. *(Distracted)* Hey, no, no, no, no, no - ye not to go sloppin' it on! Appearances, haven't I told all of ye: APPEARANCES!

The girls are swirled out of the scene amidst mounting pandemonium.

Lighting change

2ND TUNNEL: COME IN NOW

The tunnel at the back of the Big House – Early evening:

The girl waits for Bridget and Sarah to reemerge from the tunnel entrance. Biddy, a servant, comes out from around the side of the house.

BIDDY: Miss Olivia, there you are! We've been lookin' all over for ye. Dinner's underway and ye mother's been callin' for ye. What are ye doin' out here on ye own?

OLIVIA: Same as usual.

BIDDY: Oh, come on then.

OLIVIA *(Furtive)*: In a minute, Biddy.

BIDDY: A minute'll be a minute too late, Miss.

OLIVIA: They won't notice.

BIDDY: Please, Miss Olivia...

OLIVIA *(Relenting)*: Alright.

They leave with Olivia looking over her shoulder.

Lighting change

POST PRANDIAL CONVERSATION

Big House Balcony – After Dinner - Evening:

The Landlord and Agent are outside on the balcony, which leads directly off the main drawing room. Both are armed with port and cigars.

HUNTER *(A toast):* (Here's) To a dinner long to be remembered.

MEAHAN: And an evening sky suffused with the lustre of the occasion.

They clink glasses, drink and draw on cigars.

Are you getting used to the drift and current of this Irish sky?

HUNTER: I'm consoled by the constancy of all sky, Major.

MEAHAN *(Perplexed)*: Indeed… And have you had an opportunity to get acquainted with our town?

HUNTER: The town and the estate.

MEAHAN: And…?

HUNTER: Is this really…

MEAHAN: Your coyness is endearing, Charles; and unhelpful. If you are able to make even a preliminary report, please do.

HUNTER *(A final warning)*: Are you sure?

MEAHAN: I stand at the ready.

Beat

HUNTER: Your newly acquired estate is larger than is now considered prudent, and subdivided into portions that can barely sustain those inhabiting it; run, as it is, on a system whereby groups of families share plots in a primitive collective run by a centralised group of elders. They're so densely populated and dependent on their tiny crops of potato that this leaves them entirely vulnerable to any variations in yield; variations like those caused by disease or blight, such as the one this past season; although it was not, I understand, an isolated event. As for the people here; they're religious and fearful. They breed like rabbits and hold hard grudge against the Protestant aliens who continue to threaten and repress. Your uncle, however, despite

his failing mind, appears to have managed them with unusual serenity; this, no doubt, being assisted by his long association with our own Father Brennan.

Uncannily, the priest appears in the background.

MEAHAN: Ah, Father Brennan… we were just speaking of you.

BRENNAN: Well, I hope.

MEAHAN: Indeed, we were just commenting on your exemplary record in ministering to the needy; something my uncle certainly appreciated.

BRENNAN: He was a good man, to be sure. His kindness and gentleness of spirit was known and loved by all.

MEAHAN: I'm sure.

BRENNAN: Major, I wonder if I might have a word.

MEAHAN: Why yes, of course.

The priest hesitates.

Mr Hunter, would you leave us now. We can talk later.

HUNTER: Of course.

He leaves.

MEAHAN *(Convivial)*: Now, Father, what is it you want?

BRENNAN: It's about the Relief Committee, Major.

MEAHAN: What about it?

BRENNAN: Well, we don't have one. You may not have had time to fully comprehend the difficulties people are experiencing as a result of the crop failing last year. But with summer coming on and food supplies running short, I've taken it upon myself to write to Dublin asking them to speed things up.

MEAHAN: You've written to the Central Relief Commission in Dublin?

BRENNAN: Aye.

MEAHAN: That's a shame.

BRENNAN: I beg your pardon?

MEAHAN: I'm sorry, but I do wish we'd had this conversation before you'd written to Dublin.

HONORA *(Appearing)*: Thomas, we have guests.

MEAHAN: Yes, of course. Darling, would you mind coming here (for) a moment. *(She approaches)* You see, Honora and I thought we'd gather people together tonight with a mind to forming a Local Relief Committee here.

HONORA: We'd love you to be a part of it, Father.

MEAHAN: We're meeting this Thursday.

BRENNAN: I had no idea. Thursday, you say?

HONORA AND MEAHAN: Yes.

MEAHAN: Will you be there?

BRENNAN: Yes, yes, I will.

HONORA: Good.

MEAHAN: We'll send word on time and place.

BRENNAN: Very well… *(Grabbing his hand)* Thank you, sir. Thank you, madam. I'm grateful. Your uncle's kindness flows freely in your veins. I'll be on my way then and will look forward to seeing you this Thursday. Good night and God bless you both.

He bows and leaves.

Lighting change

TOUR OF THE HIGH AND MIGHTY

Kitchen – after dinner - evening:

It is a decidedly more relaxed kitchen than the one we last saw. Kitchen staff clear up after the dinner. Mrs Mullark notices the sisters still in the same place as we last saw them.

MULLARK: Ah, look at yous! Still hidin' quiet like mice in the church.

ANNE *(Realizing)*: Ah, I'm sorry, I forgot all about ye.

BRIDGET: That's alright. We've never seen such comin's and goin's.

SARAH: Does that go on every time the High and Mighties eat?

MULLARK *(Cackling)*: 'High and Mighties'! Wherever did you get such a turn?

SARAH: You, Mrs Mullark.

MULLARK: Then I must watch my tongue, or it'll be me roastin' on the spit. *(To Anne)* Take 'em now, Anne. We'll not miss ye for a moment. *(They turn to go)* Oh, wait up. *(Retrieving a piece of burnt bread)* Here's some bread for ye - too burnt for them upstairs, but soft enough inside. It's only a biteen, but it'll do. Under ye dress now and off ye go.

As they turn to go, Honora Meahan appears on the balcony above. She is conducting a tour of the house for some of the guests.

HONORA *(To guests)*: Of course, some might accuse me of saving the worst until last. But there is more to our humble kitchen than at first meets the eye. *(Acknowledging Mrs Mullark)* Mrs Mullark.

MULLARK: Kitchen!

The kitchen staff, led by Mrs Mullark, bow ceremoniously. Honora notices Sarah, who stares at her with unadorned fascination

HONORA: Oh, hello.

SARAH: Hello.

HONORA: And who might you be?

SARAH: Sarah O'Conor. And who are you?

HONORA: Honora Meahan.

SARAH: Are you a High and Mighty?

The question may sound facetious, but it is asked with genuine insouciance.

HONORA: High and Mighty – I beg your pardon?

ANNE *(Rushing in)*: Mrs Meahan… I beg *your* pardon… Sarah didn't mean any harm …

HONORA: She… belongs to you, then?

Beat

ANNE: Yes, she's… mine, M'am.

Olivia appears beside Honora.

OLIVIA: She's not! You're her Auntie Anne!

ANNE: What I meant M'am, was… she is part of my family, my husband's brother's little girl. They both are – Sarah and her sister Bridget. (*Bridget comes forward)*

HONORA: And you are?

ANNE: Anne O'Conor, M'am. I work for you, here.

MRS MULLARK: She's a good woman, M'am, and a hard worker. If there's blame for their presence, let it be aimed at me.

HONORA *(To Anne)*: O'Conor… doesn't your husband work for us?

ANNE: Aye, M'am, he does: Liam O'Conor.

Beat

HONORA: Olivia?

OLIVIA: Yes, Mother?

HONORA: Your familiar tone suggests to me that you know these girls: how.

OLIVIA: I beg your pardon?

HONORA: How Olivia: how did you meet them?

SARAH: At the entrance to the servants' tunnel, M'am. She let us in. But only after we'd guessed the password.

Imitating Mrs Mullark, she curtsies.

HONORA: Is that right?

SARAH: Yes, M'am.

HONORA: So it was *you* that let them in, Olivia?

OLIVIA: I… might have done.

HONORA: But only after they'd guessed the password? (*Olivia nods)*And may I ask what that password was?

SARAH: Oh, no: it's a secret, M'am. It'd be terrible bad luck to repeat it.

HONORA: I see. Olivia, an apology to Anne may be in order. But on this occasion, shall we let it pass? *(Anne nods, relieved)* Mrs Mullark, can you see to it the girls take a small gift with them as a reminder of their visit to the High and Mighties? *(Guests titter)* Carry on Mrs Mullark. *(Staff bow. Guests leave. Honora ushers her daughter to follow) Olivia…*

MRS MULLARK: Alright everyone, back to work, back to work. *(She claps and then turns conspiratorially to the sisters)* Come and get ye bread, girls.

Lighting change

THE BLOODING

Liam's Field – Night:

Three men stagger and cavort to the centre of the space, clumsily negotiating obstacles en route. Their progress is made the more arduous because: it is night; they are dressed in poorly fitting women's clothes; they are drunk - not paralytic, but bravely so. At first it is hard to make out who they are. As the dialogue begins, it becomes all too obvious.

FERGUS: Ohhh! *(Falling over)* Ah, jaisus – split me drawers!

Much hilarity; finally they settle.

DECLAN: Hand us the poteen, will ya?

Fergus produces a small drinking flask from under his dress. Declan takes a swig and passes it on.

FERGUS: Well, I must say, I never thought I'd ever be gettin' such comfort from a change of clothes.

MARTIN: Aye, it's the 'liberation' old Daniel O'Connell never speaks of in his speeches.

FERGUS: Ye know, I think I'd rather be a Missie than a Mister.

DECLAN: Yeah, you're a real natural, Ferg. Like ye was born to it, eh, eh?

He pokes Fergus a few times which initiates wrestling.

FERGUS: Look out, watch me little titties! Never know when I might be needin' em!

Fergus and Declan continue to explore their new anatomies as Martin stands and breaks away. He is looking for something.

DECLAN: What is it, Martin?

MARTIN: What do ye think: what we come for.

FERGUS: Where?

MARTIN: Right in front of us, ye great log – a cow.

He approaches the cow cautiously. Taking a piece of rope with a noose already tied into it from a bag, he slips the tied end of the rope over the mesmerised beast and slowly leads it back into the middle of the space.

There… There you are Mrs… no harm here, is there?

His dealing with the cow casts a new mood over proceedings.

Get me the bottle and my knife from the bag, Dec.

He does

FERGUS: You sure ye know what ye're doin', Martin?

MARTIN *(Annoyed)*: 'Course I know! Seen me gramps do it a hundred times, haven't I? Now give me the knife, will ye. And get the bottle ready.

He continues to stroke the animal as he readies the knife for insertion.

Steady her from the other side, Dec. And you take the back, Ferg.

He inserts the knife and the cow protests.

There now, that's alright. That's alright, isn't it, Mrs?

He strokes her to calmness.

Bottle?

It is passed to him and he places it against the side of the cow.

That's the way now…. good girl.

FERGUS: It looks black in this light.

MARTIN: And you look like a sassy galloot in ye moony bonnet. Now shut ya gob, will ya?

The other two titter away, as Martin bloods the beast.

DECLAN: How much do we take?

MARTIN: All of this full…. I think.

FERGUS: Mind ye don't take too much. Brian Rooney's uncle took too much once and the poor beast keeled over and died.

MARTIN: Thanks very much for that information, Fergus. I'll keep it in mind. Have ye got the letter I gave ye?

FERGUS: I got it. I got it… somewhere in here at least… *(Reaching down his dress)* Here it is. (*Sniffs)* Ah, I do believe it smells of the Italian Alps.

MARTIN: Ye don't say. Right, that's about enough. Put the stopper back in it, Dec. And I'll try to sow her up.

DECLAN: What do ye mean *try t*o sow her up? Ye mean ye don't know how?

MARTIN: 'Course I know how: ye use a bit of the tail hair… somehow. I seen me Gramps do it.

DECLAN: *Seen* 'im?

MARTIN: Aye, I seen 'im, alright… loads a times. Now, put ye finger on that while I pull out a few of these ol' hairs.

FERGUS: You want *me* to do it, since I'm up this end, anyways?

MARTIN: Alright, you do it?

FERGUS: Give us ye knife then.

MARTIN: What do ye need the feckin' knife for?

FERGUS: To cut the feckin' hairs off of its tail. What do ye think I want the feckin' knife for?

DECLAN: Now, now, girls. Don't go havin' a barney out here in the middle of it. Wait until we've finished what it is we come to do.

Martin passes the knife to Fergus, who labours over the apparently simple task.

MARTIN: Hurry up, will ye? Feckin' full moon's comin' up.

FERGUS: That's a bad sign, that is – full moon.

MARTIN: Ah, ye don't believe in all that superstitious malarkey, do ye?

FERGUS *(He does)*: 'Course not!

MARTIN: Jaisus… *(To Fergus)* Hurry up, will ye?

FERGUS: What do ye think I'm doin'? It's a delicate operation, this tail business, ye know.

He lifts up the tail, cuts a clump and hands it to Martin.

There, that be enough?

MARTIN: I suppose so.

FERGUS *(Pulls up the tail):* Hey, nice bit of arse.

MARTIN *(Struggling)*: Shut ye trap. Here, Dec, pull it closed with both ye fingers, will ye? Not that much, I can't see it at all now. There, for Christ's sake… *there*.

DECLAN: Fine, Martin. Fine…

FERGUS: Oh, what me ma couldn't do with a bit of this tail in a pot.

MARTIN *(Frustrated):* I tell ye to shut ye feckin' face, didn't I?

FERGUS: Alright, alright, I was only havin' a bit of fun, Martin; a bit o fun is all.

MARTIN: Ahhh!!! *(He can't close the wound. Cow shuffles.)* It's bleedin' all over the place. Alright, Missy, steady now. Steady!

FERGUS *(Seeing something)*: Ah Jaisus!

DECLAN: What?

MARTIN: Hold her still, will yers!

DECLAN: What, Fergus?

FERGUS: A light… It's a light… Oh, jaisus, it is; it's a feckin' light!

MARTIN: Hold her still, will ye!

DECLAN: Martin, stop that now. We got to get out of here.

MARTIN: She'll bleed herself to death if we don't sow her up.

FERGUS: Oh, Christ, it's comin' this way.

DECLAN: Get ye bag, Martin.

But Martin won't leave off the now distressed beast.

FERGUS: It's comin' this way!

DECLAN: We got to go, Martin. Pack up ye things.

MARTIN: But__

DECLAN: Martin, for feck's sake: Go!!!

The three perpetrators flee amidst the distressed screams of the cow. Liam arrives, lamp in hand. He sees something on the ground. He goes to it and picks up the letter left behind by the others. Anne arrives.

ANNE: Liam, what's goin' on?

LIAM: It's a bloodin'.

ANNE: Who…?

LIAM: I'll sort it out. Go inside.

She leaves.

Lighting change

AFTER-BLOODING CELEBRATION

Hilltop – night:

It is later the same evening as the blooding. The boys are dressed in remnants of their former costumes. Martin stands apart. Despite drinking from the same bottle of

poteen, all are now in a decidedly more sober mood. Nonetheless, they have lit a bonfire – in homage to the tradition of Molly Maguire.

DECLAN: Would ye like another tipple, Martin?

MARTIN: No…

FERGUS: Ah, come on. Join in the festivities, why don't ye.

MARTIN: Don't feel like it.

DECLAN: It's a good strong fire; warmth in it for a while yet.

FERGUS: And it'll let people know Molly's back – yes she is, in all her blazin' glory…. Just like the ol' days. *(Enthusiasm waning)* Martin?

MARTIN: What?

FERGUS: Come on, we only done what we said we would.

MARTIN: (Is) that right?

FERGUS: We said we'd blood the cow, which we done. It'll feed others of our own just like we planned. They need it, Martin. Better keepin' *us* upright than a silly old cow.

MARTIN: So what's with cuttin' off its fecking tail, ye great stupid gob?

FERGUS: I didn't.

MARTIN: You did.

FERGUS: I didn't.

MARTIN: What's that sittin' on the ground over there then: your own?

FERGUS: A piece; I cut off a piece of her tail, and a little piece at that. I left her the great remainder!

MARTIN: Oh Jais…

FERGUS: Wouldn't be the first tail was taken to feed starvin' bellies. What're ye makin' such a big to do over it?

MARTIN: You shouldn'ta done it.

FERGUS: It's only a feckin' cow, Martin! Anyway, you never finished sowin' her up yourself, like ye said ye would.

DECLAN: Come on now, you two.

FERGUS: Well, it was him tryin' to put the mockers on it all. We should be celebratin', like we said we would…. After all, that dirty Protestant lovin' brother of Sean's been taught a little lesson he won't forget in a hurry.

DECLAN: Aye, that's true, Martin.

FERGUS: We should be proud of what we done. Put the fear of God into his own blood suckin' soul. *(Remembering)* Hey, I wonder how he's dealin' with Molly's little letter I left for him.

MARTIN: You never left it for him. Ye dropped it and ran.

FERGUS: I never did! Anyway, it's the same outcome. He'll get a right royal shock when he reads it, I'll bet.

Declan approaches Martin.

DECLAN: People'll be proud of what we done, Martin. You'll see.

MARTIN: Maybe.

DECLAN: Ye worried about ye Da and what he'll say?

MARTIN: Some; and Sean, I suppose - no use putting them out.

DECLAN: No, but I wouldn't be so sure that's how it'll all pan out. Ye never know, eh?

MARTIN: No, ye never do.

During this last beat Fergus has moved over to where the tail is lying on the ground. He picks it up. The others look around. He holds it like a trophy, with the smile of the hunter. This soon becomes something closer to shame.

Lighting change

MA'S TREE

The family tree in the cemetery – Day:

Bridget and Sarah are sitting downstage in positions identical to those they were in at the beginning of the play – we are again under the same tree in the cemetery. The flower is still in Bridget's hand.

BRIDGET: Beautiful; it won't last forever, even pressed.

SARAH: How do ye know?

BRIDGET: It's so fragile.

SARAH: Then you'll just have to try all the harder to make it last.

She tickles Sarah's nose with the flower gently at first; then deliriously so; until it forces her to flee some distance. She sees her mother standing a little away.

Don't be fooled – she's armed with a dangerous weapon… *(She leaves)*

Bridget holds up the flower to her mother (the dangerous weapon) and then places it carefully in the bible. Mary sits down beside her.

MARY: (It's) A bible. Where did ye get that?

BRIDGET: Father Brennan.

MARY: Ye must be doin' well with ye readin'

BRIDGET: It comes with a price: I have to read aloud in front of all the others.

MARY: Do ye mind?

BRIDGET: Not really, but I can't say I understand it all.

MARY *(Sitting)*: No, that might take longer.

BRIDGET: Do *you* understand it?

MARY: Well, there's understandin' and then there's *understandin'* (*A distinction lost on Bridget)* Faith is a kind of understanding. (*Regards the bible for a moment*) Here… (*Taking Bridget's hands and wrapping them tightly around the bible*) Hold tight now and close yer eyes. (*Bridget does)* Got 'em closed? (*She nods*) Right, now think of somethin' that's been restin' heavy in ye heart. *(Bridget opens her eyes*) It's just a game, remember. (*She closes them again*) Now open it up, but keep yer eyes closed… (*Bridget does*) Now, put a finger down on the page. *(She does*) Open yer eyes and tell me what it says?

BRIDGET *(Reading)*: "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth *understandin'…*"

They both laugh.

It's like a message from God.

MARY: Aye, and like I said, there's understandin' and then there's *understandin'*! Let's hope it applies to women as well! Is there any more of it?

BRIDGET *(Reading)*: "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her…."

Both look above.

MARY: Aye, she is a tree, surely. *(Noticing the flower)* What's that?

BRIDGET: A flower.

MARY *(Examining it)*: It's from the pratae. Wind must have blown it across. It's a pretty one though. Put it in ye book. It'll dry there, safe.

Bridget does. They lie down together.

BRIDGET: Why do we call it *your* tree?

MARY: Your Fa planted it when he was a boy. He says he planted it for me, even though it was long before we met; (he) says it was his way of believin'.

BRIDGET: Why here, in this cemetery, among all these graves?

MARY: Why not: it's the highest point around. There's not a better view in the whole county. On a clear day, you can almost climb into the clouds and see to heaven… *(Darkens)* And now ye brother's here, lookin' after us from beneath…Diarmuid…

Diarmuid *(A little boy appears from within the trunk of the tree)*. It was a bad winter… and he was only a little boy. Such things, they come…. *(She cries. The boy returns to the trunk of the tree)* And then there was you. *(Suddenly serious)* I get feelin's. Ye must look after ye sister, no matter what may come. She's different from you. Promise me ye will… Promise.

BRIDGET: I do. I do…

Lighting change

LIAM CONFRONTS THE CLACHAN

Clachan – Day:

Liam arrives at the clachan carrying a bloody sack.

LIAM *(Repeats)*: Sean O'Conor….!

He repeats the name until a crowd gathers. Sean arrives.

SEAN: We're not wantin' trouble, Liam.

LIAM: No trouble here – none at all. In fact, I come bearin' gifts. *(Tosses the sack down at Sean's feet)* It's the head o' me cow; Daisy. She was butchered last night under the light of a coward's moon.

Beat

SEAN: And what's that to do with us?

LIAM: Well now, I'm thinkin' somebody's had 'emselves a bit of a shebang in the back paddock o' my place. And in their merriment they took to me ol' Daisy here – blooded her good and proper. (They) took her tail too, to season their soup.

THADEUS: Blooded, ye say?

LIAM: Aye, Thad.

THADEUS: No one here coulda done that, except for me. I'm the only one knows how. You know that as well as I.

MAINE *(Intervening)*: Leave him be, ye thug.

LIAM: I mean no harm by it, Maine. Ye father wouldn't do somethin' like that – a high-minded ol' codge like him.

THADEUS: Ye're a loose-mouthed scoundrel, as well as a licker of the Saxon's arse!

Laughter

LIAM *(To all)*: Aye, it is funny when ye think on it. But it wasn't so funny when the ol' girl was fallin' off her pegs from the wounds. *(Scanning the group)* Anyway, I did consider you bein' the culprit, Thad. But then I thought: it must be somebody else, somebody without such 'expertise'. In fact, whoever murdered my old cow lacked

expertise in other areas as well. *(Takes out the letter)* They were kind enough, though, to leave me this little note. *(Reads)* "We cum the nite and take of ye cow, the blood that belongs to us. And let this be a warnin', that come soon one mornin', we'll drink your own blud and pus." Sined, the nobal and very important Moli Magwia, who lives in us forever and will shorly defeat the Saxon sukin heethin one day soon." What gets a little lost when I read it so is the spellin', which even to my simple eyes leaves a lot to be desired. Whoever penned it really needs to learn how to spell Molly Maguire, for instance.

SEAN: Alright, you've had ye little show. Now, what is it ye want, brother?

LIAM: Justice, or a piece of it. *(Turning to the rest)* DID – ANYONE – KILL – MY – COW…? Not a very talkative lot all of a sudden, are they, brother? *(Picks up the sack)* Alright, I'll give ol' Daisy's head to anyone here thinks they can help me find out who was the dirty, rotten, thievin' animal that done this to her. Come on, there must be someone wants a nice bit a seasonin' for their soup. No need to get the Quakers involved.

He stops in front of the three young men.

What about it boys; can ye help me out? (*Eyeing Fergus)*

FERGUS: What's he lookin' at me for? I never done it!

LIAM: Never said ye did. *(Closing in on him)* Ye know, as I was lying there with Daisy, I suddenly got this feelin'. You know what I mean about such feelin's, don't ye, Mary? I know ye do.

MARY: If ye had feelin's, Liam, ye'd never have left us and gone over to rub shoulders with those devils. Have ye forgotten where ye come from? You're part of us. Leave the boy alone.

LIAM: Ah, now, that's a point of view. But as I say, I just had this feelin'. Y'ever get feelin's like that, Ferg?

FERGUS: What're askin' me for? How would I know? Feckin' feelin's: what're ye talkin' about? Why's he lookin' at me like that? Why's he lookin'? Take ye feckin' eyes off me! Take 'em off ye SAXON SUCKIN' HEATHEN!!

Unwittingly, by repeating the same phrase as that used in the letter, he has betrayed himself.

LIAM: 'Saxon Suckin' Heathen'. *(Checking the letter in his hand)* 'Saxon – Suckin' – Heathen. *(To Fergus)* I think this belongs to you.

Fearing a full confession, Sean steps in, grabbing Liam's hand that holds the sack.

SEAN: No more - leave the boy alone.

Liam tries to wrest the sack from him, but Sean is stronger. Sean eases his grip. Liam wrenches, but unexpectedly finding no resistance, overbalances backwards. He recovers his balance, but not his dignity.

LIAM: Don't think this is over; any of ye! Ye've had ye time. But it's comin' to an end. Be afeard… It's comin'. It's comin'…

He leaves. Crowd dissolves, leaving all but the men.

Lighting change

OLDER MEN CONFRONT THE YOUNGER

Clachan – Day:

We find the men in the same configuration as we last left them. Martin is closest to Sean and it is to him that he addresses his question.

SEAN: What do ye know of it?

OWEN: Speak up, boy; best ye speak the truth.

FERGUS *(Interjecting):* Nothin', we know nothin' of it! Tell him Martin.

But Martin is incapable of sustaining such a bald-faced lie.

THADEUS: What were ye thinkin'?

MARTIN: It was only a bit of sport. At least it was meant to be.

DECLAN: And we thought we'd be bringin' the blood home to share 'round.

FERGUS: We never meant to cause harm.

MARTIN: Just a bloodin', like you showed me, Gram.

THADEUS: I never showed ye so ye could go out and steal from a gombeen – no offense, Sean.

SEAN: None taken.

THADEUS: Anyways, no bloodin' a mine would ever fell a beast. Didn't ye seal it up like I showed ye?

MARTIN: I … got confused.

DECLAN: We didn't have time. We got interrupted.

FERGUS: Liam come upon us with a gun, and I thought I heard a dog besides… *(Thinking better of it)* Well, I never *seen* the dog, or the gun, but I got me suspicions.

SEAN: And did ye not think of the consequences?

FERGUS: Like Martin said, it were only sport.

OWEN: And what about this letter?

They look embarrassed.

DECLAN: We had a bit too much of the poteen, to give us pluck.

THADEUS: Poteen don't put rocks in ye head!

FERGUS *(Sitting on the ground to relieve his aching head)*: It sure feels like it did… ohh…

MARTIN: We wanted to make some kind of a statement.

DECLAN: Let him know who was who.

OWEN: Well, ye certainly succeeded in that.

FERGUS: Ahh… give it over you two. It was *my* idea; and an eedyotic one at that. *(Sitting)* Jaisus, my head hurts. I'm bein' punished, sure.

His self-pity oddly softens the mood.

OWEN: So that's what ye little fire was about last night?

MARTIN: Ye saw?

OWEN: (I) got up for a piss and saw the light up on the hill. Reminded me of a time…

He looks to the other elders, who despite themselves, smile.

MARTIN: Ye never talk of it now, Pa.

OWEN: It's not really my place.

SEAN: Ye father was a bit of a firebrand in his day.

THADEUS: I seem to remember an incident very much like this__

OWEN: Thad!

THADEUS: Or maybe I don't…

Beat

SEAN: Look, I know that brother of mine's had somethin' comin' to him, but what ye did was darpy. I'm afraid of what's to come. *(To Martin)* Ye disobeyed me when I told ye to wait. Ye never consulted, which is a matter of trust and respect. In future, if there's anythin' to be done, we'll do it together, all of us, at the right time. Are we clear?

The boys are sufficiently chastened; but also heartened by Sean's reference to possible future activism.

ALL: Aye.

Declan picks Fergus up as they leave.

FERGUS: Oh, my achin' head…

Lighting change

E-QU-AT-OR

O'Conor Cottage – Day:

Sarah and Bridget are playing in the yard. Bridget is teaching Sarah to read by writing in the dirt with a stick. She is also enjoying showing off her new-found knowledge.

SARAH *(Reading)*: "E-q-u-at-or".

BRIDGET: Equator.

SARAH: What is it?

BRIDGET: A line… A LINE!

SARAH: What sort of a line?

BRIDGET: Ahh, eejit!

She draws a big circle and stands back triumphant.

SARAH: That's it?

BRIDGET: Nooo!

SARAH: Well, what in the begads is it?!

BRIDGET: Guess.

SARAH *(Losing patience)*: Uhh!

BRIDGET: The world… It's the world!

SARAH: Who said so?

BRIDGET: Father Brennan. *(Drawing a bowed line through its centre)* Now, guess what that is…?

SARAH: The equator?

BRIDGET *(Indicating)*: Yes - the equator's a line looped around the belly o' the world; dividing up here, from down there; the north from the south. *(Pointing to it)* This is the world. Can ye not see that?

SARAH: Aye, of course, I can!

BRIDGET: And this is us, up here.

SARAH *(Indicating Southern Hemisphere)*: And what's down there in the south?

Bridget is silent.

You don't know!

BRIDGET: Yes, I do! I do!

SARAH: You don't know! You don't know!

They start wrestling playfully on the ground. We hear the sound of thunder. They look skyward and blink into the first drops of rain.

BOTH: Ahh, rain!

They open their mouths and stick out their tongues, greeting the approaching storm. Within a moment it is upon them, transforming their yard into a giggling muddy swill. Mary appears.

MARY: Hey, you two.

SARAH: Look Ma, the round world's floodin' away! It's floodin' away!

MARY *(Shooing them inside)*: Come on, you two! Inside now, inside!

The girls exit still screaming. Mary looks worriedly skyward and follows them inside. Lighting change

1ST RELIEF COMMITTEE MEETING

Late April – 1846

Town Hall – Evening:

Assembled for the first time is the local Relief Committee: Thomas Meahan; Charles Hunter; Lloyd Chambers; Dr Shannon; Father Brennan. As we join proceedings the committee is in the act of electing a permanent Chairman, with a punctilious clerk, Mrs Symes, overseeing.

SYMES: All those in favour, say 'Aye'.

ALL: 'Aye'.

SYMES: Motion carried: Major Meahan elected unopposed to the position of Chairman of this Local Relief Committee.

General applause

MEAHAN *(rising):* I thank you all for your vote of confidence. I'd also like to welcome my wife, Honora, who, with the committee's permission will be present in an *honorary* capacity. Now, needless to say, she has a passionate interest in our affairs. Now, to business: firstly, measures and protocols for the distribution of relief___

BRENNAN: If I might, respectfully urge this Committee to establish as swiftly as humanly possible a *Relief Depot* dispensing food to the most needy___

MEAHAN: I think we're all well aware of the situation that presently exists, Father___

BRENNAN: I'm sure you are, Major. And I would not be so bold were it not for the direness of circumstance. *(He stands)* You see, sirs, with the summer nearly upon us and the stored food supplies fast runnin' out___

MEAHAN: As I said, Father: I think we're well acquainted with the situation___

BRENNAN: That presently exists; yes I heard you say that. But I'm not referring to the present situation, but to that potentially arising from a second failure of the crops this coming summer___

MEAHAN: Which is why___

BRENNAN: We're wasting time discussing "measures" and "protocols". We need to get that relief depot set up now.

MEAHAN *(More emphatic)*: And we will, with the assistance of procedures and guidelines outlined by the Central Relief Commission in Dublin.

BRENNAN *(Dismissively)*: Ahh, "the Central Relief Commission in Dublin". I've written to them already and have heard back nothing.

MEAHAN: Perhaps if you'd shown a little more patience.

BRENNAN: Patience, is it___?

MEAHAN: I've already been in contact with Mr Routh from the Central Commission, who informs me that our application for relief has been granted.

BRENNAN *(Stunned)*: Routh, himself?

MEAHAN: That's right. And if you'd be so kind as to resume your seat, Father, I'll give summary of our correspondence.

Brennan sits.

As I was about to say, the Central Relief Commission in Dublin has put in place certain guidelines for the distribution of relief; essentially vesting it in local hands – us. The funding regime consists of a pound-for-pound contribution scheme, whereby the government will match each pound *we* raise. There will be two types of expenditure: *outdoor relief* to able-bodied workers undertaking public works projects such as the building of roads; and *indoor relief* to the elderly, the infirm and destitute – food, clothing and the like – within workhouses.

CHAMBERS: So, the able-bodied will be *employed* on these public works projects? That means they will have the ability to purchase.

MEAHAN: Precisely: they will earn wages. And with these wages they will buy food. As we speak, I understand Indian Maize is being shipped to us from America. When it arrives, those thus employed will purchase it at, or near, market price.

CHAMBERS: The markets won't be disrupted by all this?

MEAHAN: If anything, they'll be stimulated by it.

HUNTER: The capital for this new system of relief, you say it's to be raised by a combination of government and local committee?

MEAHAN: Yes.
HUNTER: So the burden of finding money will ultimately fall on landlords and property owners?
MEAHAN: Matched in equal weight by the government.
HUNTER: But what if the revenue coming in to those landlords fails?
MEAHAN: I'm not sure I understand your point, Mr Hunter.
HUNTER: Well if, as the Father has already noted, the potato crop fails again this summer and tenants are unwilling to pay due rent, then no revenue will be coming in to the landlord.
MEAHAN: That is hypothetically possible, yes.
BRENNAN *(Interjecting)*: If rent is not paid by tenants, I think you'll find it's because they are un-able to pay, not un-willing'.
HUNTER: There are many reasons why people don't pay rent, Father.
BRENNAN: Perhaps your moral slant is narrowed by your ignorance of the people you refer to.
MRS SYMES *(Mediating)*: Gentlemen, are we not straying from the issue at hand?
MEAHAN: Thank you, Mrs Symes. *(To Hunter)* Mr Hunter, whilst it's possible there may be issue with future funds, I believe the principle of local subscription is a sound one. *(To Brennan)* There should be more than enough to establish a local food depot, Father. The task at hand is to decide upon and establish various public works projects.
BRENNAN *(Persistent)*: I'm still uncertain about the workhouse arrangements. Specifically, the distinction you draw between *able-bodied* recipients of *outdoo*r relief, and *indoor r*elief, given to those in the workhouse. Who is to decide eligibility for each?
MEAHAN: There are guidelines and definitions distinguishing between able-bodied, infirm, aged and destitute.
BRENNAN: But right at this moment there are people we might classify as able-bodied, who cannot work on public works projects because they don't yet exist. And they cannot buy maize which may or may not be coming from America. So how do these 'able–bodied' survive?
DR SHANNON: Can I suggest that they fall under the classification of 'destitute' and are eligible for indoor relief at our workhouse?
BRENNAN: To be eligible for the workhouse, Doctor, these 'destitute' must first give up their land - and with it any hope of *ever* earning a living from it again. And, under

the laws that govern us, if one family member goes into the workhouse, all must follow. Once inside, whole families are separated - man from woman; son from daughter. They're dressed in uniforms, forced to partake in hard labour – all just to receive indoor relief. Is it any wonder they resist? No, no, they just – need – food!
SHANNON: I've heard the Society of Friends have, in some instances, set up temporary soup kitchens.
BRENNAN: The Quakers: why would we use the Soupers when *we* have money to provide food?
HUNTER: You spurn the thought of their assistance because they are not of your own church?
BRENNAN: I spurn the thought of it because we have means enough here to help our own!
MEAHAN: Gentlemen, please, restrain any opinion or grievance that may hinder our collective goals! Father, you have prosecuted your case forcefully, if a little less tactfully than we might have expected. However, if the committee agrees we will proceed immediately with the establishment of a *food depot* and will expedite the processes of receiving outdoor relief until we can implement the full scheme of public works. Now, do I have agreement on this fundamental course and principle…?
ALL: Aye.
MEAHAN: Thank you.
Lighting change

FOOD DEPOT

May 1846
Food Depot – Day:
Corn gruel or 'stirabout' is being administered to a long line of destitute people. It is generally an orderly affair, overseen by an unlikely assortment of volunteers: the landlord; his wife; Olivia; Biddy; Mrs Mullark, who ladles; and, the priest, doing his best to keep the line in order.
MEAHAN *(Bringing Brennan downstage)*: Father, I had no idea there'd be so many at the Food Depot?
BRENNAN: It'll get worse as word gets out.
A woman in the line collapses. They rush to help her.
Lighting change

HOPE FOR THE NEW CROP

Field adjoining the O'Conor's Cottage – Day:

Sean is showing Sarah how to pull new potatoes from the ground. Mary and Bridget are a little removed. Bridget is reading. Mary is lining the bottom of two baskets with layers of cloth. Both have an eye on the main action.

SEAN: Grab her by the waist, like this, see? Reach underneath with the tips of ye fingers. Feel 'em dance through.

She feels the delicate tubers and her eyes widen.

SARAH*:* Ohh!

SEAN: Have ye got one?

SARAH: Aye…

SEAN: Can ye get yer fist around it?

SARAH: I can.

SEAN *(Looking to Mary)*: Good – it's good; it's solid. We don't want 'em too big – not yet. Leave 'im be. *(To Mary)* (We) wouldn't want to go pullin' em too early – (It'd be) bad luck.

MARY: For all.

SARAH *(Pleading)*: Ma? Fa?

After some consultation, Mary nods.

Alright, we've had a change of heart: soft now; clear around it with ye fingers, until ye can feel it comin' up of its own mind.

She does, and produces, miraculously, a small, but perfectly formed new potato, which brings applause from Mary and Bridget.

Let me see…

She hands it to him. He wipes it and inspects for an eternity.

Perfect…

The girls applaud again. But for Sean and Mary, try as they might to conceal it, their relief is palpable. Sean gives the potato back to Sarah and hugs her.

Good girl; put it in the basket now.

MARY: Haven't ye forgotten somethin'?

SEAN *(Remembering)*: Oh, aye.

MARY: With all this heat and rain, we could do with a little extra help; what do ye say?

SEAN: Go on then, Mary.

Mary produces a small bottle. Sarah holds the potato out and Mary sprinkles holy water on it with an air of solemnity.

ALL *(Reciting)*: Blessed be the first of season; for us and all who feed; keep us safe from fairy treason; and out of harm and need.

MARY: For now

SEAN: And forever.

ALL: Watch over and deliver us.

Mary looks to Sean. He nods acknowledgement. Father Brennan, who has been watching on, approaches.

BRENNAN: You've had a bit of a peek, then?

SEAN *(Surprised)*: Father?

BRENNAN *(Of the potato)*: No speckleleens?

SEAN: None at all.

BRENNAN: Thanks be to the blessed holy Father, who watches down upon us every moment of every day. *(To the girls)* Greetings, girls.

GIRLS: Father Brennan.

SEAN: What can we do for ye, Father?

BRENNAN *(Of Mary's bottle)*: Well, from what I've just seen, I'd say, very little. I was unaware ye had your own stash of holy water, Mary. If I'd known, I might have come for some replenishment. *(Of the bible)* Still hard at it, Bridget?

BRIDGET: Aye, Father.

BRENNAN: Good, good… *(To Sarah)* And you too, smidgeon. *(He takes the bible and finds the flower in it)* Oh, lovely flower. *(To Bridget, conspiratorially)* Did you tell your sister about the round belly o' the world? (*Changing tack)* Oh, dear, I'm afraid in all the excitement, I forgot to tie up my old nag. I think she's somewhere over there by the far gate. Would you mind chasing her up for me, girls? I'd be ever so grateful…

It is a thin ruse to get the parents alone, but the girls oblige and leave. He calls after them.

Make sure and give us a hoy when you see her! *(To Sean and Mary)* Right, how are we then?

SEAN: Ah, no use complainin', Father. We're holdin' up better than some other clachans. *(Of the potatoes)* And if this lot's right…

BRENNAN: Aye, there's hope yet.

Beat

SEAN *(Reading Brennan):* Ye been talkin' to people?

BRENNAN: Ah well, ears like mine are bound to hear things - not all of it true, mind.

SEAN: Well, like I say, we're holdin' up.

MARY: Crop's comin', in spite of___

SEAN: A lot of silly talk.

BRENNAN: Aye, there's a lot of silly talk about… talk between brothers, for instance.

SEAN *(Stiffening)*: A lot of silly talk about what?

BRENNAN: That little blow up with Liam the other night.

SEAN: In front of the whole clachan – me own brother - he blows in like a summer storm and starts shootin' off his mouth with all kinds of accusations.

BRENNAN: Accusations with a seed of truth in them?

SEAN *(Comic deflection)*: Did you put him up to this? *(Shocked)* Ye did..? Ye'd rather involve the Father than talk to me? *(Betrayed)* Ah, right.

MARY: Ye wouldn't have listened.

SEAN: Is that so?

MARY: Yes, that's so.

SEAN: Ah, well then.

MARY: You're only thinkin' of ye own prideful self.

SEAN: What am I supposed to do? I'm not the one started it.

BRENNAN: But you can finish it. Go and see him, Sean. Tell him you'll set it right.

SEAN: Thanks very much for ye advice, Father, but I don't think it's that simple.

BRENNAN: What could be simpler than God's truth between brothers?

SEAN: Don't ye understand: Liam's one of *them* now.

BRENNAN: He's your brother. Make it right.

SEAN: With respect, Father; I know ye mean well. But all ye books and good intentions are about as good as a boat in a bog. He's one of them. They don't care about us: never have; never will – ye know it better than I. This 'God's truth', ye speak of, what's it to them? The pratae, the hunger, the dyin': they call *that* the God's truth. They even speak of it like they was in ye pulpit of a Sunday morn. What hope, Father: what hope?

Mary leaves, disgusted.

BRENNAN: This is not an end, Sean. Set it right.

He leaves.

Lighting change

WHO'S 'MOLLY'?

Liam's farm – Day:

Liam and the Agent are discussing the crime that was committed the other night on Liam's farm.

HUNTER: And this blooding a cow; it's common practice, you say?

LIAM: Aye, and bloodin' a cow's sometimes lawful too – providin' it's done with the consent of the owner of the beast.

HUNTER: You mean they'd allow it?

LIAM: (In) times of scarcity, all manner o' things are done – bloodin' included – part of the ol' ways. In days past there was even one given over to it – a specialist, if ye like; would do the bloodin' for the whole clachan. He'd do it safely, mind; not takin' too much blood; makin' sure the beast was well sealed after it. But things bein' as they are nowadays, it's rarely the legal kind that goes on. Like what went on at my place.

HUNTER: You think you know who did it?

LIAM: I got a fair suspicion; but little proof. *(Suddenly aware of the danger of disclosing too much to Hunter)* I'm not sayin' I'd be rememberin' all the particular details, mind; it bein' night and all. It was just a bunch of young eedyats out for a bit of a skylark that went wrong.

HUNTER: Didn't you say they cut off the tail of the beast and let it bleed to death?

LIAM: I interrupted them, and got to the cow too late to save it. It's all a bit of a blur, if ye know what I mean.

HUNTER *(Pressing him)*: But you mentioned a letter?

LIAM: Aye.

HUNTER: Do you still have it?

LIAM *(Hesitating)*: No… no, I never seen the point in keepin' it. What's done's done.

HUNTER: Well, what did it say?

LIAM: Ah, you know; all piss and wind. Couldn't even spell 'Molly Maguire', for Christ's sake. That'll tell you the eedyacy of 'em.

HUNTER: 'Molly Maguire'… who's Molly Maguire?

LIAM: Ah, just a girl's name, ye know….

HUNTER: Which girl?

LIAM: It's just a name, sir, that's all. It's just a name…

Lighting change

FAMILY SCENE - THE VISIT

O'Conor Cottage – Day:

Sean is working on the potato plot. Bridget and Sarah are playing hopscotch – or a suspiciously bastardised version of that we saw Olivia playing earlier.

SEAN: What's that?

BRIDGET/SARAH: Hopscotch!

SEAN: English?

BRIDGET: Aye.

Liam appears.

SEAN *(Seeing Liam.)*: Take ye sister inside (*Bridget hesitates)*.

LIAM *(Smiling)*: It's alright, girls, no harm here.

SEAN: Take her inside, I say.

Bridget takes Sarah away.

LIAM: She's got some spirit that one; takes after her Father. Looks like her grandmother. The little one, I'm not so sure about__

SEAN: What is it, Liam.

LIAM: I came to apologise.

SEAN: Father Brennan come callin', did he?

LIAM: No, he hasn't – not yet. But I can expect a visit, can I?

SEAN: More than likely…

LIAM: Look, Sean, I… said more than I should. But what the boys did was wrong. You know that as well as I. But I'm prepared to let it go by. I can't do more.

Beat

And I come to warn ye.

SEAN: What about?

LIAM: This new Agent the Meahans brought in – Hunter - you watch out for him.

SEAN: That's a bit rich comin' from you.

LIAM: I mean it, Sean. He's not like any other. I don't trust him.

SEAN: Well, like they say: I'd rather be shakin' the devil's tail than his hand.

LIAM: Watch out for him. He's a bad seed.

SEAN: Ah, go on, will ye; what's this all about? The money I owe you?

LIAM: I don't give shite about money. I'm tryin' to help.

SEAN: I'll pay ye back. I told ye. Come Gale Day, these oats'll be ready. I'll get somethin' for 'em. Be some for you. Tell that to ye new shams up there in the Big House.

LIAM: They're plannin' on puttin' up the rents, Sean.

SEAN: We'll manage. Pratae were sick last year was why none could pay. We've planted since, and when the new crop comes, we'll give ye what ye want. Have I ever not got us through?

LIAM: Listen to ye – like Moses himself. Whether ye heard what I just said about the Agent or not, makes no difference. (The) place is changin', Sean; times are changin'.

SEAN: God, the way ye talk now, anyone'd think ye were born to the Big House. Comin' round here, like a right royal squireen. Have ye forgot yeself, brother? Have ye forgot who y'are?

LIAM: No I haven't. But I've realised somethin' you're still blind to: the old ways are gone. This is what we got now.

SEAN: Only some got more than others, is that it?

LIAM: All of us are doin' what we can!

SEAN: And what'll you be doin' when all of us are squeezed off the place: grabbin' it all up for ye gombeen self? Is that ye plan?

LIAM: Ye fight's not with me. Open up ye eyes!

SEAN: Right, thanks for the advice; on ye way now.

LIAM: I wanted this to be good, Sean. I did. But you'll be on your own from now on. Say hello to Mary for me.

He turns to go.

SEAN: What have we ever done to you, eh? All those times ye needed us. We were there for ye? *(Gesturing about him)* Is it this, ye resent?

LIAM: Have ye lost ye mind?

SEAN: Comin' over here, playin' with the little ones... We've not been without stain, ye know that. We've had losses… the boy. But it counts for nothin'. You're almost turnin' green with it. *(Liam is speechless)* It must be hard: coveting something so bad; always wantin' it for your own; grabbin' at another's, first chance ye get.

Liam lunges and they set upon each other, brutally. Mary runs out of the cottage followed by the girls.

MARY: Stop it! Stop it!

She tries to grab Sean from behind, but in trying to throw her off, he smashes her in the face with an elbow. The blow sends her reeling. Both men stop fighting immediately.

SEAN *(Running to her)*: Mary!

MARY: Get off me!

She shakes him off.

Shame on you! Shame on ye both! (*Looking from one to the other)* Shame…

She leaves.

Lighting change

THE PLAN

June 1846

Big House - Meahan's study – evening:

MEAHAN: 'Molly Maguire: you don't honestly expect me to take seriously some story about a secret society of men moving about the night harming life and property dressed in women's clothing?

HUNTER: Dismiss it, sir, at your peril. I do not speak lightly of such things and nor should you.

MEAHAN: But why would they target me? I've done nothing to antagonise them.

HUNTER: Such reasoning is naïve, sir, and counterproductive. However, my task is not to suppress rebellion, but to propose a plan that may remove it from consideration and restore the fortunes of your estate. I have studied the options and have arrived at one which may – at first hearing – seem radical, perhaps in the extreme.

MEAHAN: Speak directly and I will respond in kind.

HUNTER: The estate is bleeding, and has been for so long its limping carcass must be killed off quickly. Depopulation and crop diversification are the solutions. I propose you cut tenant numbers by two thirds to allow for a redistribution of land boundaries; an expansion of existing plots and a transition to diversified crops and livestock farming. A pastoral Ireland is an inevitable future. A new life will rise from the old: leaner, healthier and more efficient.

Beat

MEAHAN: Are you seriously advocating 'culling' the tenants?

HUNTER: Emotive words, Major.

MEAHAN: These are human beings, not disposable commodities.

HUNTER: With respect, Major, Relief Programs such as those being undertaken by the Committee are at best short-term panaceas. They breed a false sense of entitlement. Welfare is against the laws of commerce and of human nature. It therefore violates the laws of God himself.

MEAHAN *(Challenging)*: What would you have in its place?

HUNTER: Subsidised emigration to North America: on a scale not yet contemplated.

MEAHAN: Subsidised emigration?

HUNTER: The new world is waiting to be populated. The tide of people flowing to it cannot be stemmed. *(A new tack)* Financially, you will bear the cost of sea passages. These will be significant; but must be weighed against the hemorrhaging cost of sustaining your current regime.

MEAHAN: How would you do it?

HUNTER: Rents must rise. This will provide motivation to either pay up or leave. Tenants can be induced to emigrate with the incentive of a contribution to cover their sea passage. Those who choose not to leave will face seizure of land, crop and livestock. Those that resist will be issued with eviction notices. Agitators will simply be encouraged to agitate elsewhere.

MEAHAN: You've put a figure on the venture?

HUNTER: Six thousand emigrants will cost twenty thousand pounds, depending on negotiations with shipping agents.

MEAHAN: It's too much.

HUNTER: It is a false economy, sir, to find it so.

MEAHAN: You speak of money. I speak of lives. I agree to some form of subsidised emigration. But we need to consider more lightly those who choose not to take up the option of leaving. We must distinguish between those that *can't* pay and those that *won't*.

HUNTER: Pardon me for being so bold; but is this you speaking, or your wife?

Hunter realises immediately the mistake of this question.

MEAHAN: I beg your pardon?

HUNTER: Forgive me, sir.

Beat

MEAHAN *(Emphatic)*: Mr Hunter, you will not resile from showing compassion to those that are genuinely unable to pay rent… As for these Molly Maguires: discover the specific cause of their discontent and use whatever means to mitigate the harm.

HUNTER: Sir___

MEAHAN: Now, if you'll excuse me…

Hunter leaves.

Lighting change

OPINIONS AND COMMANDS

Liam's Farm – Morning:

Liam is tending to his small crop of turnips. Hunter turns and greets him – taking him by surprise.

HUNTER: Good morning, Liam.

LIAM: Ah, Mr Hunter, sir… and also to you.

Beat

HUNTER: That look you just gave me now.

LIAM: Look, sir?

HUNTER: As if the devil had just walked over your grave.

LIAM: Ye surprised me, sir; don't like people creepin' up on me these days.

HUNTER: And your little crop here: that's something to be protected, I imagine. Turnips, aren't they?

LIAM: Aye. Time was, puttin' a turnip or two into the ground'd be cause for amusement. Nowadays, they're a valuable commodity.

Liam fiddles.

HUNTER: Does my presence bother you, Liam?

LIAM: No, sir - not so much ye presence as the one flies before it. There's been rumours…

HUNTER: And what might these rumours amount to, in your opinion?

LIAM: I have no opinion on such things.

HUNTER: Yet your agitation suggests you fear them?

LIAM: People say you've a mind to put up the rents; that you're plannin' to send us all to America; that you've already sought signatures from the landlord for eviction notices upon those refusin' to go.

HUNTER: Well, the cat is out of its bag. Are you familiar with that turn of phrase?

LIAM: Familiar enough to know that if this is what you're plannin', ye can expect fair resistance.

HUNTER: Is that an opinion?

LIAM: You'd be best to opine it a fact. I know these people. Despite what ye think, they're good at heart. The crops'll be up soon. You'll get ye rents, or that they're able to give. Best you wait for the pratae to be pulled out of the ground before ye try to do the same to ye tenants.

HUNTER: Best you resist the need to give instruction. And instead, take it from those assigned with the task.

LIAM: Aye, sir.

HUNTER: You will alert tenants to changes on the estate. Come next Gale Day, rents will rise. Crops and livestock will be seized as collateral for those who can only make part-payment. Eviction notices will be issued to those that resist payment. You will mention the option of a sea passage to North America, and the great advantage in taking up this option. You will organise a small group of men to help the sheriff and I tumble the houses of evictees.

LIAM: Would there be anythin' else, sir?

HUNTER: Yes - these Molly Maguires: find them and give their names to me.

LIAM: Pokin' ye fist into a bee hive, ye can only hope to get stung.

HUNTER: Again, opinions from the man who claims to have none… O'Conor: that's quite a name around these parts.

LIAM: If you say so, sir.

HUNTER: It's not just me. People quake when they hear it. You have a brother, lives near the Five Mile bridge?

LIAM: Aye.

HUNTER: He has something of a reputation. In fact, the Five Mile people come up a lot in my enquiries. You've got that look on your face again.

LIAM: Why are ye bringin' my brother into this? He's got nothin' to do with it.

HUNTER: Do with what?

LIAM: Nothin', I told ye!

Beat

HUNTER: Alright, Liam, I've no particular desire to intrude upon old family disputes. That is, of course, as long as they don't interfere with the running of this estate; and as long as you continue to be clear about where your allegiances lie.

LIAM: I've been loyal to the Meahans for longer than I care to recall. You've no reason to expect anythin' else from me now.

HUNTER: Good – then I can be confident you'll be my eyes and ears in areas of, shall we say, 'dissent'.

LIAM: Aye, sir…

HUNTER: Good man. Do you have protection?

LIAM: Sir?

HUNTER: Firearms? Do you have access to them?

LIAM *(Cautiously)*: I… have a gun. Though I've not had reason to use it? People around here have no cause.

HUNTER: It might be a good idea to have it at the ready, anyway. If we're going to poke our fist into a bee hive, best we prepare ourselves for the sting, eh?

He leaves. Liam goes to the pile of peat by the side of the cottage and takes a leather pouch from under it. He takes a gun from it. Anne comes out of the cottage.

ANNE: What did he want?

He tries to conceal the gun.

What do ye think ye're doin'?

LIAM: Nothin'; I'm doin' nothin'. Go back inside.

Seeing the gun, she realises what has passed between Liam and the Agent.

ANNE: Liam, no…

LIAM: Go inside!

Lighting change

STAR AND BLUE FOG

September 1846

Outside the O'Conor's Cottage – Early evening

Bridget is up on Sean's shoulders – they spin on to the stage and look up at the night sky.

SEAN/BRIDGET: Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight.

BRIDGET: What's that one?

SEAN: The North Star.

BRIDGET: Does anyone own it?

SEAN: I don't think so.

BRIDGET: Good. It'll be mine then.

He laughs then notices something in the distance. She climbs down.

What is it?

SEAN: (I) don't know… Looks like a fog comin' over.

Mary approaches.

BRIDGET: Ma, it's blue!

MARY: Go inside now. Sarah wants ye to read to her.

BRIDGET: But Ma, look__

MARY: Inside.

She leaves.

MARY: Is it…?

SEAN: Same as before.

MARY: What have we done to deserve it?

SEAN: Ahh, ye listen to too much babble!

MARY: And you're too mockin' of the ol' ways. I knew this was comin'.

SEAN: Why, because of silly talk and a bit of rain?

MARY: When we had plenty we wasted it: a willful waste makes a woeful want.

SEAN: Mary, it wouldn't have kept.

MARY: And this fog?

SEAN: Ground's moist, that's all.

A pungent odour fills the air.

MARY: And this smell: it means nothin' too?

SEAN: Fairies are fartin' at us; that it?

MARY: Check it!

But already he's on the ground, feeling the pratae with his fingers.

Sean: I think there's speckleens come upon them.

He looks up at her, bewildered. Bridget and Sarah appear. All set to digging at the earth with their bare hands. It is not long before the reality of it becomes clear. Clachan members appear, confirming the worst: no-one has escaped the blight. They drop to their knees and begin keening.

Lighting change

PUBLIC PROCLAMATION: EVICTION NOTICES

November 1846

Town – outside the Agent's office – Day:

People clear as Robert Johnson, Hunter's brute Bailiff, comes centre-stage. Behind him, overseeing proceedings, is the Agent. The Bailiff holds up a piece of paper. As he speaks, people congregate.

JOHNSON: Tenants residing in the Manor of Meahan, let it be known that on this piece of paper is writ: 'You are requested to pay into my office all rents and arrears of rents due up to the end of this month. Failure to pay will result in 'notices to quit' the land. Charles Hunter, Agent.

After consulting Hunter, he thrusts the writ into Sean's chest. Hunter's group leaves. Lighting change

CLACHAN MEETING

Clachan – Late afternoon:

The entire Clachan is gathered together. Word has spread of the eviction notices.

MAINE: All over town they're posted in every shop and window – pay ye rent by this or up to that date. No man or woman can fail to know of it.

MARY: He even has his Bailiff announcin' it for the benefit of those who might not catch it in writin'.

THADEUS: And the wreckers' gang with our Liam and the Agent in tow move about the county like a breakin' wave. From clachan to clachan they go, servin' all they see with these 'notices to quit'.

MARTIN: We'll be next, sure.

MAINE: Now, ye don't know that, boy.

THADEUS: Some say they're offerin' to send us to America or
Canada on sailing ships, whichever be the cheapest, with passage as bribe.

MARTIN: Sailing Ships?

MAINE: What are we to do, Sean? Stay or go?

Sean is reluctant to give a definite answer.

THADEUS: I'll not be goin' anywhere. My life lies behind not in front. This is where I was born. It'll be where I die.

MAINE: Ah, ye'll not be dyin' soon, Father. Stop talkin' of it.

THADEUS: Travel's for the young, Maine, who don't yet call a place a home. Our Martin could go. *(To Martin)* What do ye think, boy?

MARTIN: I'm not thinkin' anythin', Gram. Not havin' been anywhere else, I know of no other place.

MAINE: It's possible, Martin.

OWEN: Some are meant to rove, others not. I've always had a hankerin' to see what's on the other side. But chances come and go.

MAINE: It's never too late, Owen. I'll be by ye side, if that's what it comes to.

SEAN: It's not come to anythin' yet. There's no need to be gettin' ahead of ourselves.
MARTIN: Sean, they could be on our doorstop dawn tomorrow. Best we prepare. Am I not right?
SEAN: We're all together in it, so we're better than some who're doin' it on their own. I believe, in spite of goin's on, Liam is still of this clachan.
THADEUS: Sean__
SEAN: He's one of us.
THADEUS: Argh!
SEAN: Thad, I'm right.
THADEUS: I surely hope so.
BRIDGET: He is. He is…
The rest of the clachan are shocked by this declaration from her.
SEAN: Now, Liam won't let 'em make us give over too easy. In the meantime, we've still the oats and some animals to tide us over. Public works have started and the depot's still got food.
MARY: It might be of use if Maine and I went to see the Father. He'll help us if he can. I know that.
SEAN *(Grateful)*: If ye think, Mary; that'd be a good idea. *(To all)* Now, if any of ye decide to leave. I want to make this clear: no one'll be thinkin' any the worse of ye. That's a decision that you and ye own will make in the privacy of ye hearth. For now, unless anyone has anythin' else to add, that's an end to it.
People disperse. Lighting change

SEAN PLEADS FOR HIS CLACHAN

Liam's cottage – early evening
Liam is cleaning his gun. Sean stands at some distance, watching. Liam looks up, see Sean, goes to cover up the gun, realises the folly of this and resumes cleaning it.
LIAM: So, the prodigal returns. You took ye time.
SEAN *(Of the gun)*: Keepin' yourself occupied, I see.
LIAM: Ah, ye know - pays to be prepared.
SEAN: Is Anne at home?
LIAM: She's up at the Big House servin' muck to the Mighties. Why, do ye want to speak to her?

SEAN: No, I want to speak with you, alone. Can ye help us? *(Before Liam has a chance to respond)* Please, I've not asked for much before. But it's all gone; and they're comin'. All signs are they'll try to make a move on us.

LIAM: I___

SEAN: Go on! You owe us that much! We're the blood and kin of ye, for Christ's sake! The clachan need ye!

LIAM: I can't, Sean.

SEAN: Of course ye can! Ye must have sway with 'em. Ye must have some way of at least delayin' things.

LIAM: I don't. I don't! It's come too quick. They'd made their plans before the crops failed. I'm caught up in it, like a twig in the spoke of a wheel. It's the Agent - I wish to Christ I'd never laid eyes on his feckin' face. He's got it into his head there's some sort of conspiracy goin' on. He thinks I'm tryin' to protect ye, Sean. It's hot for me. Can ye not see that? It's hot.

Beat - Sean nods and leaves.

Lighting change

EVICTION NOTICE TO QUIT: THE FEENEYS

Early November 1846

The Feeney Cottage - Dawn

JOHNSON: Occupants and tenants of this cottage owned by the landlord Meahan: come out… I say, come out of this cottage; come out of this cottage now!

The Feeneys come out of the cottage: Owen, Maeve, followed by Martin and Thadeus. Throughout the following exchange the rest of the clachan congregate around the main action.

SHERIFF: By the power invested in me as Sheriff and law officer of this county, you are hereby served this___

OWEN: 'Notice to Quit' – I know well enough what it is and what it says.

SHERIFF *(Trying to resume)*: Applying as it does to this your place of residence___

THADEUS: Did ye not hear what Owen said? We know what it is, so no use bangin' on. Serve it and be done.

HUNTER *(Coming forward)*: You'd do well to mind your tongue, old man.

THADEUS *(Backing away)*: Ah, sir, I'm mindin' it. See? *(To the rest)* I'm just tryin' to save ye time, seein' as ye likely have to serve quite a few more before ye breakfast.

MAINE: Pa, quiet.

OWEN *(To the Sheriff)*: I know the terms: six months from the date of service, peaceable possession, if not - foreceable ejectment. It's pretty plain to comprehend.
SHERIFF: That's correct to the point of law.
OWEN *(A look to Sean and then to the Agent)*: And if we choose to emigrate?
HUNTER *(Public)*: Should you choose to give up these plots promptly and peaceably, let me assure you, your present suffering will diminish and passage to a new world of opportunity will begin.
THADEUS: So that's how it goes; easy as that? *(To the goons)* Have ye no hearts, ye great galloots? Liam, can ye just stand there, while they're callin' for the death of ye own clachan? What are ye made of: stone? *(Indicating Sean, who has remained silent)* It's ye own flesh and blood! You said we could trust him! Sean, say somethin', will ye?
But Liam and Sean are aware that Hunter is now watching them closely.
HUNTER *(To Maine)*: Control the old man. We've a job to do. Best to let us get on with it.
THADEUS: Ahh… Gutless, the lot of ye! Give it here then, I'll take service of it meself___
He goes to grab the piece of paper from the Sheriff, but before he can reach it, Johnson the bailiff intervenes, knocking the old man to the ground. The family rush to him, but it is Martin who gets to him first.
MARTIN: Gram! *(To Johnson)* How could ye? He's an old man, for Christ's sake. He's a feckin' old man!
He leaps at the bailiff, but is intercepted by his father, who grabs him from behind.
OWEN: Martin, no!
Hunter approaches. He speaks to Owen, but watches Martin steadily, searching the boy for signs of militancy.
HUNTER: When we've all had a chance to calm down, I think you'll find the landlord's offer an extremely attractive one. While for some the future may be a cloudy prospect; for others, those with years on their side, it could be quite bright. I do hope for your sake, you're capable of discerning between the two.
The sheriff gives the notice to Owen. The wreckers leave. The crowd dissolves. Maine and Owen carry off a still groggy Thadeus. Martin remains with Sean. Unseen by them both, is Bridget, who overhears the following instructions.
SEAN: Martin, would ye be after doin' a little reconnaissance?

Martin acknowledges the import of such a request. They exit, followed by Bridget, unseen, in pursuit.

Lighting change

ADVENTURE

Big House – tunnel entrance – Day

Olivia is again waiting at entrance tunnel. Bridget and Sarah arrive. Her joy at seeing them is obvious.

OLIVIA: You can't come in. (The) Password's changed.

SARAH: We don't want to.

BRIDGET: We want ye to come with us.

OLIVIA: Where to?

SARAH: (We're) not tellin'.

BRIDGET: A little reconnaissance.

SARAH: It's an adventure.

OLIVIA: Oh, I don't (think) ___

SARAH: Why not… chicken.

OLIVIA: I am not! It's just… they might need me…

SARAH: Is that why you spend most of your time here alone?

BRIDGET: We'll be quick. Ye'll be back soon.

SARAH: Come on, we need ye.

The temptation is too great. They leave with her looking over her shoulder.

Lighting change

IT'S NOT HERE

Liam and Anne's Cottage: Early evening

Martin searches for the gun in Liam's turf pile. Fergus stands guard. Declan mediates between the two. They're all skittish, Fergus petrified: a theft is in process.

FERGUS: Hurry up will ye?

MARTIN: Ah, get a grip a yeself, Ferg. Ye're a shiver lookin' for a spine to climb up.

FERGUS: They'll be home any moment. I can feel it in me waters.

MARTIN: Anne won't be.

FERGUS: How do ye know?

MARTIN: She's at the Big House, serving the Mighties
dinner.

FERGUS: How do ye know?

MARTIN: Chris-jays, shut him up, will ye?

DECLAN: Ferg, shut ye mouth?

FERGUS: How do ye *know*?

MARTIN: Sean said so. Give us a hand, will ye, Dec. Where is that gun?

Up-scaled searching continues.

FERGUS: What about Liam?

MARTIN: Ah, use ye brains? *(Thinking better of it)* On second thoughts, don't. He's deliverin' more of those eviction notices, most likely.

FERGUS: But ye don't know for sure?

MARTIN: No, I don't know for sure, you stupid eedyat – that's why you're keepin' a lookout!

Fergus looks back at him

Keep ye eyes on the road! *(Exasperated)* Ah, it's not here!

DECLAN: Are ye sure this is where Sean said it'd be?

MARTIN: Of course, I'm sure! Under the turf pile, isn't that where he said it'd be?

DECLAN: I don't know, Martin. I wasn't there!

MARTIN: Well, it was. Under the turf pile: that's where Liam keeps his gun! Now, how many piles do ye see?

DECLAN: Maybe we should go back and check this is where Sean meant.

Loath as he is to leave empty-handed, Martin concedes the point.

FERGUS: Right, I'm away.

But instead, he goes into the cottage. Martin meanwhile comes downstage, frustrated at the prospect of another aborted mission.

DECLAN *(Of Fergus)*: What's he doin'?

Fergus comes out, stuffing bread down his pants.

FERGUS: Right, let's go.

MARTIN: No, we're not goin' straight back – not yet…

Lighting change

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

The Big House – Tunnel Entrance – Late Afternoon

Honora and Biddy are desperately searching for Olivia.

HONORA: Check in the stables, she might be somewhere in there.

BIDDY: I have, Ma'm – twice.

HONORA: Then check again! *(She leaves; to the other)* I want you to gather as many men as you can find …

Biddy leaves. Olivia appears, her face smeared with what looks like dried blood; her clothes and knees muddied. For all this, she is in surprisingly good spirits.

Olivia!

She rushes to Olivia and entraps her in an embrace.

HONORA: Oh, Olivia! We've been so…. How could you?!

OLIVIA: How could I what?

HONORA: Where have you been?

OLIVIA: Reconnaissance…It was an adventure – no harm done: see?

HONORA: But your face?

OLIVIA: (It's) Blackberries. Afterwards, we went up to the cemetery. There's a tree there with a little boy buried under. You can see for miles….

Lighting change

ROADSIDE ENCOUNTER

Crossroads, near the Five Mile Bridge – early evening:

The Agent and Liam are about to go their separate ways after a long day's work. The Agent is in a cheerful mood, Liam less so.

HUNTER: (It was) A good day, Liam.

Obviously Liam has a different opinion on the matter.

You handled yourself well out there. There's no need to be ashamed. These people will be the better for it in the long run.

LIAM: Maybe….

HUNTER: There's a kind of divinity in such work.

LIAM: That may be so, sir. But it need not involve us gainin' pleasure from it.

HUNTER: True enough.

Beat

Well, I've still to report to Major Meahan before the day's out. Goodnight.

He offers his hand to Liam, who after some hesitation, shakes it.

LIAM: Goodnight, sir.

Liam leaves. The Agent watches him go, still unsure of Liam's allegiance to his cause. He turns to go. Three figures come out from the side of the road with shirts wrapped over heads to disguise their identities. They surround him. They set upon him, beating him savagely.

Lighting change

THE GUN IS MISSING

Liam and Anne's Cottage – early evening:

Liam arrives at his cottage after bidding farewell to the Agent. He notices the peat pile has been disturbed. He searches for the gun. It is missing. Anne enters and sees him pawing at the turf pile.

ANNE: Liam, what's wrong?

LIAM: The gun: where is it?

She does not know. And does not reply.

Lighting change

YOU'RE IN DANGER, MAJOR

The Big House – interior – evening:

With some difficulty the Agent gets to his feet. Clearly in pain and struggling to breath, he totters for a moment before the Landlord and his wife enter the room.

MEAHAN: Dear God!

Shocked at his state, they rush to him, but are waved away.

HUNTER: If you don't mind, I'll just stand.

MEAHAN *(To Honora)*: Send for the doctor and the police.

HUNTER: No, please, I'd prefer it if you didn't. Neither will be of use, I suspect. I didn't get much of a look at them.

MEAHAN: You were attacked?

HUNTER: There were three: surprise being the great accomplice of cowards.

MEAHAN: Where?

HUNTER: Not far from here: near the crossroads at the northern edge of Five Mile.

HONORA: You mean our people here? I've seen them at the Food Depot. They can barely compel their legs. It's impossible…

HUNTER: I wish it were, madam. My ribs would be the better for it.

HONORA: How do you know?

HUNTER: These paupers tend not to venture far from their nests.

HONORA: Their 'nests?'

HUNTER: Please excuse any indiscretion, madam: under the circumstances... The truth is I consider the worst of them no better than any other vermin plaguing us.

HONORA *(Shocked)*: Your attitude is offensive, sir.

MEAHAN: Please, Honora___

HUNTER: Perhaps I've had a little more to do with them than you.

HONORA: Your presumption is impertinent.

HUNTER: If it be so, then consider my apology less so.

Beat

The purpose of my visit tonight was to give you report on our progress, which in the main is solid. But this incident casts a pall over things. It's no longer safe for you and your family to be here. I can't put it more plainly: you're in mortal danger. They'll not stop at setting upon me. You must consider yourselves and your child targets.

MEAHAN: What would you have us do?

HUNTER: You'd planned to spend the winter in London. Leave now. Let things settle down. When you return, it will be less volatile, I promise you.

MEAHAN *(Considering)*: There's sense in it, Honora. We're offering assisted emigration to North America. I'll need time to negotiate their passages in London. It may just be their salvation.

Honora is not convinced.

(To Hunter) Thank you, Charles. We'll consider it.

Lighting change

IT WASN'T THERE

Clachan - Night

The three young men speak with Sean.

SEAN: Ye couldn't find it?

MARTIN: It wasn't there.

SEAN: Ye looked?

MARTIN: Sure, we looked.

DECLAN: It wasn't there, Sean.

FERGUS: They pulled the turf pile apart.

MARTIN: If ever the gun was there, either Liam's moved it, or he's got it with him.

Beat

SEAN: Alright, let it go.

MARTIN: Sean, there's somethin' else you should know; somethin' else we did…

They look sheepishly at each other, then back to Sean.

Lighting change

FOOD DEPOT'S CLOSED

December 1846

Food Depot – Day:

A melee is taking place on the front steps of the closed Food Depot, with Father Brennan doing his best to pacify the crowd, who, despite his status among them, agitate beneath his dialogue.

BRENNAN: Please, please, I ask you to be patient while we sort out problems we've had supplying food to the depot…. I'm doing everything in my power to get the depot reopened as soon as possible. I give ye my guarantee. I cannot do more…. I cannot….

But their protest has only grown throughout his speech, sweeping him into its clutching centre, mauling him, spitting him out onto his knees, leaving him alone and hopelessly praying.

Lighting change

DELEGATION

Church - Evening

Father Brennan is praying at the altar of his church in near-darkness. Maine and Mary appear behind him. He is embarrassed by the excess of emotion they may have seen.

MARY: Father, forgive us for comin' like this at night.

BRENNAN: No, Mary, the doors are always open, you know that - if not a church, where?

MAINE: We come from the Five Mile, Father.

BRENNAN: I know, Maine, I know. It was a long way in the cold dark.

Beat

BRENNAN: There's little point me asking.

MARY: It's bad, Father.

MAINE: The (public) works is dryin' up

MARY: (All the) Food's gone.

MAINE: Depot's closed.

MARY: Little ones're dyin' in people's arms.

MAINE: The old are walkin' 'emselves into the fields.

MARY: Only ones profitin' are them that build the coffins.

MAINE: They're makin' 'em with a trap door to use again.

The Father drops his head.

BRENNAN: I'm sorry. I've failed you.

MAINE: There's nothin' ye could've done ye haven't. We appreciate you, Father – all ye done for us.

BRENNAN: I'm looking into how best to get the Depot open again. But the funds from Dublin have dried up. It's the change of government in England, I'm told. *(He shakes his head)*. There's talk of soup. I'll do my best.

MARY: Father, we were wonderin' if ye might be able to have a word with the Landlord, bein' the festive season.

MAINE: Or maybe his wife: they say she's cut from a compassionate cloth.

MARY: We know ye have his ear, where he'd be deaf to the likes of us.

BRENNAN: I may have done at once, but __

MAINE: If ye could just try, Father.

MARY: Please...?

BRENNAN: You haven't heard? No, why would you have? He and his family have taken themselves to London for the winter, staying at some fancy hotel.

The disappointment in the women is palpable.

But I have a few ideas of my own. I could, perhaps, call a special meeting of the Relief Committee; get some funds for a soup kitchen - just give me a little more time and I'll see what I can do…

Lighting change

WORKHOUSE GATES

Workhouse Gates – Day:

Dr Shannon and a Matron stand outside the workhouse gates in front of a mass of people. It is a different crowd to that of the food depot: more debilitated, more resigned. Occasionally, one is granted entrance. Finally, the gates close on the mob and their cries fade.

SHANNON: That's enough! No more! The workhouse is full!

The mob dissolves.

Have them recorded, scrubbed down and clothed, if you would sister. How many are there now?

MATRON: More than twice the workhouse capacity: it'll be no good if the fever's already upon them.

SHANNON: I know. I know…

MATRON: Merry Christmas, Doctor.

He stares blankly at her – an awkward moment.

Lighting change

THE DROP

Clachan members fill the space. They stand facing the audience. One by one they drop to the ground, until none remain but the O'Conor family, who huddle together in a pool of light.

LONDON CORRESPONDENCE

Hunter's Office and a London Hotel:

The following action amounts to condensed fragments of written correspondence between the Agent and the Landlord over the winter of 1846-47.

MEAHAN: My Dear Charles, season's greetings to you from London. It is with great pleasure that I write to inform you I have secured passages for emigrants on board two ships, each bound for Canada, at rates I consider fair and reasonable. Whilst numbers are as yet modest in terms of our projected totals, it is a beginning.

HONORA *(Appearing):* Most agreeable is that conditions on the ships meet basic human requirements with respect to the health and safety of passengers.

HUNTER *(Appearing)*: Dear Major, your news is most welcome and allows for the possibility of moving to the next transitional stage of our operation. To this end, I enclose final ejectment decrees for signature.

The Landlord is handed a large pile of ejectment decrees – a glance at his wife.

MEAHAN: Charles___

HONORA: We have recently received word from Father Brennan that there are a growing number of tenants in severe distress, who face the perilous prospect of a winter without sustenance.

MEAHAN: We await word from Dublin on funds to set up a soup kitchen. *(Referring to the decrees)* Unfortunately, we cannot pursue further action in this regard until news___

HONORA: To turn these people loose without means whatsoever to feed themselves - or be fed - runs contrary to our wishes.

MEAHAN: I have therefore been reconsidering our strategy of delivering the final ejectment decrees; and would ask you, please, to distinguish between those that *can't* pay from those that *won't*.

HUNTER: Such distinctions are fatuous. They are of the same breed, the same inclination, the same nature___

MEAHAN: Nonetheless, I ask you to waylay any decision to evict en masse until after the worst of the winter has passed.

HUNTER: You think their fortunes will change with the passing of seasons?

HONORA *(Directly confronting him)*: Have you no charity?

HUNTER: Charity flees from necessity.

HONORA: Is it necessary to be so cruel?

HUNTER: Necessity overborne by weakness chokes resolve.

HONORA: Necessity must be weighed against the value of each human life.

HUNTER: Each human life must be weighed against the total advancement of *all* human life.

HONORA: All human life is valuable. It is the duty of a civilised world to consider the plight of its most vulnerable.

HUNTER: The plight of the most vulnerable merely indicates the need for a civilization to evolve.

HONORA: Even if that evolution is immoral?

HUNTER: Morality is relative to the temper of the times.

HONORA: Then you have no moral compass.

HUNTER: Its north is simply a direction you cannot comprehend.

HONORA: You live without decency.

HUNTER: I live without the freedom to act! *(To Meahan)* Sir, I am not in the habit of delivering ultimatums. But I cannot possibly continue in your employ if you do not allow me to fulfill the obligations bestowed upon me as Agent of this estate. It is beyond argument. It is beyond philosophy. To improve your land, you must cull two thirds its population. I am resolute. The decision, of course, is yours.

Beat

MEAHAN: Mr Hunter, the situation with respect to our tenants is regrettable… But I regret, more, the prospect of losing your valued services. To this end, please find enclosed the signed decrees. Each eviction will be accompanied by monetary inducement to the sum of… of… (*Honora leaves, disgusted)*

Lighting change

THE LEAVING

February 1847

Clachan – Dusk:

Owen and Sean look out at the view from the clachan.

OWEN: Sean, we're leavin'- on one of the boats.

SEAN: I thought ye might be.

OWEN: Things're too hot for the lad. I'm livin' in fear they'll come lookin' for him. I thought it might ease. But I'm fearin' it the more each day.

SEAN: Aye, there's no shame in that. It was easier when it was just us against them. Now, we've more to think about.

OWEN: Would ye look after the old man for us? He won't come: stubborn as a nail that won't be prised. *(Sean nods)*

SEAN: When?

OWEN: Tomorrow… We'll be gone before the sun. Better that way.

Beat

I went to the Agent's office yesterday. Amazin' how painless it is signin' ye life away.

SEAN: You're not the first and won't be the last. Pretty soon the only proof we were ever here'll be the grooves in the ground where the pratae once was.

Beat

Send word to let us know you're alright.

OWEN: Aye, we will, as soon as we hit the shore. They say the trees in Canada grow as tall as mountains.

SEAN: (Is) That so?

OWEN: 'Tis. First thing I'll do when we get settled is climb up to the top of the very tallest and look out to see if I can see you.

SEAN: Will ye?

OWEN: I will. If ye should see somebody wavin' from a long way off – that'll be me. Make sure ye wave back.

The two men hug as the rest of the Feeneys and O'Conors enter and farewell.

MAINE: We'll not forget ye, Sean – not in this lifetime.

Lighting change

THE PUTTING OUT

March 1847

Outside the O'Conor's cottage – Dawn:

Father Brennan shuffles about uncomfortably before speaking.

BRENNAN: Sean…Sean O'Conor!

Sean appears, still groggy from sleep.

SEAN: Father?

BRENNAN: You must come… Gather Mary and the girls… It's starting…

The Sheriff appears, along with Hunter, Liam and wreckers - crowbars in hand.

SHERIFF: Are you the man of the household?

SEAN: Out of the way, Father.

The Bailiff, interpreting this as an act of aggression, knocks Sean to the ground. Other soldiers appear, along with clachan members.

MARY *(Running from the cottage)*: Sean! *(To Liam)* What are ye doin'?

LIAM: The Father's only tryin' to help, Mary. Stand aside now, please. Two gale days have come and gone.

MARY: Ye took our oats.

LIAM: That covered the rise in rent, but little more.

SEAN: We give ye the skin off our backs: that's not enough?

LIAM: Everyone has to pay their way.

SHERIFF: This should come as no surprise now.

MARY *(Uncomprehending)*: Ye're puttin' us out?

LIAM: Go inside and collect the girls and whatever else ye'll be needin'. Gather what you can. Be quick about it…

BRENNAN: Do what he says; please, Mary.

SEAN *(Quietly)*: Do what he says, Mary.

She complies.

SEAN: So, it's come to this?

LIAM: Aye.

Mary and the two girls reappear with a bag of possessions.

SEAN: Take the girls away.

MARY: Let them do what they came to do in front of us all.

LIAM: Away with them, Mary; it's no place for them now.

BRENNAN: Go to the church and wait for me. I've made plans.

MARY: The workhouse?

SHERIFF *(To the crowd)*: You all know what's to follow. *(Checking with the Agent)* Now, there's reward here for any who wishes to play their part: a shilling for a few moments of your valuable time.

Silence

Two… three shillings…. Alright, suit yourselves. *(Looking to Hunter)* Do you want to save the roof for them, Mr Hunter?

HUNTER *(Pointedly to Sean)*: No, burn it first.

MARY: No, we'll be needin' it as the roof for a scalpeen by the road… please!

HUNTER: You'd do best to listen to the priest. Get out of the way. *(Turning to the Sheriff)* Do it…

He gives the signal to begin the tumbling. The crowbar brigade are about to advance on the cottage, when Bridget runs to the Agent. Sean, along with Mary, try to stop her, but Liam intervenes.

BRIDGET *(Calmly to the Agent)*: You're supposed to offer us money too - in return for the tumblin'.

HUNTER: I beg your pardon?

BRIDGET: Major Meahan's instructed it: a pound for each tumblin'. Isn't that right, Father Brennan?

BRENNAN: Yes, I believe that's right, Bridget.

Crowd murmurs

BRIDGET: A pound, was it?

BRENNAN: Aye, I believe so.

HUNTER: That is… discretionary.

BRIDGET: About grantin' it, or the amount?

HUNTER *(Flummoxed)*: Both.

BRIDGET: As to the grantin': I'll start the tumblin' – no fear, it'll be done. As to the amount: the Major's instruction is for a pound inducement to each family; plus the three shillin's the Sheriff just offered to begin it.

BRENNAN: According to the Major's instruction___

HUNTER: I'm not bound to anything!

SEAN: Tell her then. Tell her why she can't be the one to start it.

The Agent says nothing. Bridget goes back inside the cottage and returns with a lump of smoldering peat. Sean lifts her up on his shoulders and she lights the roof of the

cottage. The roof burns.

Lighting change

HOMECOMING

May 1847

Road – Spring, dusk:

The Meahans are returning home from London in their open phaeton (carriage). The Agent is driving up front. Excited at being back in Ireland, Olivia keeps trying to stand up to take in more of the view, much to her parents' annoyance.

HONORA *(Frustrated)*: Olivia!

OLIVIA: Can I hold the reins, Mr Hunter?

HONORA: Please sit still.

OLIVIA: But I've done it before.

They begin to pass people walking along the road – ghostly spectres – who stare blankly as the phaeton passes. Hunter pulls to a stop. There is a woman, who, unable to continue, has collapsed in the middle of the road. She is accompanied by a boy about Olivia's age and has a baby in her arms.

HUNTER: You there, get off the road; we've no room to pass…. Move along, I say.

The boy and woman do nothing. Others stop and stare.

Get off the road! You're blocking our way!

WOMAN *(Weakly)*: I would, sir; were it not for the little one. I've only just now managed to get her off to sleep, after weeks of her cryin' her poor little heart out. I daren't wake her for fear she starts up again.

MEAHAN: Charles__

HUNTER *(Alighting)*: It's alright, sir. I'll deal with it.

WOMAN: Please, sir, take pity on a poor misguided soul and what's left of her brood.

HONORA *(From the phaeton):* What is it, Mr Hunter?

HUNTER: Nothing, madam, I'll attend to it. *(To the boy, more quietly)* Look, get your mother to the side of the road, or I'll do it myself.

The boy steps between them.

WOMAN: Now, Night, step aside – the gentleman means us no harm. *(To the Agent)* Ye'll have to excuse him, sir. He's me little Night now. *(To the boy)* And what a Night he is.

She struggles to her feet, with assistance from the boy. Honora alights.

HONORA: What seems to be the problem?

HUNTER: Mrs Meahan, for your own safety, get back into the phaeton.

Onlookers edge a little closer.

WOMAN: Ye ladyship, I was just sayin' to ye man how I fear the little one startin' up again. I've only her and my boy left. You're a mother yourself, I see.

HONORA: Is there anything we can do?

HUNTER *(Calling)*: Major… *(Meahan alights; unseen, Olivia follows and stands looking at the boy)*

WOMAN: Aye, there *is* somethin', ye ladyship. I wonder if ye wouldn't mind puttin' us in the back o' ye cart, so as we might get into town.

HONORA: You have to get into town?

WOMAN: Aye… Haven't ye heard: the soup kitchen's open - a thousand blessings be upon our Father Brennan.

HUNTER *(To Meahan)*: Brennan has opened a soup kitchen?

WOMAN: Aye - with the spirit o' God inside him.

HONORA *(Noticing the baby)*: Your baby, may I see her?

WOMAN: Aye, but be ever so quiet.

Honora gasps. It is dead.

HONORA: Oh, it's…!

HUNTER *(To Meahan)*: Get them into the phaeton… now!

Meahan grabs Honora as Hunter grabs Olivia. Both are bundled into the phaeton. From this point on any semblance of normality in the woman is replaced by the ravings of hunger.

WOMAN *(Advancing):* What have we ever done to you? I only showed me beautiful little one. But you all up there; look at ye - not a kind bit between ye. Well, we'll see on the day-of-judgment who sits highest… And what a day that will be, when the first shall be last and the last shall be first…

Her rant is accompanied by a rising chorus of abuse from the crowd; who circle and approach - only silenced by a single shot from the Agent's gun fired into the air.

Lighting change

BEDSIDE

Roadside scalpeen – Night:

Sean sits with Mary, who is bedridden. She has the fever, but after a difficult night, rests more easily.

MARY: Is it daylight yet?

SEAN: No.

MARY: Is that the old rooster playin' up again? Or are my ears deceivin' me?

SEAN: Aye, Mary, I think it might be.

MARY: Then we'll have to be doin' something about your ears. I was only making it up. (*She smiles weakly)* Was I bad? *(She was)* Ah, this fever… Where are the girls?

SEAN: Out collectin' herbs for a broth.

MARY: We must talk before they're back. Go and see the Father. Ask him about the workhouse, if it's not too late.

SEAN: I'll not be goin'.

MARY: Ye must. For the girls, ye must.

SEAN: They'll split us up, ye know that.

MARY: At least it's a chance. This is not. It'll be the fever. Get 'em away before it's too late…Get 'em away…

Lighting change

TURNIP TOPS

Roadside – Night:

Bridget and Sarah gather herbs by the roadside. Bridget scours the ground meticulously, Sarah less so. She hands Bridget a clump. Bridget inspects and throws them away; this apparently not upsetting the younger: it is only a ruse to discuss what's on her mind.

SARAH: I'll not be goin' to no workhouse.

BRIDGET: We may not have a choice.

SARAH: I've heard what happens there and I'll not be goin'.

She breaks off. Something has caught eye. Following her eye-line, Bridget sees it too.

BRIDGET: No, Fa said to stick to the road. You know whose place it is…

But Sarah has already ventured off the road into the paddock. They begin cutting turnip tops from the ground, placing them stealthily into a sack. In the background, a figure approaches and pounces on Sarah. She screams. Bridget jumps onto his back scratching at his face. He wrenches her from his back and sets upon them both with unrestrained violence. A woman arrives with a lamp.

ANNE: Stop! Liam! Liam - enough! (*She drags him off, still breathless and wild.)* Get away! *(Seeing the girls)*: Ah, no: they're… just children..! *(Light up to their faces)* Bridget…Sarah?

Lighting change

DON'T COME AROUND AGAIN

Roadside Scalpeen - Night

Sean is outside the scalpeen anxiously waiting for the girls' return. Anne enters with one wrapped under each arm.

SEAN: What's this then?

ANNE: A misunderstandin'.

SEAN *(Seeing the girls' state)*: Who did this? Who…?

ANNE: Liam's gone.

SEAN: Where?

ANNE: I don't know.

SEAN: Go inside, girls.

They go inside. Anne hands him the sack.

ANNE: Turnip tops…. scraps. They could have asked… We would have… *(Checks herself) I* would have__

SEAN *(Taking the turnip tops)*: Leave. *(She turns to go.)* Anne… (*She stops.)* Don't come again…. *(She leaves).*

Lighting change

2ND RELIEF COMMITTEE MEETING

July 1847

The landlord leans upon the table. He is inspecting the Committee's books. The other Committee members look on anxiously. .

MEAHAN: Five hundred pounds unaccounted for.

BRENNAN: We needed a boiler to boil the soup!

MEAHAN: But it's not recorded. And these lists: they've been tampered with.

BRENNAN: If by 'tampered with' you mean revised: aye.

MEAHAN: It's wholly my responsibility__

BRENNAN: Where were you when this committee last met?

MEAHAN: I beg your pardon?

BRENNAN: You returned from London on May 22nd, did you not? And we last met on June 7th. When, among other things, we discussed these revisions. You were here on the estate. Why did you not come?

MEAHAN: I was not aware of the critical nature of things.

BRENNAN: There are thousands put out of their homes, thousands more with the fever or wandering on the roads; people dying on their feet; little children with faces

green from gobbling grass! How could you not be aware of the critical nature of things!

MEAHAN: I… was not informed. *(An admission)* We were told by Mr Hunter it was not safe to travel unaccompanied on the public roads – which is why my wife is not here.

BRENNAN: I thought as much… Well go on then, take a look at your lists. Go on, take a good look! Those marked with an 'F' have the fever; those marked 'W' are in the workhouse; crosses indicate the dead. I've included those that sailed to Canada, but have yet to indicate those that perished at sea. *(He catches the look on Meahan's face)* You don't know? The noticeably absent Mr Hunter didn't tell you? Of the six hundred you 'assisted' to get onboard those two ships, almost half have perished without even setting eyes on the place. *(Coming close)* There's no particular badness in you, Major. But there were things you could have done you didn't. Sometimes we turn away from a great height when it looks up at us from below. It's not too late. Do what you can. And do it quickly. God's mercy needs help from those here on earth.

Lighting change

THEY'RE GONE

Outside Sean and Mary's Scalpeen - Evening

SEAN: Gone?

THADEUS: Aye.

SEAN: All of them; are ye sure?

THADEUS: Owen, Martin and my Maine: all gone – died of the fever on the boat, without even layin' eyes on Canada.

Sean lowers onto his haunches.

SEAN: Ah, Chris jays….

THADEUS: For a man to outlive his children and grandchildren – it's against nature.

SEAN: You've still got us.

THADEUS: No, Sean, I'm done. I just came to let ye know. *(Shushing Sean)* Shhh… no, boy. Look to ye own and them that are left. We had some days, though, eh – grand times. That feckin' Agent – he did this. *(Grabbing him)* Do somethin', will ye, while ye still got the strength. Please, I'm beggin'ye - do somethin'! Do somethin'!!

His hold on Sean is ferocious. Almost involuntarily Sean finds himself acceding to the old man's wish. He is released and Thadeus leaves.

Lighting change

WHERE DID YOU GET THIS?

Outside Sean and Mary's Scalpeen - Night

Bridget approaches Sean. She carries a small wrapped piece of cloth. It is unclear as to whether she has just heard the previous conversation.

SEAN: How is she?

BRIDGET: Same… *(Of the moon)*: Waxin' crescent.

SEAN: Aye, she does.

She hands him the cloth and he unwraps the gun.

Where did ye get this?

BRIDGET: We stole it. A little reconnaissance from Liam's place. Ye didn't really trust those three boys for the job…

SEAN: I live in eternal wonder of ye, Bridge.

A scream comes from inside the scalpeen.

Lighting change

FEVER

Scalpeen - Night:

Mary runs from the scalpeen. The fever is upon her. The three other family members try to lie her down and settle her.

MARY: Dig! Dig! Ye must dig deeper, deeper until ye find 'em clean and untouched… Ohh… *(She starts to cry)* Make ye peace with him, Sean… he's ye brother…

SEAN: Hold on to me, Mary. Hold on...

Sean holds her as she writhes and contorts. Sarah cries. Bridget clutches the bible, mouthing soft words of desperate prayer. The violence subsides. She opens her eyes, reaches out with her hands. They take hold of them.

MARY: Beneath the tree… all of us together…

She closes her eyes.

SEAN *(Gathering the girls to him)*: Go to Father Brennan. Tell him to come quickly. Go!

They leave.

Lighting change

GETTING INTO THE PHAETON

Outside the Town Hall – Night:

The Agent, ever cautious and vigilant, stands outside the doors of the Town Hall, waiting for the Relief Committee Members to come out of the meeting, so he can give the Landlord a lift home in the phaeton. The members appear. Mrs Symes and Mr Chambers bid farewell to the others leaving Hunter alone with Major Meahan and Dr Shannon.

MEAHAN: Ah, Charles, I've offered Dr Shannon a lift home in the phaeton. I hope you don't mind.

HUNTER: I do have things to discuss___

MEAHAN: I'm sure there's nothing too sharp for the doctor's ears.

The Agent is about to step into the front of the phaeton.

MEAHAN: Would you mind, Charles? I'd like to sit up front with the Doctor if I may.

HUNTER: Sir, I don't think that's a wise thing.

MEAHAN: Nonsense, man, I've been far too cloistered these past months. It'll do me good to take the reins.

HUNTER: Sir, I would feel more comfortable if you rode in the back.

MEAHAN: And I would feel more comfortable if *you* were in the back. Now, it's a beautiful night and the doctor and I have much to discuss. Relax and enjoy the scenery. *(Pointedly)* And I shall do what I can to forget all the unpleasant things that have passed by us while we were in London.

Hunter acquiesces.

Lighting change

GO BACK TO THE CHURCH

Scalpeen – Night:

Father Brennan and the girls arrive at the scalpeen. It's empty.

BRIDGET: They were here.

BRENNAN: Go back to the church girls, and wait for me there.

SARAH: We'll not, Father. We're comin' with ye.

BRENNAN: Bridget, take care of ye sister. Make sure ye get there safely. I'll be back as soon as I can. *(Urging)* Do it. Go as fast as you can!

They go, leaving him to ponder where Sean has taken Mary.

Lighting change

PHAETON RIDE

Road – Night:

The phaeton moves along the road. Its pace is leisurely. But the Landlord's mind is in full flight with plans for the future.

MEAHAN: So how many fever huts would you need?

SHANNON: Three to begin with: that would alleviate the danger of infection to the main areas of the workhouse.

MEAHAN: And they could be constructed at the back of the existing buildings?

SHANNON: There'd be room, without altering any of the current structures. This would free up beds in the infirmary.

MEAHAN: Good - And the soup kitchen; have you any opinions on the matter?

SHANNON: We need another boiler and twice as many staff.

MEAHAN: We'll purchase one immediately. Charles, I'd like to meet first thing tomorrow___

SHANNON *(Seeing something ahead):* What's that?

MEAHAN: Eh?

SHANNON: Up ahead.

The Agent rises to his feet.

MEAHAN: (It's) A man, coming into the middle of the road.

HUNTER: Ignore it, he'll get out of the way soon enough.

SHANNON: No, no he's got___

A single shot is fired. The Landlord slumps against the Doctor, who grabs the reins and tries to steady the phaeton. The Agent is already to his feet and fires at the fleeing figure of the assassin.

HUNTER: Major!

Lighting change

BURY US BOTH

Mary's tree – Dawn:

Sean leans against the trunk of the tree. Mary lies in his lap. She could be peacefully asleep. In front of them a fire burns. The priest appears and comes to him.

SEAN: I thought ye might find us eventually, Father. Ye know, all the times I've been up here, I never really appreciated the view. Of course, she did – always wanted the boy to have somethin' to look out upon. Come and sit with me by the fire. Ye look as though ye could do with some warmth. *(Brennan sits)* Would ye look at all these fires?

There's one on every hill for miles. I thought it was long forgotten. But word travels fast. They've remembered, Mary.

BRENNAN: What have you done, Sean?

SEAN: Somethin' I should've done a long time ago. If I'd had my wits about me, I would've done it when I first laid eyes on him. Did I kill him?

BRENNAN: Aye, ye did.

SEAN: Good, there's justice in the world yet. Well, that's part of me confession ye won't have to worry about. But don't expect me to feel sorry for the bastard. I'd do it a hundred times over if it'd bring back those he's killed himself – him with his wreckers and his evictions. I'd strangle his corpse if it was within reach. You seen him the day Liam and his lot come with their crowbars, the way he stood back while the others pulled our place apart – smilin' like he was lord of the Big House himself. But our Bridget gave it to him.… Ha! A fool is a fool most when he tries to fool a child.

BRENNAN: Sean, no….

SEAN: What do ye mean, no! Ye were there, Father.

BRENNAN: If the Agent was the object of ye revenge – it's come to nothing. Hunter's alive. It's the Landlord was the target for your bullet.

SEAN: Uh…?

BRENNAN: The Landlord was in the front of the phaeton with the doctor. It's him ye shot. You've killed Meahan by mistake.

SEAN: No……!

Mary's body has masked the bullet wound in his chest. Now, it is revealed.

BRENNAN: Sean, are ye alright?

SEAN: Chris jays! It was him shot me – Hunter?

BRENNAN: Aye; Sean, we need to get ye help.

SEAN: I'm already dead, Father; one way or the other. There's no use prolonging it. We must be quick now. *(Of Mary)* She always wanted to be buried with the boy under this tree. Will ye do it for me? And the girls; she wanted them in the workhouse. Would ye be seein' after them? I do think Bridge's the stronger, so she'll need…Mary always said… she always said….

He slumps forward.

Lighting change

BLESS YE BOTH

August 1847

Workhouse Gates – Night:

The Matron stands at the workhouse gates, waiting anxiously for Father Brennan and the O'Conor girls to arrive. They do, stopping some distance off.

BRENNAN *(To the sisters)*: Wait here a moment, girls.

He approaches the Matron.

MATRON: I thought you' d not be showin'. I was about give up and go inside.

BRENNAN: I'm sorry, Matron. It took me a while to gather the girls. It's been quite a time.

MATRON: I can imagine. Well, best get them into the workhouse before we attract a crowd. I'll not be after explainin' why we chose them over others, after all the goin's on with their father.

BRENNAN: I thank you for your charity, Matron. It'll not be forgotten in heaven's reckonings.

MATRON: It's more the reckonings closer to home I'd be worried about. God knows what the Doctor would say if he got wind of it.

BRENNAN: He's not about then?

MATRON: He's not been right since the slayin'. Word has it he's plannin' to be rid of us altogether and go off to England – and maybe that's just as well. With the new fever hospital, all this'll be changin' anyway.

BRENNAN: It feels like a war that'll never be over. There's only so much a caring soul can bide. Well, I best bring them. *(Calling)* Girls. *(They come)* This is the Matron. She's a good woman. You can rest assured she'll do all she can for you. *(Suddenly lost, he gathers them into his arms.)* Bless ye … Bless ye both.

He goes. They follow after him a short way.

MATRON: Best come inside now, girls.

They stay looking out for a moment longer, turn and she follows them inside. Lighting change

END OF PART 1

EBBINGTIDE SCRIPT

22nd October Draft

Ross Hall

Part 2: Sea Journey

LIST OF CHARACTERS

BRIDGET O'CONOR – Irish Orphan

SARAH O'CONOR – Irish Orphan

BESSIE BURDEN – Irish Orphan

DERVLA GILRAIN – Irish Orphan

NELLIE DRISCOLL – Irish Orphan

ROSE LEYDON – Irish Orphan

DOCTOR EDWARD SHANNON – Ship's Doctor

MRS HANWELL – Assistant to Dr Shannon

MR BLACK – Captain of The *Ebbingtide*

MR HIGGS – First Mate on The *Ebbingtide*

GALE - Sailor

TATTOO – Sailor on The *Ebbingtide*

COOK – Cook on The *Ebbingtide*

SISTER BERNADETTE – Matron of the Immigration Depot

MR MEREWETHER – Australian Immigration Officer

MR PIGGOT – Irish Workhouse Inspector

MRS GRIMSMORE-KING – A Scottish Protestant zealot

WORKHOUSE MATRON

WORKHOUSE ATTENDANT

O'BYRNE – An Irish farmer;

PRIEST – back in Ireland

CHANGEOVER TO BEGIN PART 2

In the original production there was a changeover of cast members for the sisters. Following is a brief description of this. The Part 1 actors enter and resume their positions downstage – this is the moment before Matron calls them inside the workhouse at the end of Part 1. The Matron also enters and stands upstage in her original position. The sisters look out at us. The actors playing the sisters in Part 2 enter and stand alongside their counterparts. The original actors remove a piece of clothing – a shawl – and wrap it around their counterpart. A look of recognition and the originals leave. Sarah comes closer to Bridget, who touches her face, gently. Then we repeat the final moments of Part 1.

MATRON: Best come inside now, girls.

They turn and she follows them inside. Lighting change

SELECTION WALK

February 1848

Workhouse Refectory – Late Afternoon:

Girls are sitting at long pews eating ravenously from bowls of gruel. So intense is their concentration on their food, they fail to notice the arrival of the Workhouse Matron and the Government Inspector, who is here to select suitable girls for a boat to Australia.

MATRON: Girls… *(Shouting)* Girls!...

Silence

We have a visitor – a very special visitor. *(Gesturing for them to stand – they do)* This is Mr Piggot, our Government Inspector, who comes to us all the way from Dublin, with a very important task to perform.

INSPECTOR *(To the girls):* Thank you, Matron – Yes, I come today to select girls for a journey upon a boat called The *Earl Grey*, which will soon travel from England to one of the far flung Colonies - Australia. It will be an arduous journey, no doubt; but it will bring the promise of a bounteous future… Now, if you would just allow me a few moments for my eyes to adjust…right.

He begins his selection walk. Turning to us, he speaks with odd intimacy.

(To us) The Scheme: From a country moribund and overflowing we will supply young, abandoned females to a nascent colony in need of fecund fodder. They will fill a void: the shortage of women in a new country. These poor abandoned Irish orphan girls will become lovers, wives and, we hope, mothers; ensuring the perpetuation of an

Empire… *(Regarding the girls)* Finding the first always seemed… difficult. But once located all the rest miraculously followed…. *(Seeing Sarah)* Ah…yes… A watery sun through a filthy pane casts a thin filament of colourless light onto her face. *(To protect Sarah, Bridget steps forward)* No, not you… *(To Sarah)* Here, child, I won't harm you. *(Sarah comes to him. He smiles kindly)* What is your name?

SARAH: Sarah O'Conor, Sir. *(Turning back to Bridget)* And this is my sister, Bridget.

AGENT *(Ignoring Bridget)*: Of course…

Lighting change

OCEAN OF DREAMS

Workhouse Dormitory - Night.

The sleeping orphans lie in formations that suggest rows of beds. They sleep fitfully. Intermittently, bodies turn over and rearrange themselves in patterns that evoke ocean currents. One of them is in the middle of a nightmare, which grows into a tumultuous scream.

GIRL: No, no, Ma…! The world we knew is gone; replaced by another - stranger and more luminous. The moon is approachin' full. Its edges have not ventured into the narrow frame of the window. But the unusual intensity of light spillin' across the lime-washed dormitory, recasts us into an unsettled ocean. Bodies are the gnarled edges of waves suspended in air, billowin' to life as sleepers dream; and dreamin'… remember.

Bridget and Sarah share a bed. They are swept by the sea of dreamers into a prominent upright position.

SARAH: They'll not be makin' me…?

BRIDGET: Makin' you?

SARAH: Go… to that place….

BRIDGET: … Australia?

SARAH: Aye; they can't be forcin' me, can they? Not if I don't want to go.

BRIDGET: No, they can't be forcin' you… But it might be ye only chance to get away.

SARAH: But I don't want to get away; not without you? We must stay together, you and me. Who'll remember us? We're the last.

BRIDGET: Sometimes we don't have a choice in these things.

SARAH: But if I don't want to___

BRIDGET: If the hand of God reaches for us … we've no place sayin' 'no'.

SARAH: Aye, that's true enough.

Beat

When will you come?

BRIDGET: Later: There'll be other boats to follow. I'll come when you've made it nice for us.

SARAH: Aye, that'd be grand. I will… I will…!

BRIDGET: But you must write to me and tell me all about your new life. Promise, you'll write to me - promise!

SARAH: I do. I'll turn Father Brennan's writin' lessons to good effect. I'll write about everythin' that happens, wherever I go and whatever I see. I promise. I do, I do, I do…!

A moment of lightness between them; but it is brief.

Is that a moon up there?

BRIDGET: Aye - comin' through the window.

SARAH: I can almost feel it pullin' me. It's a strange sensation.

BRIDGET: Don't be frightened.

SARAH: I'm not… It must be full?

BRIDGET: Aye.

SARAH: And round.

BRIDGET: Like the belly o' the world.

SARAH: Aye…

Beat

Bridget, come soon.

BRIDGET: I will... I will…

Lighting change

WAITING TO EMBARK

May - 1850

Plymouth Dock - Day

Three years have passed since the departure of The Earl Grey. *Bridget is one of a group of orphan girls assembled on the deck of their ship – The* Ebbingtide – *which is preparing for departure and the imminent arrival of its Captain. The ship is abuzz with activity. The girls, from various workhouses around Ireland, are excited and disoriented.*

GIRLS *(To us)*: Three years; thirty-six moons to prove it; in that rotten workhouse, waitin' to board a boat – The *Ebbingtide* - bound for the underside of the world!

BRIDGET *(To us)*: My time has come at last!

BESSIE *(To us)*: And mine!

Others echo this declaration. Bessie spots another boat docked beside them. She is, perhaps, a little over-exuberant.

BESSIE: Look Bridget: another boat just like ours! They must be leavin' too. I wonder where they're off to. *(Waving.)* Yoo hoo! Ship ahoy! Ship ahoy!!

NELLIE: Leave off, ye bloody heavin' eedyat! You're makin' fools of us all.

BESSIE: I'm not!

ROSIE: You are! *(Of Bessie's deformed arm)* Dervla, look at her: wavin' her gammy arm around like it was a broke shoot!

DERVLA: Put ye claw away before someone breaks the rest of it off!

MRS HANWELL *(Intervening):* Girls, please, a little decorum – at least until we've left the dock.

NELLIE: Well, tell her to stop wavin' her thing around, Mrs Hanwell.

ROSIE: Aye, paradin' it around like that. Who let her onboard?

NELLIE: (She's) Deformed in her brains as well, most likely.

BESSIE: I am not! I was just sayin' good mornin' to the passengers on that other boat.

MRS HANWELL: I'm not sure that's appropriate, Bessie.

BESSIE: Why not? They're just like us; almost.

Despite themselves the others stare out at the other boat.

GIRLS *(To us)*: Look, on its main deck a motley group bound for America. Poorer lookin' types; though not as poor as us; with the bewildered faces of lost children. Families: men with arms around the waists of wives; mothers nursin' mewlin' babes; children wound into the folds of skirts; others standin' alone; all joined to the dock by coloured paper streamers; Their ends held by a small group of well-wishers; wavin' God-speed; A band playin' slightly out of tune. Most have their backs to us. Some see us lookin' at 'em. And quickly turn away…

MR HIGGS *(Shouting)*: Captain boarding!

Girls spread, sailors scramble and reform into barrel-chested line. Dr Shannon – the ship's doctor - also roused by the call, appears and takes his place alongside Mrs Hanwell. Captain Black, with the stiff grace of a visiting dignitary, arrives up the gang plank, with a newspaper conspicuously tucked under one arm.

HIGGS *(Saluting)*: Captain Black.

BLACK: Mr Higgs.

HIGGS: Welcome aboard, sir.

BLACK *(Inspecting crew and cargo)*: And how are we faring, Mr Higgs.

HIGGS: Well, Captain – well.

BLACK: All in order?

HIGGS: As it should be, Sir. We're awaiting Pilot's instructions. As soon as we receive them, we'll be ready for departure.

BLACK: Good.

He stops at the sight of a crewmember with wiry frame, ill-fitting pants, gummy grin and a curious tattoo.

Name?

TATTOO: Tattoo, Cap'n.

BLACK: I beg your pardon?

TATTOO: It's not my real name.

BLACK *(Dryly)*: Really?

TATTOO: But I'd prefer it if that's what you called me *(Smiles, toothlessly)*.

BLACK: You've been scraping the bottom of the barrel in your selections, Mr Higgs. Need I be alarmed?

MR HIGGS: He was one of Bully Forbes' men, sir.

BLACK *(Demeanour changing)*: I see. Which particular boat, might I ask?

TATTOO: *The Marco Polo*, sir – Sixty eight days to Melbourne in Mid-Winter.

BLACK: Sixty eight days...

TATTOO: It is a record that still stands, Sir.

BLACK *(Sotto voce)*: I know...

HIGGS: The man, in spite of appearances, has particular talents aloft.

BLACK: Does he?

TATTOO: I do, sir.

BLACK: Very well, then.

He comes to the Cook.

COOK *(Volunteering)*: You won't be seeing me much in the rigging, Cap'n. *(Looking up)* I'm not fond of heights. Anyway, I might break something. I do possess other talents, though – most of which reside in the galley. You'll find me there most days cookin' up a storm.

MR HIGGS *(Intervening)*: He comes to us with high recommendation from the Emigration Commissioners.

COOK: I have particular experience feeding delicates like these, sir.

An actor, henceforth playing the dog, enters.

DOG *(To us)*: A growl emanates from the cook's shirt *(Growls)*, which is the usual residing place for his tiny, beloved dog.

COOK: Whoah!

The dog escapes from Cook's shirt, depositing himself at the feet of the Captain. This is achieved by the actor playing the dog falling to the ground on all fours and barking, incessantly, up at the Captain.

BLACK *(Expressionless)*: What is that?

COOK: My dog, sir: always travels with me. But, rest assured, he'll keep well out of harm's way.

The actor playing the dog stands and leaves.

BLACK (*Looking skyward)*: And what of the boy?

MR HIGGS: Attending to the pilot.

BLACK: Very well.

He turns to the girls.

SHANNON *(Stepping forward)*: Good morning, Captain *(Extends a hand, which is rejected)* I don't think you've met my assistant - Mrs Hanwell.

She steps forward and bows.

BLACK (To Mr Higgs): Mr Higgs, we have an unnecessary Doctor and his useless assistant among us?

SHANNON *(Stonily)*: You might try telling that to those who perished onboard the coffin ships bound for North America.

BLACK *(Ignoring this, he turns to the girls)*: So, these are they?

SHANNON: Yes, all present and accounted for.

BLACK: Total?

SHANNON: I beg your___

BLACK: How many, Doctor; how many?

SHANNON: One hundred and twenty two.

BLACK: And how many bog-dwelling tykes among them?

SHANNON *(Stonily)*: The majority, as well you know.

BLACK: Have you included yourself in that tally?

BESSIE *(Coming forward)*: How dare you…

Black notices Bessie's hand. She tucks it in her pocket.

BRIDGET: It's alright, Bessie. Show him.

Bessie brings it out.

She was born that way, sir; weren't you Bess?

BESSIE: Yes, (I was) born that way, Sir.

BLACK: *(Regarding Bessie)* Well, Doctor, it looks as if the Commissioners may have slipped up in some areas. *(Regarding Bridget)* But they've certainly compensated for it in others.

HIGGS *(Intervening)*: Three cheers for Captain Black! Hip Hip…

Three cheers break the awkward moment. A boy rushes onto the ship, his haste being marred, in part, by legs that are an oddly misshapen twist of angles. He is out of breath.

BOY: Mr…Higg…Cap'n…

HIGGS: What is it, boy?

BOY: Pilot, sir…says he's… ready when you are…

BLACK: Are you sure, boy?

BOY: See for yourself, Cap'n.

He points to the pilot boat. A horn sounds.

BLACK: Right, boy, up you go. And keep those eyes peeled.

The boy runs off.

Mr Higgs: up anchor!

HIGGS: Heave away, lads!

The boat is overrun with action, the girls caught up in the middle of it. Some of the sailors thread poles into imaginary holes - the ship's capstan.

MEN: Haul Awayee! Haul Awayee! Haul Awayee!

The men push the wheel around to the slow but regular rhythm of a sea shanty. The girls spin and spread to form the sides of the boat.

Lighting change

UNDERWAY

Ship – Day:

The girls have spread to a pattern that resembles the outline of a ship's hull – loosely in the shape of a leaf. They sway from side to side as they speak, conjuring the rhythms and lull of deep sea swell.

GIRLS *(To us)*: In a sail unfurlin' flurry, we are underway. By early afternoon we are clear of the harbour and moving further and further away from the coast. The earth

succumbs to a different kind of spilling space: broader, cooler, freer. A light breeze is blowin' and the sky clears to a faded wash. Seagulls, sensing our ship's intention, lose heart and return to land.

BRIDGET *(To us):* I trace the passage of foam beneath the bowsprit; watch it slide along the belly of the boat, back to the gently swirling eddy behind.

GIRLS: Its flow is slow, seamless and somehow comfortin'. Despite this gentle illusion there can be little doubt: we have begun to edge our way around the rim of an unimaginably large world.

Lighting change

DUTIES OF CARE

The Doctor's Cabin – Day

SHANNON *(To us)*: As doctor on this ship, I have been instructed by the Emigration Commissioners to keep a diary throughout our voyage, recording all activity and happening as it unfolds: an official response to problems encountered on one of the earlier boats – The *Earl Grey*. The diary's purpose: to provide, in the event of mishap or misadventure, documentary evidence that I have discharged any duties of care… *(To himself)* Duties of care…Had they the slightest inkling of my previous 'duties', they'd not even dare… *(He stops himself. Back to us)* Still, I am diligent to the letter. Here, in this cramped cell, that doubles as cabin and infirmary, wedged between narrow bunk and medicine chest, I plot and compose a Godless sermon for my abandoned flock.

He goes to the small writing table and begins to write.

Lighting change

CAPSTAN SERMON

Ship's Main Deck – Day:

The Doctor waits anxiously for Mrs Hanwell to arrive with a flag – set dressing for the First Sabbath at Sea sermon he is about to give. She is late.

SHANNON: Oh, (Lord) deliver us, where *is* she? *(Looking about)* Mrs Hanwell… Mrs Hanwell!

MRS HANWELL *(Unsteadily, wiping vomit from her mouth with a floral-edged handkerchief)*: Coming, Doctor…I'm sorry, the motion of the swell seems to have… unsettled me.

Rather unsympathetically, he grabs the flag from her and spreads it over the capstan.

SHANNON: Would you gather the girls around the Capstan, please.

MRS HANWELL: Of course, Doctor: girls!... Oh… *(She rushes off to vomit again).*

SHANNON *(Taking control)*: Girls gather round, if you will. *(Climbs onto the capstan)* Quickly now, we...don't have all day.

NELLIE: No, three months more like.

Laughter

ROSIE: Doctor, what's that flag you've got over the capstan?

DERVLA: I'm afraid they've given ye the wrong one – it's English. That belongs to the enemy.

SHANNON *(Half-apologetically)*: I'm afraid it's the only one provided.

DERVLA: Perhaps ye could turn it over, Doctor.

ROSIE: Or maybe throw it over the side.

More laughter

SHANNON: Alright, girls: that's enough now. I have something to say, and I'd like you to pay attention, please.

They settle. He pulls out his script and tries to gather himself together. Despite this, he begins stiffly.

Being our first afternoon and also our first Sabbath at sea, I thought it fitting to gather and give thanks for this... opportunity. My concern, girls, is not merely for your physical well-being – although, I assure you, I will do all in my power to dutifully tend to it - no, it is also your emotional and spiritual well-being over which I am charged. I know you don't need me to lecture you on the importance of this time in your lives – this voyage upon this vessel - although I do know something of the circumstance that led to it… We are all now pilgrims together on this ark of salvation. Feel the surges of these strong ocean currents; currents that will carry us to our new lives on the other side of an immense and humbling world. Be reassured that you are not the first to have been carried by them. Others have gone before. Others, too, have looked out upon this same relentless horizon.

His words are beginning to have an effect on the girls. Their bodies begin to sway with the rising swell. Throughout the following action the rising tumult of the sermon is accompanied by increasing wind and rising swell.

Look, girls - Look around you…

He turns to us, using the spoke as a directing rod. Drawn by word and deed the girls follow. Muted by the immensity of the watery mass that surrounds them, they stare in awed wonderment.

What do we gaze upon? Sea and sky; sky and sea: vast, immense, roiling with imponderable mystery. Very much like that same view Noah, himself, must have looked upon, when the awful rains washed away his world. What do you think he must have felt; a man whose entire world had been swallowed by the great waters of the flood? With no idea of what was to come or what lay on the other side of this great calamity. He did not know; as we cannot… Many of you are in pain: loved ones apparently lost to us. But are they? Or do they live within us still? Search these restless waters for them. Feel them with you now. Feel their presence, feel it swell within you as the ocean swells beneath us. Let them come, as these waves do come. Let yourselves be washed by the soft spray of their loving hearts. Hear their voices in the whistling wind, laughing and rejoicing, laughing and rejoicing around the wide rim of the melancholy world, all the way to its edges and on to the other side… the other side!

The girls fall about the deck, a swirling mass of hysteria overcome by recollection and the seesawing motion of the gathering swell. A wave comes, sweeping over them. The Captain appears on the poop.

BLACK *(Bellowing)*: Doctor…! Doctor Shannon…!!

The Doctor rouses from his revelry to find himself in the middle of a bad squall.

Did you not hear me, man? Get them all below!

Doctor and girls stagger offstage as the squall gathers. Only Bridget remains.

Lighting change

IT'S A BIG WORLD, BUT NOT SO BIG AS THAT

Bridget, alone, and looking out. Sarah, appearing from behind, playfully covers Bridget's eyes with her hands.

SARAH: Guess…

BRIDGET *(Raising her hands to Sarah's):* Little one?

SARAH: (It) might be.

She releases Bridget's hands and moves downstage.

BRIDGET: You're___

SARAH: I'm grand; and you?

BRIDGET: Fine…

SARAH: Ye look like ye seen a fairy *(She laughs).*

BRIDGET: No, no, I just___

SARAH: Did ye think I'd forget ye?

BRIDGET: No, I___

SARAH: It's a big world, but not so big as that. *(Suddenly serious)* You'd not forget *me*, would ye?

BRIDGET: No. never!

SARAH: Good… I said I'd write didn't I?

BRIDGET: Aye.

SARAH: Well…?

Lighting change

FIRST NIGHT BELOW

Ship's deck – Moments later

Bridget is standing at the top of the steep hatchway steps: those leading to Below Decks – the girls' living quarters. Despite the imminent storm, she has not yet gone below, apparently transfixed by its fury.

MRS HANWELL *(From below)*: Come below, please! *(A wave comes. The boat heaves)* Come below, please, I say! Did you not hear me? We have to close the hatch!

ROSE *(From below)*: Are ye deaf?

NELLIE *(From below)*: We're all gettin' wet down here, ye selfish cow!

Rose and Nellie take hold of Bridget's boots.

DERVLA: Get down the hatchway steps before the next wave comes – now! *(They pull and she topples to the floor. Dervla pins her neck with a boot)*

While you're up there taking in the views, we're all gettin' wet.

BRIDGET: I'm sorry.

ROSE: Are ye now?

NELLIE: That'd be a comfort, sure.

ROSE: Bein' wet as we are from ye stupid doin's.

MRS HANWELL: Now, girls. She's down now.

The hatchway above clunks shut. She wanders off to be sick.

DERVLA: So where do ye think you're beddin' down?

ROSE: Not here.

NELLIE: No, not here

ROSE: Where then?

BRIDGET: I don't know.

DERVLA: Oh, ye poor puss, ye don't?

BRIDGET: No.

ROSE: Because this is ours.

NELLIE: It's our hatchway.

ROSE: It belongs to us.

NELLIE: And you're not welcome.

ROSE: So off ye go and find yourself a place of ye own.

Another wave passes. Unsettled by it Nellie and Rose crawl off to their bunks. More fragile than she would like, Dervla sits on the floor beside Bridget.

DERVLA: Best find a place before this gets worse. Sailors say it might. *(Softening)* You're from the west?

BRIDGET: Aye; and you - where are ye from?

DERVLA: Skibbereen; or what's left of it. Nellie, Rose and me: we're the last of our clachan. I'm all they have now. So don't think too poorly of them. They just got bees in their bonnets, along with a few other places as well.

Beat

The cack-handed one; she's ye friend?

BRIDGET: We just met. She's from up north.

DERVLA: Aye, sure; they plucked us from all over. She was sayin' you'd be lookin' for a sister came out a few years back. (*Bridget nods)* Well, good luck with that one… Ye know, some of them tars up there say this hatchway'll be the most comfortable place when the heat comes. But they might've been thinkin' of comfort for 'emselves. Well, best ye be on ye way – I'd like to stop a while longer, but I might be sick all over ye. (*Bridget leaves)* By the way, what's ye name?

BRIDGET: Bridget.

DERVLA: Dervla; though ye can call me what ye like: ye wouldn't be the first.

Lighting change

IN HERE

Below Decks – Night:

Bridget moves unsteadily through the narrow space of the steerage compartment amidst heaving, moaning voices from the darkness.

BESSIE *(Calling)*: Bridget..!

BRIDGET: Bessie?

BESSIE: Come in here.

Bessie sticks her head out from one of the bunk boxes. She reaches for Bridget's hand and takes it to steady her.

I've saved you a place, next to me. And I brought ye bag. I'm sorry if ye didn't want

me to, but I thought ye might like to be in with me. Is that alright?

BRIDGET: It's alright, Bess. I'll stop here.

Bessie smiles and heaves into a bucket.

BESSIE: Oh, what a state…

She falls back into the bunk. Bridget sits on a small stool at the end of the bunk, reaches into the bag at her feet, pulls out her bible, opens it and looks at the flower pressed between its pages.

Lighting change

LETTER TO BRIDGET: A SPECIAL PLACE TO PEN

Sarah is sitting under a tree writing a letter home to Bridget. Bridget watches her. At points, the letter almost becomes a conversation between the two of them.

My dear Bridget, I can hardly contain my excitement with at last being able to write; hopin', as I do, this finds ye well enough, in that awful place – the workhouse. But you'll be pleased to know I am well, havin' arrived not too long ago on the other side of this funny ol' world. Already, I've found a special place to pen this. Oh, I must describe it, so you'll have some idea of what to expect when ye get here… It's on a high hill (if you can picture it) with a little church sittin' just off the top; surrounded by a low stone fence.

BRIDGET: Like them we have at home?

SARAH: Aye, and a slopin' yard with old headstones sproutin' all over. Everythin' is covered with deep green grass as luscious as ye like, and blackberries – little different than those we picked with our little friend Olivia on the day of our big adventure. I'm gobblin' as I write, so you'll please excuse the page bein' stained as it is! The weather is… well, ye can probably imagine.

BRIDGET: Just perfect.

SARAH: Aye, although a little on the hottish side. But I've off with my bonnet and shoes, which cools things down so. And there's a tree above me, which helps with shade. Ye remember our tree – the one we'd sit under with our Ma for remembrance?

BRIDGET: Aye!

SARAH: Oh, what a silly question; of course ye do! Oh Bridget, but the view: I can see for miles and miles…! *(As she is leaving, she looks up at the moon)* Moon's bright tonight…

Lighting change

AT THE HATCHWAY GRATE

Steerage Compartment – very early morning

A bell rings: three distinct rings; followed by the loud clunk of the hatchway being opened. Moonlight spills down the hatchway steps. Still slumped at the end of the box bunk with the bible on her lap, Bridget wakes and sees the light above pouring down. She climbs mid-way up the steps and looks up at the moon. Then something else catches her attention.

BRIDGET: Excuse me!

A face appears above her. It is the boy who rushed onto the deck as they were about to embark.

BOY: Something I can do for you, Miss?

BRIDGET: No.

BOY: Then kindly move away from the hatchway steps.

BRIDGET: I'm only lookin' at the moon.

BOY: Well, that may be. But___

BRIDGET: What harm in a bit a sky?

BOY: Miss, I said move away from the hatch.

BRIDGET: Why?

BOY: Cap'n's orders.

BRIDGET: Yes, but why?

BOY: You're not supposed to be here, alright?

BRIDGET: Yes, but you've not said why.

BOY: (There's to be) No 'fraternization' between crew and cargo – them's direct orders from the Cap'n.

She smiles.

Oh, this is funny, is it? Why, might I ask?

BRIDGET: Because you're fraternizin' with me.

BOY: I am not.

BRIDGET: You are.

BOY: Am not!

BRIDGET: Suit yourself.

BOY: Alright, maybe I'll be closin' this hatch right back up again so's there'll be no chance of fraternizin' at all.

BRIDGET: No, please don't!

He holds off.

What's ye name?

BOY *(Suspicious)*: Why do ye want to know?

BRIDGET: I'm Bridget.

BOY: I know.

BRIDGET *(Taken aback)*: How do ye know?

BOY *(A moment of triumph)*: Not so smart now, are ye? One with the jimmy hand told me. I saw all of you heavin' ye guts up. Ye want to watch that one; she's a blabber: told me all about your sister; said she was about my age?

Beat

Gale - that's my name: Gale. You asked so I'm tellin' you.

BRIDGET *(Repeating)*: Gale.

GALE: That's it.

BRIDGET: Really?

GALE: That's what the Cap'n calls me, any rate. You can do the same, if ye like.

BRIDGET: The Cap'n?

GALE: Aye… Why, what's wrong with it? It's a good name.

BRIDGET: Aye, it is. It is.

GALE: It's short for Nightingale. At home me Ma called me somethin' else. But here I'm Gale. Cap'n says it's a good omen.

BRIDGET: Where's 'home'?

GALE: Where the hell do ya think I'm from?

BRIDGET: You're not English.

GALE: I am!

BRIDGET: You're Irish. I can hear it on ye tongue.

He darkens.

That'd be the end of the bad weather then?

GALE: Actually, Bridget, it's my maiden voyage… But I'd appreciate it if you didn't say so to others. Cap'n's taken me under his wing, like. (He) says I need a bit of guidance. He's teachin' me to read the signs; says a man can see things … things ordinary folk are either too ignorant of or blind to. 'Signs', he calls 'em. *(Looking over his shoulder)* Look at them clouds, for instance. See how fast they're movin'? That means somethin'. It's a sign, see… like my name - Gale.

They watch clouds float overhead.

BRIDGET: Like a message from God?

GALE: Sort of…

BRIDGET: I saw ye keepin' watch from up on high.

GALE: Aye, (I was) from the crow's nest. I got to get used to it, for later, when workin' aloft. Captain says, with my name bein' Gale, it'll bring us luck. He's aiming for the record, ye know.

BRIDGET: Record?

GALE: Shortest time to Australia: He wants sixty six days. But he'll settle for sixty seven. That's why he brought the newspaper onboard, tucked under his arm like that: proof of when we left England. With good currents and favourable winds, anything's possible, or so he says.

BRIDGET: Why does he want to get there so quickly?

GALE: Best ask him yourself.

BRIDGET: Can you open the grate?

GALE: Soon – I promise.

He turns back to the sky.

It'll be a good day today – nice sun, fair gust up.

BRIDGET: How do you know?

GALE: Moon's waxin' gibbous and the North Star's winkin' like mad. You wait and see.

Lighting change

BESSIE DREAMS RAVENS

Steerage Compartment - Morning

Bessie is asleep in the narrow box-bunk - in the midst of a nightmare, which materialises as a pack of black ravens – flying, encircling. One breaks free from the rest and hovers above her. She gasps and tries to swat it away. With unexpected violence it drives its beak hard into Bessie's belly, eliciting a wild feeding frenzy from the rest.

MRS HANWELL *(Appearing)*: Get up, please.

The attack continues, unabated.

Get up, please, I said. We haven't got all day.

She reaches into the melee of birds to grab Bessie's foot.

I said, get up, you lazy girl. Get up and come this instant!

Bessie kicks out wildly catching Mrs Hanwell with the full brunt of her foot. The birds

scatter. Bessie sits up. Matron groggily tries to stem a bloodied nose.

BESSIE: Matron?

MRS HANWELL: Oh, look what you've done, you dirty wild thing?

BESSIE: Oh, I just had a nightmare… terrible black birds; ravens, I think.

(*Distressed, she starts to cry)*

MRS HANWELL: Now, now, enough of that; you didn't mean it…. There's no harm done: good as new. *(Taking the girl in her arms)* Come here now. Come here. There, there; all better now… see? All better. (*Unused to such kindness, Bessie clings to her)* (We'd) best, get topside. Dr Shannon will be waiting. He's none too pleased at dawdling it seems.

The moment passes soon enough when Bessie vomits into the bucket.

BESSIE: I'm so sorry, Mrs Hanwell – I've got the seasickness worse than most, I think.

MRS HANWELL: That's alright, Bessie - no matter.

Lighting change

EVERYTHING IS A SIGN

The Crow's Nest – Day

Gale stands in his perch, a picture of delirious joy: face up to the sky, with mouth wide open, as if depositing bubbles in the wanton wind.

GALE: A bright sunny morning and the sun is high. How bright, how sunny, how high I'm yet to learn. But each is a sign, signifying something. And something else are those clouds, so close I could flick 'em like milky marbles across the smooth and silken sky *(He does, laughing wildly. He opens his mouth wide)*. And this breeze, this song in my open mouth makes a sound like the conch in the Cap'n's cabin. And a breeze is a tiny wind that can blow to a Gale, which is my name, and that is a sign, if only I knew…If only I knew! *(Looking below)* This deck below me, this tiny leaf island is my realm and all upon it my subjects… Look at them: insignificant speckleens, bodiless insects with little girl heads and little girl feet. I could crush 'em between my fingers! *(He pincers them to death between two fingers – laughs wildly)* But I'm not here for sport. Oh no, I'm here to read the signs; and to keep an eye on the doctor and his fraternizin' females. Cap'n says I must wait and watch 'em, like cut glass in a shaken tube. (*He cranes over the edge of his perch)* Now, where is she…? Ah, movin' to the galley.

Lighting change

MEAT FOR MESS NINE

Ship's Galley – Day:

Bridget stands at the galley entrance holding a large teapot in one hand and a piece of raw meat on a hook in the other. From inside: the sounds of pots and pans being roughly thrown about, merry singing, gruff cussing and the shrill bark of a small dog.

BRIDGET: Hullo? *(Louder)* Is anybody home…?

COOK *(From inside)*: What?

BRIDGET: Meat for Mess Nine.

COOK: Christ in heaven, how many of you are there?

BRIDGET: About a hundred and twenty, I think.

COOK: I see: they decided to bring out the whole country, did they?

BRIDGET: Not all of us; the rest are back home chasing leprechauns.

COOK *(Appearing)*: A sense of humour? That'll come in handy, where you're going.

BRIDGET: You might try developin' one of your own.

COOK: Oh, well played, girlie!

BRIDGET *(Holding out the teapot)*: Ye're supposed to fill this too.

A low growl emanates from his shirt.

COOK *(Warning)*: Matey…

Growl diminishes.

(To Bridget) I'm afraid you'll have to speak a little more kindly, or there'll be trouble…

The dog leaps onstage and comes at Bridget in a wild barking frenzy. She steps back as Cook steps in.

Matey, no...*(One bark)* Nooo… *(One bark)* Back here… *(Dog protests)* Go on, get back here - Eee-up *(Dog jumps back into his shirt)* Good boy *(Dog licks up under Cook's shirt and actor disappears)* You'll get used to him. He means no harm. *(To the dog)* He's a good boyyy! *(More licks – he laughs)*

Well, no use standing out here all day; in you pop.

They move inside the galley. Cook begins throwing pots and pans around, as if suddenly in a battle to save both their lives.

Right, give us a squizz at your meat. *(She does)* Nah, we can do better than that.

He swaps its label with another piece already in the pot and holds up the new piece.

Fancy this? It's twice the size.

BRIDGET: Wouldn't that be stealing someone else's leg of lamb?

COOK: I won't tell if you don't. *(Winks, puts it back in the pot and fills her teapot)* What's your name?

BRIDGET: Bridget.

COOK *(Hands her the teapot)*: I'm Cook, by name and nature. *(Indicating the dog)* And this here's Matey. Right, off you go.

She goes, leaving him to resume his war with the pots.

Lighting change

HE WAS ON THE EARL GREY

Main Deck - Day

Bridget is still moving back across with the teapot in hand, when, having scaled down from the crow's nest, Gale arrives to intercept her.

GALE: Pay no mind to the Cook. He doesn't like the Irish – says they're a pack of in-breds.

BRIDGET: How do ye know?

GALE: He told me so himself. Seems he's had a bit to do with them before. He was on that ship, The *Earl Grey*, when all hell broke loose.

The sound of the ship's name flushes through her.

BRIDGET: He was on *The Earl Grey*? That was my sister's boat.

GALE: Well, so he says - and gives me no reason to disbelieve him. *(Noticing the change in her)* Cook didn't do anything to you in there, did he…?

BRIDGET: No, but I met his dog.

GALE: Don't cross him on that dog. It means more to him than anythin'.

BRIDGET: I gathered.

Beat

GALE: I told you so, didn't I? *(Sticks a finger in his mouth, then holds it up)* See that? Wind… Told you it'd be a good day for sailing.

BRIDGET: Aye, ye did.

A moment passes between them.

GALE *(To us)*: Quite suddenly, he finds himself unable to breathe.

BRIDGET *(To us)*: She sees now, he's just a boy – about Sarah's age: beautiful and alive, with eyes the colour of bottle in sun.

Lighting change

GO SCALD YOURSELVES

We widen to a full view of the deck with girls sitting about. Nellie and Rose approach.

NELLIE: Ooo ahh! Found yourself a girlfriend?

ROSE: Aye, looks like it. I thought you navs were meant to be mindin' ye own business.

NELLIE: She's a bit old for ye, isn't she?

GALE: Shove off you two. I don't like ye smell.

MRS HANWELL *(Intervening):* Girls, could you help out with sewing some cloth for me?

ROSE: What in the bejaisus for?

MRS HANWELL: Doctor Shannon wants shower partitions.

ROSE: If the Doctor wants shower partitions, let him sow 'em himself.

MRS HANWELL: Now, Rose, there's no need___

DERVLA: Girls, why don't we all settle back now and I'll go and get our boilin' water from the Cook.

GALE *(To Nellie and Rose)*: Aye, off ye go. I hope ye don't go scaldin' yourself with the boilin' water.

A higher power intervenes, this time from the poop.

CAPTAIN: Boy…!

Gale looks up.

Go aloft, boy. She's beginning to squall.

GALE: Aye, Cap'n.

The confrontation dissolves.

Lighting change

LETTER TO BRIDGET: THE VERY FIRST GARDEN

Sarah is sitting under a tree writing a letter home to Bridget.

Oh, Bridge, it'd take ye breath away! Bein' the highest point for miles ye can see everythin': green fields stretchin' forever, fenced with lines of stone over hill and dale all higgledy-piggledy. In every paddock there's cows all dotted and numerous and sheep with faces the colour of burnt bog. There are cottages and laneways arched over with hedge and vine; with overflowin' carts snailin' their way to market. And in those carts… food Bridget… food, of every conception and flavour! Of course, there's pratae and turnips like the ones we grow at home; and breads and fruits all the colours of the rainbow; and meats from animals only Noah himself could imagine! It's all

like…like a garden… the very first maybe! And all the people are out and about, everywhere; smilin', happy people with full bellies and lovin' hearts - not unlike those we know at home… But I'll not be speakin' more of them; not right now if it's alright with you, Bridget, as it brings me the sadness to remember them, as I'm sure it does you…

Lighting Change

FIRST TIME ALOFT TOGETHER

Aloft – Late afternoon:

A deepening dusk descends on the upper regions of the ship. At centre is Gale, lying up in the crow's nest, apparently asleep. Without warning Bridget appears from over the side of the small crow's nest platform.

GALE *(Shocked)*: What are you doin' here in the crow's nest?

BRIDGET: I came to see what all the fuss was about.

GALE: You're not to be doin' this. You'll be gettin' us both in trouble.

BRIDGET: Why not?

GALE: How did ye get up here?

BRIDGET: Same as you, I expect. *(Swinging out over the side)*

I like the view.

GALE *(Grabbing hold of her)*: Look out! *(He helps her onto the platform.)* Ye can't be here! The Captain won't have it.

BRIDGET: He won't know. He's gone below, as he always does about now.

GALE: But the other lads; they'll not be havin' it.

BRIDGET: No?

They look about them.

Nobody cares but your old Cap'n. *(Changing the subject)* What do you do up here – keep a look out?

GALE: Aye.

BRIDGET: For what?

GALE: Oh, I dunno…things.

BRIDGET: Like what: us?

GALE: No! Well, yes; amongst other things… It's my job.

BRIDGET: I see…

GALE *(Embarrassed)*: But not especially you. Cap'n's on the lookout for things that might, you know, help us move along. I'm to look for signs. *(Responding to her*

skepticism) Ah, what's the use of explainin' to you… *(Turning away)* Dunno why you bothered comin' up.

BRIDGET: No, I'd like to know – really, I would.

Beat

GALE *(To the sky)*: Here, can ye see them?

BRIDGET: Aye, (it's) a colony of clouds.

GALE: Floatin'…

BRIDGET: Their bellies full of afternoon light…!

GALE: Look… (*He takes her hand, and points it)* There… much higher up - wispier ones…

BRIDGET: Embroidered with gold on a quilt of deep blue.

GALE: Fanned by a high silent wind.

BRIDGET: Ah… I could lose myself.

GALE: Or fall through – deeper, deeper - into whatever was beyond.

She is crying.

Are ye' alright?

BRIDGET: We're so small. What does it mean?

GALE: I haven't seen it before. But they've been comin' all day.

Lighting change

READING AND WHISTLING

Deck – Day:

Gale watches from his crow's nest perch. Groups of girls sit about idly in the growing heat of the day. Sailors are scattered around the boat. The Captain stands on the poop. Higgs and Tattoo watch him and speak to us, as does Gale.

HIGGS: We sit becalmed in the baking heat of an equatorial sun.

TATTOO: For days the Cap'n has not left his station.

HIGGS: He has tried every trick he knows to shift us: caressed the boat to every imaginable pocket, followed elusive gusts across a listless ocean.

TATTOO: Still, it resists him.

HIGGS: All the while, valuable time leaks away.

GALE: Mid-ship are the lovelies, all in sweet patterned rings, doing little on a deck idle day. She is amongst them - leadin'the readin' - a dried flower she's plucked from the bible's page in her hand.

Bridget leads a circle of girls, who are reading aloud from her bible. The doctor looks

on from a discreet distance. It is Rose's turn. She reads slowly, carefully, by tracking words with a finger.

ROSE: '…beware, lest you lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars…'

BRIDGET: Good, Rose - you were word perfect.

ROSE: I had a bit of help along the way.

SHANNON *(Unable to resist):* You did it, Rose, and that's all that matters.

DERVLA: Ah, doctor; don't be blowin' too much wind up us; we'll be gettin' fat heads.

ROSE: Nell, why don't ye have a go: ye never do.

NELLIE: Ah, what'd be the point? None of us'll be usin' it where we're goin'. It's a broom ye should be showin' us how to use, Doctor.

SHANNON: Education - of any sort - never goes astray, Nell. There'll always be a use for it. You'll be writing letters back home, I expect.

NELLIE: And who might it be I'd be writin' home to, Doctor? That is, unless you'd want me to be addressin' the letters to heaven.

MRS HANWELL: Nell!

NELLIE: Give the bible to Bessie – it's her turn.

DERVLA *(Intercepting it)*: Ah, give us it here: I'll read up a storm about Noah and his little boat.

NELLIE *(Snatching it back):* But it's Bessie's turn.

BESSIE: I don't mind, really.

Nellie hands it to her.

BRIDGET: Take ye time, Bess.

BESSIE *(Reading)*: … So… wat…

BRIDGET: Watch…

BESSIE: Watch…Yours…

BRIDGET: Yourselves…

BESSIE: I know, I know: 'Watch yourselves… l-e-s-t – lest? What does that mean: 'lest'?

SHANNON: It means 'unless' – only in a more archaic form.

DERVLA: The ark – if it's about Noah, I'll read it. *(She snatches the bible back).*

SHANNON: No, I said, 'archaic' as in old. 'Lest' is just an older way of saying 'unless'.

DERVLA: Well, why don't they just come out and say it?

SHANNON: It was written a long time ago.

DERVLA: So, why hasn't someone put it into words we can understand, instead of that old mallarky?

BESSIE: Ah, give it here, will ye? *(Taking the bible back)* 'Watch yourselves lest you…f-o-r-g-e-t… the… c-o-v…' Ah jaisus!!

SHANNON: 'Covenant'… *(Repeating)* 'COVENANT'.

Collective frustration

BESSIE: Covenant: what in the belly blue blazes is that?

SHANNON: A bargain between you and God.

Collective appreciation

DERVLA *(Grabbing bible)*: Leave off it, Bess. *(To Bridget)* Ye should be givin' her an easier bit. That one's too hard.

BRIDGET: I didn't know it was comin' up?

NELLIE: It would have been alright for me, though?

DERVLA: Shut ye gob, Nell.

BESSIE *(Trying to grab the book back):* Give it here. I can do it!

DERVLA *(Standing)*: Can't ye see: ye're makin' a fool of yourself!

SHANNON: Dervla, she's not.

DERVLA: Well, leave off her, then!

BESSIE: Let me finish.

DERVLA: Bess, it's no great thing.

BESSIE: I said let me finish!

Dervla hands the book back.

DERVLA *(To the rest)*: Well, what're you all lookin' at? Mind ye own business.

NELLIE: Ah, Derv, give it over.

DERVLA: Did I not say: mind ye own business?

SHANNON: Now, girls___

NELLIE: She's the one swapped our leg a lamb for a smaller one, don't forget.

BESSIE: I never!

NELLIE: We seen ye do it; didn't we Rose?

BESSIE *(Before Rose can answer)*: I never even seen ye leg a lamb! How could I a stole it?

NELLIE: Pincered it away, more like.

DERVLA: Where did ye see her do it?

NELLIE: Why are ye takin' her part instead of those ye belong to? *(Turning on Bessie)* This is your fault, ye one-fisted toad. Ye shouldn't be readin' in the first place. It's not for cripples.

ROSE: What about the leg a lamb?

DERVLA: Ah, it was weeks ago. Why do ye keep bangin'on about it?

NELLIE: Because it would a kept my family a month longer in this world, is why!

DERVLA: And all of our families, if they'd had it. But they didn't. And we're all here now. So don't go blamin' Bess for everythin' that's been!

BRIDGET: It was me swapped the leg of lamb over – when I went to have ours put in the pot. *(To Dervla)* And Bessie's readin' because I asked her to. The Doctor's wantin' us all to be sewin' and readin' – useful skills for when we arrive. *(To Nellie)* You'd be readin' too if you'd wanted. You'd be good. Now can we please get back to it.

They settle back down. The bible is handed along to Nellie, who, after some deliberation, takes it. A long silence follows. This is broken by an odd sound, barely discernible at first: a sustained single note eerily whistled through a pair of dry lips. So mysterious and humble is its origin, none can initially guess at its source, until, at last, it becomes clear - it is the Captain.

MR HIGGS: What on earth is he doing?

TATTOO: I believe the Cap'n may be whistling for the wind.

The Captain continues, joined, perhaps inevitably, by another equally strident voice: Matey's - driven mad by the sound. He runs from the galley, pursued by The Cook.

COOK: Matey, stop that yappin'! Stop it, I say!

Unheeding, the dog continues. The Captain stops whistling. Beyond all imploration, the dog continues with increased intensity. Mr Higgs steps forward, but is intercepted by Bridget, who moves to the dog and simply picks it up. The barking stops. She hands the dog back to The Cook.

COOK *(Sotto voce):* I owe you one, girlie.

Beat

Someone, somewhere, coughs. This is followed by a wheezy snigger, which escapes despite the best intention of its owner to suppress it. As a tiny piece of snow, dislodged from the side of a steep mountain, this sets in train an avalanche of laughter. The Captain stands rigid and mortified. Laughter subsides.

Silence

GALE *(From above):* Cap'n… sails … they've been licked.

CAPTAIN *(Looking up)*: What's that, boy?

GALE: The sails, sir: squalls are upon us… The wind, she blows!

CAPTAIN: Ay, boy; Mr Higgs: to it, man – quickly now, bring her about.

A fresh torrent of orders and the boat is once again a teeming hive of activity.

Lighting change

LETTER TO BRIDGET: COME QUICKLY

Sarah composes a letter. Bridget lies at her feet, asleep.

…I don't know why I'm describin' it all in such detail. Maybe, in part, it's my relief at being so free to enjoy it all. And that brings me shame, because I know it can only make you yearn for it all the more. I do wish, dear Bridget, ye could be here with me. I'm livin' for the day when you can sit upon this same hill. And we can look out upon the day together, as we used to in our own place. I long for it, more than anythin' in the world – I long for it. That's the truest, truest thing I can say. Oh, Bridget, please hurry in ye preparation. I know as I say this how impossible it may be for you to do what it is I'm askin'. I have no idea what's become of ye there; or if you'll even remember me… So, if it's at all within ye, come, and come quickly… Please, come quickly…

ALOFT AGAIN

Crow's Nest – Night:

Bridget wakes. She is lifted into the crow's nest, still half-asleep. Gale joins her.

GALE: Bridget?

BRIDGET: Oh, I must have fallen asleep. *(Looking skyward)* You'd like my sister…

GALE: Do ye think so?

BRIDGET: I do… And she'd like you. Would ye come and meet her, after I get settled with her?

GALE: Aye, if ye like.

BRIDGET: Good, that's settled then.

She lies back down. He lies back down.

Lighting change

GET ME THE SEXTANT

Deck – Night

The Captain is standing in his usual position on the poop gazing upwards at the sky.

CAPTAIN: Boy…

Beat

I say, Boy!

Gale scrambles down from his perch to a position beneath the Captain.

GALE: Sir?

CAPTAIN: Go to my cabin. Fetch me the sextant.

GALE: Aye, Sir.

He leaves.

Lighting change

SHORT CUT

Captain's Cabin – Night:

Gale enters the cabin, lamp in hand. A map is spread out on the desk. Its raised corners are pinned down on one side by the requested sextant; on the other, by a beautiful conch shell. Gale is about to pick up the sextant, but is unable to resist the pull of the conch. He takes it from its holder and holds it up to the light.

GALE: The Cap'n's cabin. His desk. On it, a conch. Within its patterned skin *(Inhaling its smell)* – lived some creature of the briny sea deep; safe in the folds of its home. *(He holds it to his ear and listens)* An ocean within rolls on and on and I am in it.

He opens his eyes, moves forward to the porthole and peers out. Behind him, the Captain appears.

CAPTAIN: What kept you, boy? I was waiting. *(He sees the conch in the boy's hand)* Ah, you've found the conch. That explains it. *(Oddly tender)* It has a way, doesn't it?

Beat

What were you looking at?

GALE: Sir?

CAPTAIN: When I came in; you were looking out of the porthole.

GALE: Nothin', sir.

CAPTAIN: Nothing?

GALE: Nothin' and everythin'…

Beat

CAPTAIN: Where are you from?

GALE: London, sir.

CAPTAIN: No, you're not.

GALE *(Conceding)*: Connemara…

CAPTAIN: Ireland: West Coast?

GALE: Aye, sir.

CAPTAIN: Like our good doctor, you're doing your best to forget – understandable…. Explains why you get on so well with our female cargo… You've been through it, haven't you? Is that where your legs were mangled? (*No reply)* Here, I want to show you something. Look again. *(Gently pressing his face close the glass of the porthole)* What do you see?

GALE: Water, Cap'n.

CAPTAIN: And?

GALE: Sky

CAPTAIN: And?

GALE: The moon.

CAPTAIN: How is it?

GALE: Waning crescent at fifteen to twenty above the horizon.

CAPTAIN: Yes: the horizon… cunning bitch.

He releases the boy. Gale slumps into the chair. Black moves to the porthole.

She was staring you in the face and you hardly noticed her. That's the way she is. She'd like you to think she's nothing but a straight little line at the edge of the world; holding the sea and sky apart for us to slip between. *(Wryly)* But she lies. That line out there – that's just her slippery sleight of hand. She's round, boy; round and full like a belly.

He reaches for the globe in the corner of the cabin, pulls it off its axis and places it on Gale's lap. Gale is transfixed.

GALE *(To us)*: The round orb of the world lit by an oil lamp: its smooth surface alive with the flicker of flame. Countries glow with rippling fire. Mountains rise and fall with sunlight and shadow. Tides gleam across vast pulsing oceans.

CAPTAIN: Let me show you the mysteries of Great Circle Sailing, boy. *(He kneels at Gale's feet and demonstrates his points using the globe)* This is where we started: Plymouth, England. This is where we are: just north of the Equator. And this is where we're going: Australia. Now, show me the best way for us to come.

Gale plots a course with his finger down the West coast of Africa to the west coast of Australia, hugging close to the coast before heading east across the Great Australian Bight, then up the east coast of Victoria and New South Wales.

Nice try, boy. Now, watch – *my way*.

With his own finger, Black plots his own course. He begins with the same route Gale has just chosen until he reaches their current position. But instead of heading south down the west coast of Africa, he runs it much further westwards across the Atlantic Ocean, almost to Rio de Janeiro on the eastern coast of South America, continuing south until the lace disappears under the bottom side of the globe - almost to Antarctica.

This is where she gets cold; as cold as we can stand it.

Finally, he turns the lace upwards, back up towards Australia. As his fingers peg the lace across the southern ocean he stops and looks hard at Gale.

This is where she blows us up, up and around, like a slingshot.

He threads it up beneath the Great Southern Bight of Australia, through Bass Strait and up to Sydney. Arriving at his destination, he holds up the section of lace not yet used in the journey.

See - coming this far south is shorter – much shorter. And with the blow from the Westerlies we get from going so far south we can shave off days; maybe even weeks.

GALE: Cap'n: why must we get there so quickly?

CAPTAIN: Because it's in our hearts to desire it.

The Captain is now kneeling in front of the boy. He looks hard at the boy, moving in closer. Gale tries to move his legs, but his feet are pinned by the Captain's weight upon them.

Don't be frightened, boy.

There is a knock at the door. The Captain doesn't move. Gale is too frightened to call out.

HIGGS: Excuse me, Sir.

Beat

Captain Black?

CAPTAIN: …Yes.

HIGGS: The men are preparing for Crossing the Line … They need the boy to help with preparations… Sir?

The Captain releases the boy's legs, stands, and opens the door. Gale escapes past

him.

Lighting change

THAT SHOULD BE ENOUGH TIME

Central Deck – Dusk:

Bridget stands alone, looking upwards. Mr Higgs approaches.

HIGGS: You've not gone below with the others, Miss? *(No reply)* Your time on deck is well past.

BRIDGET: Yes, I know that, sir. I was just takin' a few last breaths before I go (below). I'll not be long.

Again, she looks up.

HIGGS: If you're caught up here we'll both be in for it.

BRIDGET: I know, sir.

HIGGS: Lucky for us, our betters are for the time being occupied…. *(Referring to the crow's nest)* Are you worried about him?

BRIDGET: Aye, I've not seen him for days.

HIGGS: He has spent a lot of time up there lately. *(Considering)* I…. have to go down to the foredeck for a few minutes. *(Looking up at the crow's nest)* That should be enough time.... When I come back, I trust you'll be safely stowed below with the rest of the lovelies… Am I making myself clear?

BRIDGET: Aye, sir – perfectly.

He leaves. She begins to climb up towards the crow's nest.

Lighting change

UNEXPECTED GUEST

Crow's nest – Dusk:

Gale is curled up into a ball in the crow's nest. Bridget arrives. He doesn't move.

BRIDGET: Are ye alright?

GALE: I've got to get into the sick bay.

BRIDGET: Are ye sick?

GALE: Just got to get there, that's all - away from here.

BRIDGET: Give me your sleeve.

GALE: Uh?

BRIDGET: The end of your sleeve, give it here.

He holds out his arm and she pulls out some threads.

Rub these into ye eyes. *(Explaining)* The dye from the threads in your sleeve: it'll

make ‘em burn so bad ye won’t be able to see. It’s only temporary. But it’ll do the trick. .

GALE *(Following her instructions)*: Where did ye learn this?

BRIDGET: Where do ye think?

Lighting change

CROSSING THE LINE PREPARATIONS

The Doctor’s Cabin

Doctor Shannon composes a diary entry - addressing it to us. As he describes events we see them materialize.

Ebbingtide - June 7th: Today the girls have been busy preparing for “Crossing of the Line” ceremonies, which are to take place tonight. They have responded to the occasion with no end of resourcefulness and application; having created, seemingly out of thin air, the most wondrous adornments. Indeed, all this, along with the grooming of mind and body; scrubbing of skin, washing of hair, mending of dress, has given our ship a distinct sense of eager anticipation for the crossing of the equator... On a somewhat more sombre note – one of the ship’s crew – the youngest as it turns out – reported to me yesterday with a strange and familiar ailment of the eyes. I was able to treat him without undue complication; but, as is often the case, the cause of his affliction remains somewhat of a mystery…

Lighting change

DUTY TO INFORM

Captain’s Cabin – Early evening

The Captain is working at his desk. There is a knock at the door.

SHANNON: Captain.

CAPTAIN: Yes?

SHANNON: I wonder whether I might have a word.

CAPTAIN: A brief one; we’re about to begin celebrations.

SHANNON: Nevertheless___

CAPTAIN: You may not be aware of how significant these Crossing the Line celebrations are to the men. It’s why I’ve relaxed the fraternization rule.

SHANNON: I would, nonetheless, like to discuss the general well-being of the boy… Nightingale: the one you call Gale.

Beat.

CAPTAIN: What of him?

SHANNON: He came to me last night with an ailment.

CAPTAIN: Was it serious?

SHANNON: No.

CAPTAIN: Then why are we discussing it?

SHANNON: It is an ailment, let us say, that in my previous employ, I was familiar with. In the workhouse I was attached to in Ireland it was common practice for the children to manufacture illness in order to gain entry into the Infirmary; illness like temporary blindness induced by rubbing dye into their eyes.

CAPTAIN: And you're accusing the boy of doing this?

SHANNON: I raise the matter because the condition may allude to other malady within him.

CAPTAIN: To what specific malady do you refer?

SHANNON: Of that, I'm unsure.

CAPTAIN: Thank you, Doctor.

That Captain resumes his business. Having effectively been dismissed, the Doctor leaves.

Lighting change

CROSSING THE LINE

Ship's deck – a bright summer's eve:

The deck is awash with preparations for the dance. Doctor Shannon is helping put the finishing touches to the lanterns. On a separate part of the stage, Younger Bridget is on the shoulders of her father, spinning, and saying 'Star Bright' together – an echo of the earlier scene in Part 1. Downstage, Older Bridget is looking up at the night sky. Seeing her, Shannon approaches.

SHANNON: Star light, star bright; first star I see tonight…

She turns, surprised to hear him utter the phrase.

A beautiful evening, wouldn't you say?

BRIDGET: Aye, Doctor, it is.

SHANNON: And just enough Moon to welcome our friends from the deep.

BRIDGET: Aye, are you excited?

SHANNON: Honestly? I'll be glad when it's over.

Beat

BRIDGET: Do ye remember me, Sir?

SHANNON: Of course, Bridget…

BRIDGET: No, I mean do ye remember me from before.

SHANNON: Before?

BRIDGET: Back home…

SHANNON: I don't (quite follow).

BRIDGET: You were the doctor at our Workhouse.

SHANNON *(Blanching)*: I see.

BRIDGET: I understand why ye wouldn't: we had little to do with each other. And there were a great many others in need. But ye tended to my little sister when she was poorly, and for that I'll always be grateful.

Beat

SHANNON: And how is your sister?

BRIDGET: She's grand! I'm chasing her, do ye know: around the belly o' the world – all the way to Australia.

SHANNON: She's already there?

BRIDGET: Aye, she is… she came out on one of the early boats.

SHANNON: And you've managed to keep in touch?

BRIDGET: Aye – she's gettin' things all ready for me. She writes all about it, regular, like; at least as regular as she's able.

Beat

Do ye know much about the stars, Doctor?

SHANNON: Not much.

BRIDGET: Me neither; but ye certainly miss 'em when they're not there… The North Star: I used to look at her from on top o' me Fa's shoulders at home. It seemed so close I could almost reach up and touch her. Since we've been aboard I've been watchin' her sink down the sky. Then, the other night she just slipped right under the ocean.

Beat

SHANNON: Do you miss them?

BRIDGET: Them?

SHANNON: Your father, your mother? *(Realizing his mistake)* I'm sorry: that was unforgiveable.

BRIDGET: No, it's alright. I do… I do…

Beat

Father Brennan, he taught me. To read: Father Brennan taught me how.

SHANNON *(Remembering)*: Father Brennan - I see, aye.

BRIDGET: He's a good man: he helped us; Sarah and me. Did ye know him?

SHANNON: I did.

BRIDGET *(Comforted):* I'm glad.

She looks up to the crow's nest.

SHANNON: Are ye worried about the boy?

BRIDGET: Should I be?

SHANNON: I've bathed his eyes and they seem to have recovered remarkably well.

Beat

Did you show him how to do that?

BRIDGET: I beg pardon?

SHANNON: He'd done it to himself, Bridget. I ask if you showed him how? I was a Doctor in the workhouse, remember.

BESSIE *(Approaching)*: Come on, Bridget; it's startin'.

There are screams of delight and instantly the deck is alive with dancing. Dr Shannon and Bridget are swirled into the action. At a time convenient, seaweed attired sailors rush forward. One sailor comes forward to begin the ceremony. It is Tattoo, whose toothless performance sets style and tone for what is to follow.

TATTOO: Hear ye now, ye swabs and beauties: Make way for the Master of the Seven Seas! Make way for the king of the briny blue! For he is the deepest denizen of this hump-backed globe; the Lord of the Line, this great equator you cross tonight. Make way! Make way! Make way, for Neptune and his Slimy Brood!'

Framed by a kelp arch of sailors Neptune and his clan appear: An imperious Father Neptune (Cook), an enigmatically reluctant Mother Neptune (Gale) gripped tightly by her husband, and a yapping Baby Neptune, peering out from the shirt of his Father. Recognizing the cast, a loud cheer goes up. A space is cleared in the centre of the deck.

Oh Mighty Lord of the Deep, what brings you here on this balmiest of nights?

NEPTURE: Why, can you not tell that yourself, you chompless lack?

TATTOO: Yes (I can), but what brings you here specifically, your Bellyful?

NEPTUNE: Well, gap-mouth, I'll tell you. *(Addressing the crowd)* You've all done well to get this far, well enough for such a land-lubbing bunch of noughts. So I've come tonight with my little family to congratulate you and to welcome you to these, my southern dominions *(Cheers*) Now, I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me, I've got a number of other important appointments tonight. *(Building to a cue line)* So, until we

meet again... consider yourselves part of the family!

A mighty cheer goes up.

Well done monsters; well done sky!

More cheers; he turns to go - then, as if remembering something...

Oh, by the way, you wouldn't happen to have any landlubbers aboard?

TATTOO *(Lascivious)*: We have a boatful of 'pretties', your rotundity.

Groans from all the girls

NEPTUNE: No, that's not exactly what I had in mind, cavity.

TATTOO: What then, sire?

NEPTUNE *(Pointedly):* Well, what I meant was… have you any… sailors, perhaps, on their MAIDEN VOYAGE?

Sailors roar with anticipation.

TATTOO: Ooh, now, let me see … *(Looking for something lost)* we did have one around here somewhere. But he seems to have gone missing.

NEPTUNE: Oh, now, that's a pity.

TATTOO: (It's) A terrible pity.

NEPTUNE: Have you looked for him?

TATTOO: High and Low, sire.

NEPTUNE: Up in the nest?

TATTOO: Up in the nest.

NEPTUNE: Down among the pretties?

TATTOO: Down among the pretties.

NEPTUNE: And nothink?

TATTOO: Not a think.

NEPTUNE: (It's a) shame.

TATTOO: A great shame.

Both shake their heads and 'tsk' in unison.

By the way, sire: (is there) something wrong with your missus?

NEPTUNE: Oh, a little lovers' tiff is all. But you know what they say: quick is to fire; quick is to cool. Ain't that right, darlin'? Nothink a little lovin' won't fix.

He sends his wife a big sloppy kiss. Sailors roar.

TATTOO: Would you mind, your holiness, if I took a closer look at her mermaidian beauty?

NEPTUNE: No, not at all *(Referring to the other sailors)* In fact, I can see your friends

are curious too? (You) Be my guest, ugglies; be - my – guest!

Sailors scrum around Neptune's wife. When this dissolves, Gale is left in the centre: bound, shirtless and blindfolded. He is picked up, tossed into the air three cheered times, lowered onto the deck and painted with a black substance (tarred).

TATTOO: That's it: tar him up! Bird him, lads!

He is tipped into a barrel headfirst and feathered (coated with a layer of feathers); then pulled from it, coughing and gasping for air.

What's that (you're saying), my little gull - thirsty?

He slaps him hard on the back and Gale falls to his knees.

Give him a drink, boys.

A bottle of water is placed to his lips. He sculls then spits it out.

Oh, dear – bit too salty, eh? *(Into Gale's ear)* Not long to go now, lad. *(To the crowd)* And lastly, but not leastly: ride the roiling waves to the other side! Up! Stand up!

He is helped to his feet. The final obstacle is a series of knee-high ropes he must negotiate. They rise up and down, simulating an ocean swell.

Go on now, boy: Cross the line and be a man amongst us!

He takes a few steps forward, urged on by the other sailors. But, being blindfolded he trips over the first rope, and then another, and another. Finally, he reaches the last rope and stumbles over it. A mighty cheer goes up. But the ordeal is not quite over yet.

Hoist him up, lads, and dunk him down deep. Wash him good: make him one of us.

ALL: One of us; one of us!

TATTOO: Welcome to heaven, boy.

Having fallen at the last into a loop of rope, he is hoisted aloft, dumped head first over the side of the boat and is now suspended upside down before us.

GALE *(To us)*: And then, to end my initiation the sailors hoist me high into the sky with a winch attached to the main mast. And they lower me down… down… into the ocean; deeper than they intend… so deep I have time to remember.

He is gently laid down and we are transported to a workhouse infirmary with rows of sick children. An attendant walks slowly among them, diligently checking each child as he passes by. He comes to Gale, kneels down and touches him.

ATTENDANT: Boy… (*More vigorously)* Boy… *(Gale does not respond)* Matron…

A woman approaches. He shakes his head. She nods and the man picks Gale's body up in his arms.

MATRON *(A hand on Gale's forehead)*: Be not afraid, child. A better life awaits thee

yet.

She leaves. The man is joined by others who hold Gale up to face us and he begins to speak, softly.

GALE: At the back of the Infirmary there was a place; rarely seen, but often spoken of by those who'd come to be in my workhouse. Some called it 'the back way'; others simply 'the dead-end'. Most agreed it was the only way out of that place. There was a room, bare but for a single table. *(He is laid on the table)* On the table was a box like a coffin without a lid with a lever on one side. Pull this lever and the bottom of the box gave way to a chute beneath. This led down to an open pit on the outside wall. (*He slowly slides down the chute, coming to rest on a pile of bodies)* The pit was not yet full so there was quite a fall from the end of the chute. That's how I broke my legs. The pit was filled with lime; and others, like me: dead from the fever, mostly. Many say it was from hunger, but that's because they weren't there… I lay in that pit for three days - dead - so I had a lot of time to think. I was not afraid: 'a better life, a deeper life, awaits me yet'… When I finally crawled out I was sure of one thing: I would never go back.

He looks around, smiles, and is lifted into his original position: in the moment of his dunking.

TATTOO: Alright, lads, don't want him to drown, pull him up now!

The sailors all cry, 'Pull'. But there is something wrong with the pulley and it sticks.

GALE: But the winch jams.

Higgs runs to assist.

HIGGS: Again, again!!

They try again – 'Pull!' But the winch remains jammed.

Everyone – pull!!!

More sailors join in and with the extra power the pulley mechanism comes free. But the increased purchase on the rope sends the boy flying up into the air. He lands on the deck with a sickening thud. The sailors rush to his aid. But it is the doctor who now takes control, kneeling over the boy and beginning to unloosen his ties.

SHANNON: Get out of the way!

TATTOO: Now, now, Doctor; no need for that.

CAPTAIN: Get back. *(He knocks Tattoo to the ground)*

All of you clear the deck. Clear the deck!

Cook receives a forceful shove to the chest – an unfortunate act as it transpires.

DOG *(To us)*: In an instant the tiny dog's vengeance explodes upon the throat of his master's attacker.

CAPTAIN: Ahhh!

He grabs the dog and throws it onto the deck.

DOG *(To us)*: Momentarily stunned, the dog tries to re-gather and come again.

COOK: Matey, no!

DOG: But the Captain doesn't wait for a second assault. With one swift, carefully placed boot, he kicks it off the deck and into the dark sea swell beneath.

Cook runs to the railing, desperately searching the darkness for his beloved.

COOK: Matey…? Matey….?

But the dog is gone. He goes to climb over the rail, but is stopped by other sailors. He is distraught, inconsolable, a state which quickly transforms to rage. He rushes towards the Captain in a wild fury, and is only restrained by a small army of crew.

CAPTAIN *(Of Cook)*: There's a storm coming. Tie him to the mast. And get the boy to the Infirmary.

Crowd dissolves.

Lighting change

DID YOU EVER SEE THE DEVIL?

Ship's Deck – Night:

A storm is upon the ship. At the stern a helmsman is tied to the wheel. At the front of the poop commands are being sent from Captain via the First Mate on the main deck. Across the stage we get glimpses of frenetic action: reefing of sail, pulling of rope; men crawling like spiders across spars. Every now and then, amidst the relentless roar of wind, men shout out warning of an impending wave, which flushes over the boat, sending grappling bodies spearing across its deck. In the centre of it all is the Cook, who, despite being chained to the mast and bloodied about the head, appears to be enjoying the ordeal; singing merrily to the conspiring elements.

HIGGS: Wave port! Brace! Wave!

The wave comes, sending men flying across the deck.

COOK: Ohhh… Did you ever see the Devil, with his dirty spade and shovel, a digging of potatoes with his tail cocked up? *(Shouting to the sky)* That's it, my little boy, come to your one and only. Rain down upon us! Bury us in the deep, my Matey boy!

The Captain bashes him, brutally.

TATTOO: Wave from port!

HIGGS: Brace! Wave!

The wave sweeps them up and sideways across its face. The Doctor appears from the hatchway and unsteadily makes his way to the Captain.

SHANNON: Captain, I demand to know how long you're going to pursue this course.

CAPTAIN: I'd get myself below before the next wave, Doctor, if I were you.

SHANNON: Why are you doing this?

CAPTAIN: You're overreaching, sir.

SHANNON: Whatever other agendas you may have, it is not part of your brief to endanger the lives of these girls… *(To the First Mate)* How far south have we come, Mr Higgs?

CAPTAIN: Wave!

Another wave comes, bringing the Captain goes to assist the Helmsman. The First Mate grabs the Doctor and holds him fast until it passes.

HIGGS: I'd take the Captain's advice, Doctor, and get below while you still can.

SHANNON: How far south have we come?

HIGGS: Fifty degrees by last reckoning, and we'll go further yet before he turns us north east.

SHANNON *(Shocked)*: Fifty degrees? Why, we're almost into the ice. Is he mad?

CAPTAIN: Starboard!

COOK *(Waking)*: Ahh… *(Mock Irish)* Top of the mornin' to ye, Doctor… Welcome to heaven… Would ye happen to any spare galoshes? I could do with a pair meself. Me feet are getting a little wet.

SHANNON *(Seeing the Cook)*: What in God's name… *(To the Captain)* What have ye done to him?

CAPTAIN: Mr Higgs, see the doctor below.

SHANNON: Release that man and allow his wounds to be treated.

CAPTAIN: Mr Higgs…

Higgs approaches.

SHANNON: If you do not get this boat into safer waters, I will do everything in my power to ensure you never captain a vessel again.

A blow from the Captain sends him into the First Mate's arms.

COOK: On second thoughts, Doctor, forget the galoshes - I think my feet are already wet.

The sailors scramble to the port side. Bridget appears from the hatchway entrance.

SHANNON: Bridget, you must get below.

BRIDGET: Doctor, it's Bessie; there's something wrong. Ye must come quickly to the Infirmary.

Lighting change

BESSIE

Below Decks; Ship's hospital – Night

The ravens from Bessie's previous dream have returned and are now in a feeding frenzy. From somewhere deep within their mass, we hear a shrill cry.

BESSIE: Nooo…!

They scatter as she flails and kicks. She is on the bunk in the narrow space of the ship's Infirmary. She grasps her belly and recovers enough to fend off Mrs Hanwell and Dervla, who are failing in their attempts to settle her down. She is hysterical; made the more so by the sight of blood pouring from beneath her nightdress.

MRS HANWELL: Now, Bessie, please, lie still until the doctor arrives.

BESSIE *(Cowering, kicking)*: Get away! Get away from me!

DERVLA: For Chris Jays, girl; settle down, will ye!

BESSIE: No, they'll come back. Stay away, Stay away!

DERVLA *(To Mrs Hanwell as she gets hold of a foot)*: Grab the other one. Quickly, grab it!

A wave passes overhead. As they are recovering, Bridget and the Doctor arrive. Seeing them, Bessie backs up against the wall.

SHANNON *(Seeing the blood)*: Bessie, let me see.

BESSIE: No, no, ye don't understand! They'll come (back).

SHANNON: Bessie, I need to see.

DERVLA: Let the doctor take a look at ye; please, girl!

BESSIE: No!

SHANNON *(To the others)*: What happened to her?

MRS HANWELL: Bridget woke up and found her like this…. Blood everywhere…

DERVLA: We got her in here to the Infirmary. But she won't let anyone___

BESSIE: You don't understand… none of ye do.

SHANNON *(To the other girls)*: Tell me what you know of it.

DERVLA: Know of it? She's sick is what I know.

SHANNON: Was there an injury of some sort?

DERVLA: She was alright when we came below?

SHANNON *(To Bessie):* Was it a knock of some sort - from a wave perhaps?

Bessie shakes her head.

BRIDGET: It's comin' from inside her.

SHANNON: You must let me look, Bess. I can do nothing unless you do.

Mrs Hanwell tries to grab Bessie's foot. Bessie kicks out at her.

BESSIE: Nooo…!

SHANNON: Mrs Hanwell, I may need room to access instruments. Would you attend to the rest of the girls, please? This storm will only get worse before it gets better.

She leaves.

Lighting change

O'BYRNE

Ireland – Somewhere in Bessie's past:

A priest and Bessie stand some distance from a cottage. It has been arranged for her to be a domestic servant for the farmer who lives there. Having previously agreed to the arrangement, she is now having second thoughts.

PRIEST: Bessie… ?

BESSIE: Father, I've been thinkin'…

PRIEST: Yes…

BESSIE: Could I not be comin' to live with you at the church? I'd be more than useful___

PRIEST: Bessie, we've been through this. I don't mean to be harsh, but it's this___

BESSIE: Or the workhouse, I know, I know. I'll not be goin' there. I heard the stories, Father.

PRIEST: It's not much of a choice. But it's the best we can do. O'Byrne's offered to take you on. I know it's not much of a chance, but it's a chance more than most.

O'Byrne appears at the door of the cottage.

O'BYRNE: Father…

PRIEST: Michael…

O'Byrne is an ugly man: in appearance and temperament; something the priest has obviously omitted to tell Bessie.

O'BYRNE: Well, what're ye waitin' for? (The) Door's already open.

The priest realizes, for the first time, the magnitude of the mistake he's made. But he's committed himself to the transaction.

PRIEST: Go on, Bess.

She takes a few tentative steps towards O'Byrne.

O'BYRNE *(Noticing her hand)*: What's this?

BESSIE: My hand.

She takes it out of her pocket.

O'BYRNE: Christ … (it's) a cripple. Ye never mentioned that, Father.

PRIEST: I didn't think it *worth* mentioning.

O'BYRNE: We're all equal in the eyes of God, eh?

PRIEST: If you've a problem___

O'BYRNE: Now, I never said that. *(To Bessie)* You've still got one that works anyway. Come on, then, no need to stand on ceremony.

BESSIE: Goodbye, Father…

The Father leaves.

O'BYRNE: Lie still, ye freak, or I'll put ye in the workhouse meself.

The birds swoop on Bessie.

BESSIE: Nooooo…!

They disappear, leaving Bessie on the table. Only now, she is being operated on with Bridget and Dervla holding her legs in position. The Doctor is trying to deliver her baby.

SHANNON: Hold her legs, please, girls. I need ye to hold them still! Bessie, please: I need you to lie still!

Bessie screams one long final gasp. It is the delivery; one which, under other circumstances might be cause for relief, if not joy. But the look on the Doctor's face tells another story.

SHANNON: Dervla, the bottom drawer of the instrument cabinet – get me as many towels as you can. Give me one and clean up with the others. DERVLA: But___

SHANNON: Do as I say!

She does. He gets the towel from Dervla and wraps the tiny body in it.

Bridget, come with me. *(To Dervla)* I'll be back in a moment. *(Of Bessie)* Don't let her move.

BESSIE: Let me see.

SHANNON: Ye don't___

BESSIE: I do… Let me see.

He holds up the dead baby for her to see. She recoils in horror, then gathers, and

kisses it.

No, no, no...!

Lighting change

GALE

Ship's Deck – Night

The Storm continues to batter the boat - we are in the middle of its fiercest onslaught. Another wave comes.

SAILORS: Wave!!!

They spill across the deck. This time, with its passing an eerie stillness follows. We are in the cocoon of a still moment. Bridget enters.

BRIDGET *(To us)*: 'Throw it over the side,' our Doctor said, 'and into the soft centre of the ocean's mighty heart'. In the lull between sets of waves I crawl out from under one of the lifeboats and am about to do his biddin'…. *(She looks up)* when I see; up there overhead, straddlin' the far tip of one of the highest yardarms - Gale. He is part of a line of men gatherin' a mass of sail with his free hand as they balance on a rope bridge that dangles the entire length of the yardarm. I can see the others are wary of the next onslaught. They cling like helpless children to the giant cross of beams. But not he – he is light and lightness itself upon the dancin' canvas of sky and sail. It's as if he's just waitin' for me to find him.

GALE *(Appearing)*: And she does! *(He smiles)* And I am in the sky flyin' through the air on a circus trapeze before an audience of one!

Throughout the following action, Gale and Bridget speak to us and each other. Gradually, during the next sequence, the move closer to each other.

BRIDGET: Another set of waves rise before us. The other sailors scamper into the centre of the mast and call to him.

GALE: But she is with me now and we will be in this moment forever.

BRIDGET: We climb the wave sideways, the mast tilts and the yardarm follows in inevitable descent towards the face of the wave.

GALE: I am riding with her! Like ancient Gods we fly across the universe!

BRIDGET: Fallin'… fallin'…

GALE: Further and further...!

BRIDGET: He lets go with his feet and dangles free!

GALE: Faster and faster still…!

BRIDGET: And he is no longer trouble and grief!

GALE: And we are in this moment and in this moment are we!

BRIDGET: And his is the face of a boy in moonlight!

GALE: And she is with me!

BRIDGET: And with me!

GALE: And with me!

BRIDGET: He pierces the skin of the wave: first his feet and then each part of him, swallowed, until there is only his face, still laughin', still mouthin' the words.

GALE: A better life awaits me yet. Come with me to sleep and remember.

His mother appears close by. She is the woman on the side of the road with the dead baby in Part 1.

WOMAN: There he is: me little Night… and all in the blessed image of his Da.

GALE *(Turning to her)*: Ma?

WOMAN: That's it, me little Nightingale. *(Beckoning)* Come now.

He looks back at Bridget.

Leave off that and come home. There's a good boy.

She comes to Bridget, takes the baby as if it is her own. She and Gale leave. The ship comes back to life. It is mayhem.

SAILORS: Man overboard! Man overboard!

Lighting change

LAST RITES

Ship's Deck – Day

It is Gale's funeral; or a short memorial service that, in the absence of a body, will suffice for it. The entire population of the ship is congregated on the main deck. Bessie is missing. Also noticeably absent is the Captain. Nellie is reading aloud from the bible.

NELLIE *(Reading)*: "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. He bowed the heavens, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. And he thundered in the heavens; then the channels of water were seen. He sent them from above. And he took me. He drew me from the waters and delivered me from my enemy."

SHANNON: Heavenly Father, we commit your servant, Nicholas Nightingale unto you. We return him from whence he came, back into thy own eternal ocean: for thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory. Amen.

Men pick up a coffin and let it slip over the side. The grieving crowd dissolves. Bridget

is left alone, looking out over the side of the boat. Sarah appears for a moment and dissolves as quickly as she came.

Lighting change

QUIET WORD

Ship's Deck – Night

Doctor Shannon approaches The Second Mate.

SHANNON: Mr Higgs, might we have a quiet word? The Captain; I haven't seen him for three days.

HIGGS: He has not come out of his cabin, Doctor.

SHANNON: There are things I'd like to discuss with him.

HIGGS: You're not alone, sir.

SHANNON: Is it the boy he mourns?

HIGGS: It's hard to tell.

SHANNON: Mr Higgs: one amongst us has perished – a boy, who was the subject of medical intervention just prior to his passing. If you have something to report, be out with it. *(Trying to read Higgs' silence)* The boy's death was related in some way to his relationship with the Captain? *(No response)* He sought refuge in the hospital, man. I must give account. Were these things related? Tell me!

HIGGS: I cannot speculate more than I already have. But can I suggest you adequately prepare yourself to answer such a line of enquiry?

There is reassurance and prescription in this advice: enough to blunt further questioning.

Lighting change

LAND AHOY

Ship's Deck – Day:

The ship is about to enter the harbour of their final destination. The girls are agog and stand blinking at the distant cliffs. Bessie is brought up from the hatchway. Dervla and Bridget assist with Mrs Hanwell officiating. From a safe distance, the Doctor keeps watchful eye. Mr Higgs is standing in the Captain's usual position.

MRS HANWELL: Make way for the patient. Clear a space, please.

BESSIE: Shush, now, Mrs Hanwell. I can do for myself. It's my hand's a little skew, not the rest of me.

MRS HANWELL: But you can't do it on your own___

BESSIE: I can, Mrs Hanwell, and I will – with a little help from me friends.

But the rest of the girls are too entranced by the view to clear a space.

NELLIE: Didn't ye hear what the lady said: clear a space!

BESSIE: Thank ye, Nell; that's very kind of ye.

NELLIE: Ah, don't go gettin' soppy; or you'll make us puke all over the nice scrubbed deck.

DERVLA: Would ye take a look at that. I'd not have thought cliffs could look so grand. Not at all like the black ones at home.

BESSIE: They're the colour of biscuit.

A sighing moment passes and then we hear seagulls.

DERVLA *(Pointing)*: Hey, would ye look at that - Seagulls! (*Bessie cowers)* Bess, what wrong?

BESSIE: Birds… I suppose they're white at least.

DERVLA: Are you alright?

BESSIE: I will be… just a matter of gettin' used to it all.

TATTOO: Vessel approaching!

SHANNON: It's the pilot boat come to guide us in. I expect the Immigration Agent will be onboard.

HIGGS: Vessel astern; prepare for boarding!

Lighting change

MEREWETHER ONBOARD

Ship's Deck – Day:

Merewether, the Australian Immigration Agent, is helped awkwardly aboard. In the absence of the Captain, Mr Higgs officiates, but it is the Doctor who is first to greet.

SHANNON: Mr Merewether, it's grand to see you, sir.

MEREWETHER: And you, Doctor; it's a pleasure to meet you at last.

MR HIGGS: Mr Higgs, sir - First Mate. On behalf of the ship and crew, welcome aboard.

MEREWETHER: Mr Higgs, I'm delighted to meet you *(He searches for the Captain)*

SHANNON: And may I introduce the girls of The *Ebbingtide*. Please welcome Mr Merewether, girls?

Awkward greetings and improvised curtsies follow.

MEREWETHER: Thank you… girls. And, welcome to you. You certainly look …intact.

SHANNON: They're all in perfect health, sir.

MEREWETHER: For which you are to be congratulated, Doctor. Mr Higgs, I was wondering: the Captain…

BLACK *(Appearing)*: I'm here, sir. If you wouldn't mind accompanying me to my cabin; I'd like a word in private.

Puzzled, he nonetheless acquiesces with the request.

MEREWETHER: Of course…

Lighting change

THE MEETING IN SHANNON'S CABIN

The doorway to Doctor Shannon's Cabin – Afternoon:

The Immigration Agent has just completed his conversation with the Captain and is coming topside. The Doctor, who has been anxiously waiting for his return, collars him as soon as he appears.

SHANNON: Mr Merewether, I wonder if I too might have brief conference. I assume our Captain has informed you___

MEREWETHER: You lost a sailor overboard during a storm off the West Australian coast - a boy. There seems to have been some involvement between the boy and one of your girls; an involvement the Captain feels was inappropriate and may have contributed to the boy's demise.

SHANNON: I see.

MEREWETHER: He says you too readily allowed your girls to become intimate with the boy; 'fraternise' was the term I think he used. Tell me what happened. *(Shannon withholds)* Need I remind you of the sensitivity surrounding these Irish orphans? That incident on The *Earl Grey* nearly sank the whole enterprise. Now, what's your account?

SHANNON: The boy, Nightingale, did have contact with the girls; one in particular. I allowed it. The Captain allowed it. It was entirely harmless. The boy was an innocent. I can only assume he sought the softer society of the girls as a way of coping with what he was forced to endure.

MEREWETHER: 'Forced to endure'?

SHANNON: A boy of such tender years should not have been aloft in a storm of such magnitude___

MEREWETHER: Clarify.

SHANNON: At the time of the accident the ship was nearing sixty degrees south of the equator.

MEREWETHER: But why…?

SHANNON: The Captain was hell-bent on getting us here in the shortest possible time – a record seemed to be his goal. And in recklessly pursuing it, he endangered the lives of passengers and crew alike. Blaming the girls for the boy's death is a crude attempt to exculpate his own guilt in the matter.

MEREWETHER: Tell me about the girl.

SHANNON: She tells me she was in the workhouse I attended – it was in one of the worst hit areas - although, in truth, I have no recollection of her; or her sister, who came out on one of the earlier boats and now awaits her arrival. They are to be reunited.

MEREWETHER: Perhaps I should interview her, just to make sure.

SHANNON: No, please; it's entirely unnecessary.

MEREWETHER: Let me be the judge of that.

SHANNON: Sir___

MEREWETHER: Either I have not made myself clear, or you are refusing to acknowledge the situation. If the Captain chooses to go public with his account___

SHANNON: But they are still in a fragile state. Don't you see? They've arrived. They're here now. It's a new life. They're about to begin again.

MEREWETHER: Best I do it quickly then.

SHANNON *(Grabbing him)*: You can't!

MEREWETHER: Let go of my arm.

SHANNON: Please, leave the girls out of this!

MEREWETHER: Tell me what happened to this boy. I need to know.

SHANNON *(Succumbing)*: Inappropriate relations with the boy may have emanated from the Captain himself.

MEREWETHER: Can you verify this?

SHANNON: I suspect Mr Higgs will be able to.

MEREWETHER: I see… *(After deliberating)* Not a word of this is to be uttered to anyone. Leave it to me. On all accounts, keep the girls free from it. I have further plans for them I wish to discuss with you…. Now, show me to Mr Higgs.

Lighting change

HARBOUR VIEWS

Australia – Late Afternoon

The girls are walking up a city street, two abreast. They are in exuberant spirits; Bessie, perhaps, a little too much so.

BESSIE *(Rallying the others)*: 'Three cheers' for Doctor Shannon – Hip Hip Hooray! Hip Hip Hooray! Hip Hip Hooray! *(They rise to the call)* And, Mrs Hanwell! *(Again, they rally)*

ROSE: I say, Doctor, how much further?

SHANNON: We're about half-way.

NELLIE: Would ye mind if we stopped for a bit of a breather? I've not yet got my land legs back.

SHANNON: Alright, then, we'll rest here a while: at ease, girls.

They stop and look around.

NELLIE: I didn't expect the heat.

ROSE: The sun's feels closer.

BESSIE: And the streets wider than at home.

DERVLA: It's a bigger country.

BESSIE: Aye.

BRIDGET: Would ye look at that harbour – shimmerin' so. It's beautiful.

BESSIE: I can still see our boat – see its masts stickin' up like pins from a cushion.

ROSE: All the buildin's are so new and soaped so.

DERVLA: (The) whole place is new.

ROSE: Aye.

NELLIE: (It's) got a real bustle to it!

SHANNON: Alright, girls, let's keep goin' – not far now.

They move off again.

Lighting change

AN UNEXPECTED WELCOME

Outside the Immigration Depot - Day

The girls arrive at the entrance to the immigration depot. But there is a rally of protestors blocking their way in, led by woman giving a public lecture on a soapbox – Mrs Grimsmore-King, representing the Protestant Women's League.

MRS GRIMSMORE-KING *(Her speech in full-flight)*: …I ask you, simply - on behalf of the Australian and Scottish Protestant Women's League - as reasonable and

responsible citizens: should we not be mindful of the kind of person we are asking to our fair and prosperous land? Should we not be vigilant in the processes of selecting those that would seek to be among us? I, of course, refer to a Government Immigration Scheme designed to populate us with Irish orphan girls – a class of people from a country where Providence has already condemned their Godless ways. Why, I tell you, beneath the thin veil of deception this 'assisted emigration' is nothing more than a plot, through mixed marriage, to Romanize our glorious and bountiful Colony! It is a flood; a flood that must be bagged and stemmed at the source! (*A nun appears in the crowd)* Ah, what have we here: a Sister of Charity? Come, like a swooping bird to beg mercy at the foot of the temple? …Then your charges must be close at hand. *(Noticing the girls)* Yes, as God is my witness: the flood has burst its banks! New arrivals in our midst, readying themselves to settle and breed amongst us. And what are we to say to these devil's disciples? 'Welcome, ye brides of a beaten Babylon? Bring thou the message of Beelzebub; as brazen as if thou were the embodied Anti-Christ himself?' I think not! Rather, abiding by the true religion of this Protestant heaven on earth, we say unto you, 'You are not welcome here. We do not want you or your kind in our midst. Turn around, and go back to that unholy place from whence you came! Go back! Go back, I say, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!'

It is too much for Dervla, who pulls her from the soapbox and sets upon her. A skirmish ensues.

Lighting change

ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE FUTURE

Immigration Depot – Late Afternoon

The Sister who was involved in the skirmish outside the gates is presenting a welcome speech of her own, albeit somewhat different in tone than the one they have just been subjected to.

SISTER BERNADETTE: Girls; there is no adequate explanation or apology for what you have just experienced. Although there are small, vocal pockets of such sentiment here, these are but a minority. For this we must be grateful. Remember, your future has already begun. It did so the moment you passed through those doors. This Immigration Depot represents a gateway into a life of unlimited possibility. Now, before you settle yourselves in, I understand, Dr Shannon has something further to say.

SHANNON *(Coming before them)*: Thank you, Sister; yes, briefly, Mr Merewether this afternoon put a proposal to me that I would now like to convey to you; an

invitation to any who would like to accompany myself and Mrs Hanwell on a further leg of our journey into the heart of this new country. We will travel on bullock carts in a caravan, of sorts, venturing beyond the Blue Mountains to our west and on to selected regional towns - into the interior.

DERVLA: All of us?

SHANNON: Only those that wish to come.

BESSIE: Like a grand tour, you mean?

SHANNON: In a way, I suppose.

NELLIE: Like a herd of animals?

SHANNON: Like a group of young women making a new life for themselves. At every town we'll stop. People will know of your arrival. They'll come from all around. You'll be greeted with a civic reception. Some – those who choose to - will stay on. The rest will go on to the next town, and the next, and so on. Mrs Hanwell and I will be with you every step of the way, until there's none left on those carts but the two of us. You will live and work amongst these people; as employees of their businesses and in their homes. Some may marry and have families.

ROSE: Can't we stay together?

SHANNON: Rose, I'll not be misleading you___

NELLIE: Well, couldn't we write to each other?

SHANNON: Of course, girls…In all honesty, I do not know what lies ahead. Life is a chance at best. You've already seen the narrow-mindedness that afflicts the hearts of some. But I'm reasonably confident there'll be a fair share of kindness out there as well. My hope is that you will behave like the brave and good women I know you to be. And in time, I predict these people - whoever they are and wherever they may be - will come to regard you as one of their own. That is my most earnest wish… Well, there you have it. I'm sorry I've kept you all up on your first night here. But this is what I propose. Those for whom the idea appeals; we'll begin preparations tomorrow. For now, though, rest well and sleep on it.

The girls disperse. Dr Shannon leaves. Sister Bernadette turns to go.

BRIDGET *(Calling after her)*: Sister Bernadette…

SISTER: What is it, my child?

BRIDGET *(Looking around)*: My sister; she must have been here.

SISTER *(Not understanding)*: Yes…?

BRIDGET: She was on one of the first boats.

SISTER: Was she?

BRIDGET: The *Earl Grey*; you must have known her?

SISTER *(Uncertain)*: *The Earl Grey*… It was some time ago. Many have come and gone.

BRIDGET: She would have liked it here. She would have liked you.

SISTER: That's very kind.

Beat

BRIDGET: I know it sounds silly, but I half- expected her to be here when we arrived. But I'll be findin' her soon enough. She did write. But it's been a while since I heard from her. *(Realising)* I wonder; do the girls write back here - those that have found a place for themselves?

SISTER: Occasionally, they do, yes; but not as often as you'd imagine. When they find a new life, this one tends to fade. And it can be difficult to trace them once they've left. *(Seeing Bridget's disappointment)* What was her name?

BRIDGET: Sarah O'Conor.

SISTER: I can't recall her. But I'll tell you what: I'll have a look through our old correspondence and see if I can find anything. You never know your luck.

BRIDGET: God bless ye, Sister *(Leaves)*

SISTER: You didn't tell me your name.

BRIDGET: Bridget.

SISTER: Bridget O'Conor.

BRIDGET: Aye.

Lighting change

SKY WITH MOON

Immigration Depot Grounds – Evening

It is not long after the Doctor's speech to the girls. He is standing outside the Depot looking up at the night sky, which is lit by an effulgent full moon. Sister Bernadette approaches.

BERNADETTE *(Referring to the sky)*: One never tires of it.

SHANNON *(Surprised)*: I'm sorry?

BERNADETTE: The night skies here: they're so vivid. You'd almost think we were closer to heaven.

SHANNON: Yes, I see what ye mean. I try to console myself that at least the moon is still the same one I left behind. This is the third since our departure. I'm reasonably

confident it's not counterfeit; although I confess I can't really be sure.

Beat

BERNADETTE *(Referring to the speech)*: Your speech went well. I'll be surprised if there are many who won't want to go with you.

SHANNON: We'll see in the morning. There are so many unknowns; although, of course, one tries not to let on.

BERNADETTE: If your proposal lacked conviction, you certainly didn't show it. I had half a mind to volunteer myself.

Beat

Doctor, there was one thing I wanted to raise with you before tomorrow. Would you mind? It's about Bridget O'Conor…

Lighting change

IT'S FULL

Immigration Depot Dormitory – Evening

Bridget is standing looking out of the dormitory window. She, too, is looking up at the moon in the night sky. She holds the bible up close to her chest. The Doctor and Sister Bernadette approach. Before they can say a word, she begins to speak – without turning to face them.

BRIDGET *(Referring to the moon)*: The moon: it's full.

SHANNON: Aye, it is.

BRIDGET: I saw ye lookin' at it too, Doctor – *(Indicating)* from down there. It has an effect over all of us. What I can't quite work out is when it has its greatest pull. Is it when it's closest to the ground and biggest; or when it's smallest and highest and brightest?

Beat

BERNADETTE: Bridget, I've had a look through the correspondence as I said I would.

BRIDGET: Aye…

BERNADETTE: I'm sorry to say there was none from your sister.

BRIDGET: That's alright; it was only a wing and a prayer…

Beat

BERNADETTE: I also checked our records here…

BRIDGET: Aye…?

BERNADETTE: They're a copy of the Government record: the one they keep in their

own repository. They go right back to very first boat that came – The *Earl Grey*. That was the one you mentioned, wasn't it?

BRIDGET: … Aye.

BERNADETTE: Bridget, I… could find no record of Sarah O'Conor having been onboard.

Beat

BRIDGET: I see…

THE HAND OF GOD

Irish Workhouse Dormitory - Night

We are back in the original dormitory scene in Ireland. Bridget is joined by the Matron from the workhouse.

MATRON: Be gentle, child. Ye sister's poorly.

She's leads her into the infirmary. Sarah is lying in one of the beds. She has her eyes closed and does not appear to hear their approach.

BRIDGET: Can I be in with her?

After some deliberation, the Matron consents and withdraws. Bridget climbs into bed with Sarah and wraps herself around her. Sarah opens her eyes.

SARAH: You've come.

BRIDGET: Aye...

Beat

SARAH: They'll not be makin' me…?

Bridget does not at first understand what her sister is asking.

BRIDGET: Makin' you?

SARAH: Go… to that place….

BRIDGET: … Australia?

SARAH: Aye; they can't be forcin' me, can they? Not if I don't want to go.

BRIDGET: No, they can't be forcin' you… But, it might be ye only chance to get away.

SARAH: But I don't want to get away; not without you? We must stay together, you and me. Who'll remember us? We're the last.

BRIDGET: Sometimes we don't have a choice in these things.

SARAH: But if I don't want to___

BRIDGET: If the hand of God reaches for us … we've no place sayin' 'no'.

SARAH: Aye, that's true enough.

Beat

When will you come?

BRIDGET: Later: There'll be other boats to follow. I'll come when you've made it nice for us.

SARAH: Aye, that'd be grand. I will… I will…!

BRIDGET: But you must write to me and tell me all about your new life. Promise, you'll write to me - promise!

SARAH: I do. I'll turn Father Brennan's writin' lessons to good effect. I'll write about everything that happens, wherever I go and whatever I see. I promise. I do, I do, I do…!

A moment of lightness between them; but it is brief.

Is that a moon up there?

BRIDGET: Aye, comin' through the window.

SARAH: I can almost feel it pullin' me. It's a strange sensation.

BRIDGET: Don't be frightened.

SARAH: I'm not… It must be full?

BRIDGET: Aye.

SARAH: And round.

BRIDGET: Like the belly o' the world.

SARAH: Aye…

Beat

Bridget, come soon.

BRIDGET: I will.... I will…

It is the moment of Sarah's death. Bridget lies with her a moment longer, before Sarah and the bed dissolve.

CLEAR INDICATION

Immigration Depot – Night

We are back at the last moment of disclosure with Sister Bernadette and the Doctor. Downstage, Bridget is crying quietly. Still, she has not turned to face them.

BRIDGET: I've consulted the bible here, about whether I should go over the mountains with you tomorrow, Doctor. But it doesn't seem to be helpin'. You might say I'm a little stuck.

OLDER SARAH: Bridget: Go…

We return to a mirror image of the first scene in the play beneath the tree. Young

Sarah lies in the Young Bridget's lap. She is now surrounded by her family.

YOUNG BRIDGET *(To us):* I will remember this moment … and all moments. I'll not forget them.

OLDER BRIDGET *(To us)*: I will hold them in my heart forever.

Lights to Black

END OF PART 2