

Directing David Hare's *The Secret Rapture*: Issues Toward a New Aesthetic Praxis

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Overview

Dramaturgical strategies of 1990s playwrights reflect a penchant toward eclectic content, form and style. Today there is no traditional way to view playwriting, nor play going. Directors, designers, actors and audience face new challenges in dealing with contemporary dramaturgy. The notions of authorial vision and director as auteur are abrasive antipodes. Even the practice of articulating stage directions so well used by George Bernard Shaw, is antiquated, if not completely abandoned. Patricia Suchy points out in a recent journal article, that "in contemporary theatre the uses and parameters of stage directions have become so diverse that they have lost conventional force [and] even when intent can be identified the authority of the script is provisional."¹ The process of moving from literary text to performance text—from page to the stage—is fraught with uncertainty. Much of the nineties dramaturgy, though grounded in realism, is susceptible to unacceptable interpretation given the ambiguity, the mystery and the lack of linear connections in the plays. Directing British playwright David Hare's 1988 play, *The Secret Rapture* enlightened my understanding of Hare's work in a new way.² The experience evoked thought on aesthetic praxis—how we realize this kind of dramaturgy on stage, what specifically informs our decisions, and what changes might be warranted in the theatrical endeavor.

The Secret Rapture is a good example of a kind of dramaturgy that has evolved from British fringe and American experimental drama and which has now become the primary stock of mainstream transatlantic theatre. Texts by Hare's generation of playwrights such as Caryl Churchill, Howard Brenton, and Americans Eric Overmyer, Craig Lucas, and most recently, Suzan-Lori Parks, all share similar dramaturgical strategies and reflect a significant difference from a more "traditional" dramaturgy. By traditional dramaturgy I am referring to "a" tradition and not "the" tradition in modern dramaturgy, the latter of which implies

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one inclusive tradition. It is generally accepted that “a” tradition of modern dramaturgy has existed since the late nineteenth century which is grounded in realism and constructed via the components of the well-made play. Works by Ibsen, Chekhov and Shaw offer examples as do later twentieth century playwrights’ work such as Noel Coward, Neil Simon and even Wendy Wasserstein. Hare and his contemporaries exploit the traditional structure of the well-made play; expose political exegesis of culture and history; and extend the nature of images to function on both a visual and metaphoric level; all of which require a creative means to physically realize the text as well as a means to theatricalize the levels of political and social thought.

Little scholarship exists regarding how the performance text is realized.³ Scholars do recognize and write about the perplexing incongruities found in what Christian Rogowski calls an “implied dramaturgy,”⁴ but they stop short of any discussion regarding how such issues are dealt with in performance. For example, Michael Vanden Heuvel identifies one important component of the dramaturgy of the nineties which has to do with the dialogical space between text and performance. He notes that playwrights move in and out of the classic text of realism because “neither the dominant mainstream style nor the most promising avant-garde idioms seem wholly adequate for addressing the form and pressure of our time, or for giving shape to viable new forms of knowing.”⁵ Robert Brustein observes a similar dichotomy noting that “at present we seem to be caught between a theatre of ideology and a theatre of quietism, the one devoted to exhortation and outrage, the other to bright if mindless entertainment.”⁶ Paul C. Castagno’s recent article in *Theatre Topics* offers valuable insights into the text, but does not address how they translate to the stage in performance. He does recognize another significant aspect of this new dramaturgy noting that it “disrupts continuity whereby spontaneous language shifts alternate the world of the play.”⁷ John Rouse’s chapter in *Critical Theory and Performance* is a perspicacious discourse regarding textuality and authority but never reveals how a semiotic methodology of the performance text can be useful in plays that are not categorized as “ab-normal.”⁸ And finally, Bert O. States’s most recent contribution, *The Pleasure of the Play*, introduces perceptive distinctions between such things as the psychology of character and the psychology of characterization, and delivers a lively commentary on playwrights’ creative impulses.⁹ However, as sagaciously observant as States is about text and performance, his discourse is primarily theoretical. Stan Garner argues in his book, *The Absent Voice: Narrative Comprehension in the Theater*, that we must learn “more fully how to approach the text of a play with an awareness of theatrical experience in its nonliterary modes of actuality.”¹⁰ Directing Hare’s play revealed first hand, how contemporary dramaturgy has reinvented itself in the nineties and consequently

how directors must re-envision their methodologies for realizing the script in performance.

Synopsis

*The Secret Rapture*¹¹ is set in the Thatcher England of the eighties. The play explores how two sisters, Isobel and Marion, cope with the death of their father, and the subsequent repercussions of his absence. Marion and Isobel are sisters but their behavior bespeaks strangers. Isobel spent months nursing her dying father while Marion, a Conservative Party member buys him an expensive ring, believing that the act was “one of the few really decent things I’ve done in my life.”¹² The action begins with father Robert’s death and subsequent funeral leaving the sisters to decide what to do with his young bride/widow, Katherine, an alcoholic. Marion’s husband Tom, a born again Christian, and Isobel’s lover and partner in her small graphics firm, Irwin, are the other main characters. When no one acts to help Katherine, Isobel against her better judgement offers Katherine a job. This act of kindness serves as the catalyst for the action, in confluence with Marion and Tom’s unsuccessful business venture that forced Isobel to expand her firm, again against her wishes. When all things go wrong, Isobel resolves to maintain her loyalty to her father by selling her business, leaving Irwin and taking care of Katherine. Irwin cannot accept Isobel’s rejection and in the end kills her. The final scene reveals a changed Marion and Tom, who realize, albeit too late, that Isobel’s goodness was genuine, and that neither politics nor religion is the way to deal with a corrupt world.

Dramaturgical Strategies

Exploiting Traditional Structure

Much of nineties dramaturgy is cinematic and episodic, and therefore solving the technical problems without compromising the text is a formidable challenge. Hare’s stage directions and set requirements are minimal and therefore open for broad aesthetic interpretation. *The Secret Rapture* is divided into eight scenes, four in each act. Hare stipulates no specific means of moving from one scene to the next except to say “the set parts” or “at once the scene disappears” or “the scene is replaced by.” He admits generally though, that “the way in which scenery changes is very important to a sense of forward movement.”¹³

Scenic designer, Bob Cothran and I agreed that each scene should move in and out without visible manipulation. Once the locale of each scene is established, and the atmosphere and the texture realized by the audience, there is no reason for the characters to be confined to that physical locale. No significant action, except perhaps in the first studio scene where Irwin is drawing, is

requisite in a particular space. What was needed was a way to establish the “realism” of each locale, providing actors with real props and furniture to deal with, but then to be able to move out of that very specific realism to a more neutral space as the ideas and issues broaden. The family is Hare’s microcosm—the dysfunctional institution—but like his other plays, the familia story embraces universal issues. Hare’s strategy is to structure the realism and then just as quickly to dismantle it by moving the characters out of it. Hare wants us to see both the microcosm and the macrocosm of society at once. The difference here is that in a more traditional practice one view usually dominates over the other. Hare’s work focuses specifically on the juxtaposition of the microcosm and the macrocosm.

The set was basically a 20 x 20 foot square. Each scene was realized via moving platforms and walls within that square. Four scenes were preset and the next four were preset at intermission. The remainder of the set, which included various levels was neutral and sparse and used as necessary (see figure 1).

The Secret Rapture, Carousel Theatre, University of Tennessee Theatres

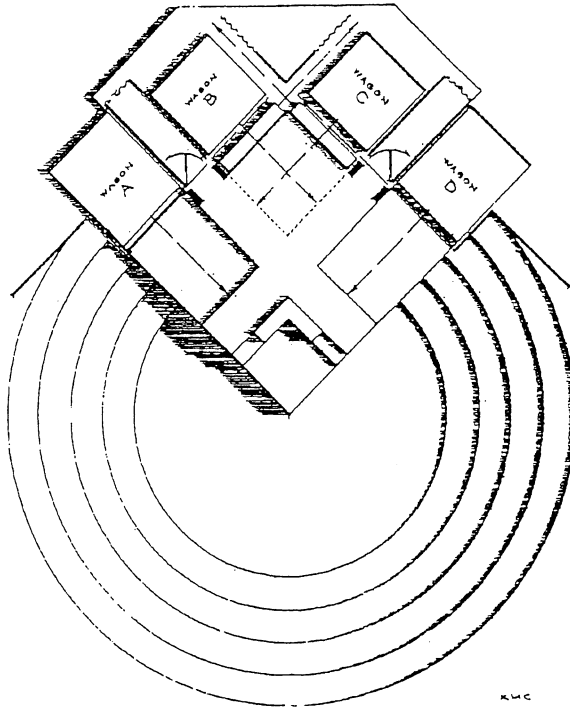


Figure 1

This design had an enormous impact on the development of the play while, I believe, maintaining a strong allegiance to the text and to the movement of the text. The area nearest the audience became a “dream corner” where characters delivered monologues which took them out of realism and real time and away from the action of the scene.

The design addressed the juxtaposition of scenes forceframing one scene to the next, highlighting the shift for the audience. I’ve always maintained in my commentary about Hare’s plays, that the playwright “produces” meaning beyond the literal content of the script, by the way he juxtaposes scenes. This is an emerging practice of nineties playwrights and one must distinguish the difference between “conveying” meaning and “producing meaning” in order to achieve the fullest impact of the drama in performance. Conveying meaning has to do with content, which traditionally implies the Aristotelian elements of the play text. Producing meaning comes from the form—which has to do with both structure and style—how the scenes change, the relationship of one scene to the next and what the audience deduces from both the physical manipulation of the set change and the subsequent differences between the scenes. The departure from the more traditional strategy has to do with the episodic structure and the relationship of that literary structure to the physical portrayal, or in other words, how episodic structure is theatricalized. The shifts highlight the structural dichotomy of thematic issues as well, including: realism and idealism; public and private despair; society and the individual; subjectivity and objectivity.

The design included projected gobos on the panel walls for each scene, which reinforced both the realism of the scene and the more abstract nature of the play. As the world of the play grew more unstable the projections became more abstract. In scene six a projection of a large, cracked window created a feeling of isolation in Tom’s sterile office, while the crack, painted red, foreshadowed Irwin’s emotional breakdown, Isobel’s death, and the fractured nature of society. In the following scene as gun shots are fired, all the panels “cracked” blood red from the bottom up.

Hare’s dramaturgical strategy requires active audience participation. Each scene begins in progress of an action. Traditionally, playwrights guide the audience with transitions or transitional devices of some sort or with exposition and sustained chronological character development. Instead, Hare creates an atmosphere of curiosity and mystery. We move from the somber bedroom of the dead father to a bright sunshine-filled garden. The shift is not necessarily abrupt but it requires immediate engagement by the audience. Additionally, the audience must be attentive in order to understand the events that have occurred in the fictitious span of time. In almost every scene characters seem to be caught in the middle of a response to an event that has occurred earlier and was not dramatized.

In almost every scene characters seem to behave irrationally or out of sync emotionally, given their states of mind in the previous scene. Without the use of transitional devices both between scenes and within scenes, Hare creates an unusual tension that sustains the play's episodic structure. The tension comes from the lack of knowledge that the audience has. It requires the audience to put together the play like a puzzle, which is a vastly different task than the traditional means of understanding a play grounded in realism. Hare's dramaturgy allows the audience options of understanding at any point in time, until the end, when the puzzle/play is complete; and even then, as with most plays the final interpretation will always vary.

The lack of internal transitions plagued the actors and pointed to an aspect of the text not obvious in early readings. We realized in these moments that actors needed to define an additional aspect of character, in that moment, before they could move forward. Scene three is the only scene Hare provides to establish the positive aspects of Isobel and Irwin's relationship. The scene is interrupted fairly early by Katherine's arrival. Before the intrusion, Irwin responds to Isobel's admiration of his drawing: "I've just got much better since I worked with you" (38). They toast each other with champagne and Irwin then says: "Do you think we'll have a child?" (38). The transition depends on several interpretative factors: subtext of the previous conversation; what Irwin is silently thinking as he draws; what if anything Isobel does to provoke his remark about a child; what the underlying purpose of the scene is. The actress playing Isobel crossed to the "dream corner" between the lines. However the silence in the movement did not provide a satisfactory transition. The actor playing Irwin had to discover more about his character. Based on his view of the text, he decided that Irwin was pushing for a commitment from Isobel and that he felt this the right moment to pursue it given the atmosphere—celebratory and romantic. Whether or not this was the best choice,¹⁴ it demonstrates an example of how Hare's dramaturgy creates more than subtextual issues for the actor and the director. It points to an additional concern regarding how to maintain a consistent interpretation of the play, without benefit of consistent character development.

Exposing Political Exegesis of Culture and History

Rogowski reminds us that the "crisis of the dramatic genre goes hand in hand with larger cultural, political and social—economic development."¹⁵ Hare's characters are both internally and externally drawn; they are the manifestations of both public and private politics; they are the reflective puppets of contemporary British history—all displaced by their personal behavior as a response to the state of public affairs. This dramaturgical strategy is seen in Hare's most recent play, *Skylight*, which reviewer John Peter praised as "a stunning analysis of the politics

of giving and taking.”¹⁶ This duality of function explains characters’ irrational behavior; action often arises from no apparent potentiality. In a way, Hare uses character the way more traditional playwrights use plot: layers of behavior are similar in function to subplots of action.

No consistent pattern of character development exists. Tom’s character for example, “unravels” as the play progresses, so that what at first appears to be a caricature slowly devolves into a fully dimensional character. Marion’s character does not change until the final scene of the play, so that the mere repetitious nature of her responses to each situation puts her near caricature as well. Both characters suffer an additional burden of labels: the born-again Christian and the Thatcher-like MP. Isobel’s character does not “grow” in the traditional sense. However, through her struggle to address everyone else’s needs Hare provides strong nuances of character that in the end create a complex character who is kind, strong and has a sense of humor. Still, it is only in performance that these observations came to light. The method of analyzing character had to change, sometimes starting at the end of the play and backtracking to the beginning to discern moments in the text that provided clues to character and character development. Identifying the way a character developed was more useful than identifying a taxonomy of characteristics. Knowing then, that Marion’s repetitious behavior is a means to represent her inability to take action that diverges from her eschewed and rigid set of morals, helps to avoid the caricature.

Often Hare’s pattern is to place two characters together whose relationship is stunted by the intrusion of a third. In a less obtrusive manner characters are implicitly paired by their role or lack of role in a situation. The more the pairings change the more complex the situations and relationships become. Hare produces meaning not only by establishing the pairings in juxtaposition to one another but also by using such pairings as a means to comment on the dysfunctional family/society. Marion and her secretary, Rhonda get along much better than do sisters Marion and Isobel. Tom and Isobel seem to have some spiritual bond that Tom and Marion do not. Isobel and Katherine have a compassionate link with Robert while Isobel and Irwin have no compassionate link between the two of them. Several significant issues merit attention here which help to further distinguish Hare’s dramaturgy from more traditional fare. There is less portrayed understanding of who the characters are in relation to everyone else. There is less dramatization of how characters develop a relationship with more emphasis on the difficulty of maintaining one. Further, we begin to see why relationships work or don’t work when we see which pairings are successful. This strategy is not blatantly apparent in the literary text. However, in performance it becomes obvious that Hare’s seemingly

benign pairings reflect each character's inability to cope with the very people they are supposed to inherently love. On another level the pairings and the relationships that such pairings establish, reveal the stratification of human behavior and the struggle to survive in the public and private realm.

The lack of movement, the seeming paralysis of some of the characters symbolizes the characters' inability to move forward with their lives within this microcosm of British society. Isobel's stillness is often referred to by Hare. In production, it became apparent that each character moved through his or her particular crisis until each met with a problem that stymied them into inaction. Whereas most symbolic action in the theatre is a kind of movement or gesture representing the emotional or psychological state of the character, the reverse is true in Hare's dramaturgy. The stasis of action is itself symbolic. Though reminiscent of Pinter, the technique is more subtly employed and ingrained into the texture of the play. It does not draw immediate attention to itself, but when viewed collectively, reifies the dramaturgical pattern. Irwin's comment to Isobel, "Don't move" and her reply "Don't move? Good Lord, that will make life pretty difficult" (105) is a good example. The characters are not moving; they are in a stalemate physically and emotionally. Isobel's reply resonates with levels of meaning. Not only must she move to get immediately out of her situation in which Irwin is holding her at gunpoint; but she must also "move" to get on with her life without him.

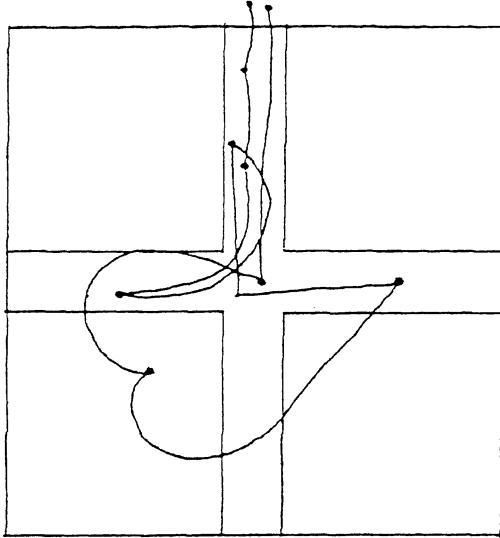
In terms of a new aesthetic praxis, clearly what Hare and others of his generation are doing is dramatizing the void, the gulf, the "not", if you will. Hare dramatizes the nontraditional components of plot, the reverse of action. He dramatizes "not" how characters develop relationships, but rather how they try to maintain one. He dramatizes "not" the relationship itself, but the lack of one. He dramatizes "not" the action, but the inaction.

Inaction also served as a catalyst for action, so that it was crucial to recognize those moments of stasis and to patiently play them. Marion's inability to move at the conclusion of scene six was contrasted with Katherine's restless movement of scene seven. Rhonda's momentary paralysis at the conclusion of scene five where Isobel asks to accompany her to the cinema reveals not only Isobel's immediate fear of being left alone but also reinforces the theme of displacement. Isobel's line, "Let's all go to the cinema. Then we can have a good time" (81) belies the situation but foreshadows Isobel's ultimate action of leaving the movie theatre, Irwin, the business, and her own paralysis.

Organic blocking revealed an interesting component of Hare's dramaturgy that could never be detected in the literary text. Actors were asked to literally chart their movement patterns for each scene. This is not an uncommon directorial exercise ordinarily revealing consistency or inconsistency

of character development. For example, Marion's movement patterns evolved as strong lines, sharp curves, and expansive strokes. An unexpected similarity arose from Tom and Isobel's movement patterns, which were uncannily similar (see figure 2).

Movement Pattern—Tom—Scene One, *The Secret Rapture*



Movement Pattern—Isobel—Scene Three, *The Secret Rapture*

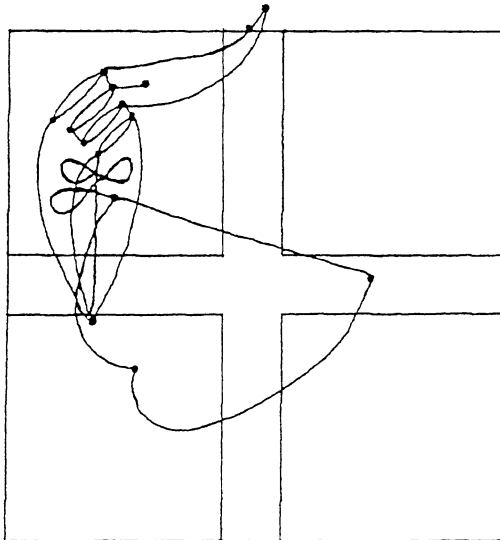


Figure 2

This realization was the first in a number of discoveries regarding Tom and Isobel's spiritual connection arguably only loosely implied in the text. One might argue that movement patterns were simply a response to the performance space; but I would suggest that they were more of a response to the dramaturgical features, which created the performance space. And too, we must remember that Hare's dramaturgy does not specify a type of performance space, but it became apparent that how the performance space was conceptualized and ultimately used was important to the realization of the dramatic intent. The point to make here is that there is some evidence that inherent movement patterns exist in dramaturgy such as Hare's where characters are both internally and externally drawn, and where the playwright develops character relationships on a metaphysical level as well, often subordinating familia relationships to a level below the coterie. However speculative the observation, it is clear that in the absence of a more Shavian specificity, Hare's dramaturgy encourages experimentation to find the connection that each character has to each other and to his/her social milieu.

Extending Images

Hare's dramaturgy has often been called "imagistic." Of interest here, is *how* he creates and then extends images to function both visually and metaphorically. The revealing factors center around Hare's use of language and the characters' physical repetition of action, especially that of Isobel.

Robert Brustein believes that "there is a way for contemporary theatre to preserve both poetry and political responsibility, to synthesize its Aristotelian and Platonic functions, and that is through the medium of metaphor."¹⁶ His comment is especially germane to this discussion. Hare's language is both poetic and political and the playwright sustains the two through metaphor. Isobel's early exchange in scene one sets up the practice. She says to Marion, "There's actually a moment when you see the spirit depart from the body. I've always been told about it. And it's true. Like a bird"(12). The spirit of the bird is a metaphor for Isobel while Isobel's spirit is Marion's albatross. The public and private politics between the two exists on several levels and Hare uses the marriage between poetic and political nuances to create both literary and symbolic metaphor. Not unlike that of his Fringe contemporaries whose works are the stock of mainstream theaters, Hare's work is imagistic. His images of how political events and actions have affected people's lives is a profound and unique feature of his dramaturgy.

The "spontaneous shifts that alternate the world of the play" that Castagno speaks of are loosely tied to character motivation, but more closely aligned with a strategy that sublimely focuses on the synapse between the shifts. The shifts change the rhythm and the world of the play. Isobel concludes her poetic monologue with, "I must do what Dad would have wished. That's it" (96).

Marion's response is spontaneous and immediate. "You are insufferable. Hide behind your father for the rest of your life. Die there!"(96). The shift between Isobel's ethereal world of Lanzarote and Marion's discordant commentary is uncomfortable; likewise the abrupt rupture of the image is also unsettling. The linguistic technique is as much a part of the meaning as the language itself.

Unlike Chekhov where characters' eccentricities or idiosyncracies are revealed in a linear fashion to define and distinguish the players, Hare employs a pattern of repetitive responses that serve to eliminate possibilities of character instead of illuminating them. The effect is a cumulative one. Isobel is instinctively and consistently kind. She "smiles and holds out her hand" (12); or in scene two "Characteristically, she takes Katherine's hand"(34); or in scene six Isobel "Has walked across and taken her [Marion's] hands"(92). Taking this given as their clue, the rest of the actors explored specific physical means to establish their repetitive response. The actress playing Marion was very successful realizing this strategy, by how she sat down. She crossed one leg over the other as she sat, finishing with a precise pose. This action, like Isobel's became instinctual and concomitant with the emotional or psychological response to a situation. In similar fashion the actor playing Tom began to reach for his Bible in response to other characters' dilemmas. Perhaps the seminal question here is: Do characters have unconscious desires which cannot be addressed in language and how much of this is due to Hare and how much to the evolution of the performance text? The question presses the relationship of metaphysical and metaphor so that a kind of "implied dramaturgy" emerges as perhaps a meaningful description of Hare and his cohorts' work.

Some Conclusions

The practice of creating the performance text out of the literary text has clearly changed because of the nineties dramaturgy. The necessity to experiment as mentioned above is mandated by the lack of specificity from the playwright, so that the evolution of the performance text requires a strong realization of discoveries in rehearsal. Traditionally, where the literary text ended and the performance text began was guided simply by what resulted when the actors added the blocking, the use of props, and costume. Now, with the dramaturgy of the nineties the emergence of the performance text from the literary text requires both actor and director to constantly look for the "implied dramaturgy" for the unspecified intent of the text. Additionally with this new kind of dramaturgy the traditional dramatic elements acquire broader and more complex functions. For example, in *The Secret Rapture* the thematic movement of the play mandates a specific kind of rhythm. The themes of goodness, justice, love and duty each provide an inherent antithesis which creates tension and thus contributes

to the tempo of the play. As each character becomes victim of, or adheres to a particular thematic issue, the tension changes and consequently affects the timing, spacing, and accenting of the dramatic elements. Additionally, traditional dramatic elements swap functions, as pointed out earlier, where character functions like plot. And there is a speculative, but persuasive argument that there exists a metaphysical component to these plays that in some instances can be explored and identified via the performance text. It is clear though, that traditional dramatic elements are more complex, have stronger interrelationships, and in some cases, have been re-defined completely.

Realizing the performance text warrants new analytic approaches to the script. We can no longer rely on traditional methods of examining text and we must eliminate altogether an analysis that is in isolation of performance. There are different things to look for in the dramaturgy of the nineties, not just different subject matter, or nontraditional treatment of plot. A unique genre has evolved that merits its own kind of deconstruction. An appropriate analysis is a seminal issue in this new aesthetic praxis to identify the creative impulses that are both imposed and implied in the text. Analysis must embrace notions of potential—the potential of a character to function in a particular way; the potential for the plot to advance in a particular way.

More attention must be given to the structure of the text so that an audience is able to recognize how form contributes to content.¹⁷ In contemporary dramaturgy of the nineties action, silence, space and sound are politicized and become components of content, where before they were primarily elements of form. Further, a different means of exploring structure must focus on how juxtaposition functions and what it reveals, non-traditional development of character, and non-linear development of plot. Directors, actors, and designers must not only rekindle their awareness about how plays are written, but also in what sociopolitical framework the plays are grounded.

In like fashion it is necessary to identify the metaphorical tendencies and to find a way to manipulate the imagistic nature of the play so that the cumulative effect is realized by the audience. Jill Dolan's comments are particularly appropriate here: "We need different metaphors to challenge from where and how we see in theatre, how we can hear at least partially, without theatrical speech devolving into empty confession, how theatre can disclose new knowledges without voyeurism."¹⁸

The process by which we realize a play—what we do in rehearsals and what we decide in production meetings must be rethought. In plays like *The Secret Rapture* unity and balance are exposed in the text by degrees and must coalesce in the performance text. We must, for example forceframe the changing

of the set, manipulating the audience's attention and thereby creating visual, physical, and metaphysical relationships of scenes, characters, and ideas.

The "relationship between text and performance" notes John Rouse "is in other words a question, both of the possible and the allowable."¹⁹ Contemporary dramaturgy is dangerously ambiguous and often susceptible to interpretation that is outside Rouse's edges of definition. The possible and the allowable are good places to begin the exploration. Boundaries of the text must be identified and interpreted. However, I learned in performance that there were inherent textual clues throughout the play that were less issues of interpretation and more of newly educated perception.

A new aesthetic praxis involves issues of focus, shifts, degrees, balance and rhythm of the text in performance. It requires new definitions, or (re)-definitions of terms like movement, structure, and language all of which can function as content, form and style. I recognize that ideas and observations presented here are not, in all instances, completely original or new. The contribution lies in offering a broader view of traditional terms so that we might appropriately articulate the methodology of contemporary dramaturgy. Equally important is offering a theoretical discourse grounded in practical experience. The issues explored compose a loosely drawn aesthetic phenomenology which may serve to further effectuate and define a new aesthetic praxis. It is at least a beginning.

Notes

1. Patricia A. Suchy, "When Words Collide: The Stage Direction as Utterance" in *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 6 (Fall 1991) 74.

2. My writing on Hare's work includes both published and unpublished analyses and reviews. See *David Hare: Theatricalizing Politics* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research P, 1991); "David Hare" chapter in *British Playwrights 1956-1995*, ed. William Demastes (New York: Garland, 1996); "From Brass to Crass: Brenton and Hare's Collaborative Plays, *Brassneck* and *Pravda*" chapter in *Casebook on Howard Brenton*, ed. Ann Wilson (New York: Garland, 1992); Rev. of Steppenwolf's production of *The Secret Rapture* (Chicago 1990) in *Theatre Journal* 43 (4 December 1991); "Hare's *Absence of War* and the Religious Trilogy," SETC convention, Savannah, March 1994; "Religion and Relevancy in David Hare's *Racing Demon* ," ATHE convention, Philadelphia, August 1993; "The Intractability of Goodness or a Perfect Imitation of Life—*The Secret Rapture*," ATHE convention, Chicago, August 1990; "David Hare and Theatricalizing Politics," ATHE convention, Chicago 1987; "The Devolution on Stage—David Hare's Political Theatre," PCA convention, Montreal, March 1987; "David Hare's *Plenty*: The Bottom of the Cornucopia," SWTC convention, Oklahoma City, October 1983.

3. The following are only tangentially related to this study but may be useful to the reader for further discussion regarding the creative process: See Susan Letzler Cole, *Directors in Rehearsal* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992); For a study of exploring the terminology of performance text see, W.B. Worthen, "Deeper Meanings and Theatrical Technique: The Rhetoric of Performance Criticism," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40 (4, Winter 1989). Any of J.L. Styan's series on text in

performance, such as *Chekhov in Performance* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982), might also be beneficial to the reader; and James Schevill, "Towards a New Poetic Realism in Contemporary Theater," in *Theater* 23 (Winter 1990) 58-62.

4. Rogowski uses the term in his discussion of Robert Musil's plays. See Christian Rogowski, *Implied Dramaturgy: Robert Musil and the Crisis of Modern Drama* (Riverside, California: Ariadne P, 1993).

5. Michael Vanden Heuvel, "Complementary Spaces: Realism, Performance and a New Dialogics of Theatre" in *Theatre Journal* 44 (1, March 1992) 50.

6. See Robert Brustein, *Reimagining American Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1991) 288.

7. Paul C. Castagno, "Informing the New Dramaturgy: Critical Theory to Creative Process" in *Theatre Topics* 3 (1, March 1993) 29.

8. John Rouse, "Textuality and Authority in Theater and Drama: Some Contemporary Possibilities" in *Critical Theory and Performance* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: U of Michigan P, 1992) 146-157.

9. Bert O. States, *The Pleasure of the Play* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994).

10. Stanton B. Garner, *The Absent Voice: Narrative Comprehension in the Theater* (Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1989) 173.

11. We used the revised 1989 edition of the play which has several significant changes from the original text. Scene three has been completely rewritten. The rewritten scene is an improvement because it makes Irwin's character much stronger. Scene seven is placed in Robert's house whereas in the original version Hare called for the scene to be placed in Katherine's flat. We decided to use this original idea because placing the scene in Katherine's flat before returning to Robert's house in the final scene, maintains Isobel's estrangement as well as the cyclical structure of the play.

12. All references are from David Hare, *The Secret Rapture* (New York: Samuel French, 1989).

13. Georg Gaston, "Interview: David Hare" in *Theatre Journal* 95 (2 May 1993) 217.

14. This scene was the most unsatisfying scene in the production. I was constantly looking for the definitive interpretation. I decided after watching the actors explore the scene in a variety of ways, that the key to the entire scene had to relate to Irwin's sexual desire alongside Isobel's urgent need to express not only her love for Irwin and his work but also her gratitude for his patience with Katherine. This interpretation places the two characters on a similar emotional plane but with cross purposes and therefore creates the necessary tension in the scene. However, I was unable to get the actors to portray this kind of reading. They continually fell into a pattern of silly flirting concentrating more on developing their relationship when in actuality this relationship should have already existed. It was difficult for the actors to feel that they had an established relationship because Hare gives them only a partial scene onstage together before they are interrupted.

15. Rogowski 280.

16. Brustein 288.

17. For a discussion of this idea see my article, "Howard Brenton's Dramaturgy of the Nineties: Eclipsing Utopia" in *Theatre Three* 9 (Fall 1990) 51-57. This discussion focuses on Brenton's *Bloody Poetry* and suggests that the play falls under its own weight because an audience cannot recognize how form contributes to the content, in this case because Brenton's dramaturgical strategy is clever on the page but unproduceable on the stage.

18. Jill Dolan, "Geographics of Learning: Theatre Studies, Performance and the 'Performative'" in *Theatre Journal* 45 (4 December 1993) 436.

19. Rouse 146.