

PLAYWRIGHT AS ARCHITECT OF THIRD SPACE:
THE DRAMATURGY OF JAPANESE TRADITIONAL THEATRE AND AMERICAN
PLAYWRITING

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ABSTRACT

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Intercultural Playwriting: The Dramaturgy of Japanese Traditional Performing Arts on the American Stage

Thesis directed by Professor Bud Coleman

Playwrights build their plays using theatrical conventions. These conventions' meanings are culturally situated and dependent on both the playwright and audience sharing an understanding of what they mean. When a playwright utilizes theatrical conventions from a culture different than their audience's those plays inhabit a space between two cultures, containing elements from both. This dissertation explores plays written by American playwrights who use elements of the Japanese traditional performing arts of *noh*, *kabuki* and *bunraku*. Using Homi Bhabha's theory of Third Space, a series of case studies apply the metaphor of playwright as architect as an analytical model. These plays are built from cultural materials and crafted into meaning by the playwright. The use of Japanese traditional theatre in the case-study plays (*In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* by Tennessee Williams, *The Long Christmas Ride Home* by Paula Vogel, *36 Views* by Naomi Iizuka, *The Saint Plays* by Erik Ehn, and *The Lily's Revenge: A Flowergorey Manifold* by Taylor Mac) are examined in comparative close-readings. Each playwright uses different tactics to expose their audiences to Japanese theatrical conventions and build a play in Third Space.

To Theodore, my constant writing companion.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When I lived in Japan, I saw as much theatre as I could: I caught single acts at the Kabuki-za, I wandered into the basements of skyscrapers to watch performance of *noh*, and I eagerly awaited each time the National Bunraku Theatre would go on tour. After returning to the United States from Japan to begin my graduate studies in dramaturgy, I was struck by the connections between many American plays and the theatre of Japan. This resulted in my MFA thesis which explored the connection between Japanese traditional performing arts and Tennessee Williams' late plays. This dissertation expands this investigation to look at the work of several American playwrights in connection to the Japanese arts of *noh*, *kyogen*, *kabuki*, and *bunraku*. Playwrights such as Erik Ehn, Paula Vogel, Naomi Iizuka, and Taylor Mac all have plays that explore the aesthetics and techniques of Japanese traditional performing arts.

This study uses theories of intercultural theatre to explore the dramaturgy of these playwrights' work. Intercultural theatre theorists often explore performance, but rarely apply their theories to the dramaturgy of plays and the labor of playwrights. I explore ways these American playwrights employ the conventions of Japanese traditional performance within the American theatrical landscape. Playwrights build their plays using theatrical conventions. These conventions' meanings are culturally situated and dependent on both the playwright and audience sharing an understanding of what they mean. When a

playwright utilizes theatrical conventions from a culture different than their audience's those plays inhabit a space between two cultures, containing elements from both.

The metaphor of playwrights building plays comes from the very etymology of the word. In English, the person who writes plays is not called a playwright, but instead a playwright. Just as a shipwright builds ships and wheelwright builds wheels, a playwright builds plays rather than writes them. This vision of the playwright building plays evokes a more tangible analysis of the text. What are the materials and tools used to build this play? This mode of thinking abstracts the plays into space. I visualize plays as an object taking up space, constructed by the playwright using a variety of materials and tools. The way these plays function, how their materials are put together with what tools, constitutes their dramaturgy. When plays are intercultural, playwrights use materials from multiple cultures to build them. The materials used to build plays include language, characters, conflict, action and genre. The most culturally dependent of the materials are theatrical conventions. M.H. Abrams, in his *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, defines conventions as "necessary, or at least convenient, devices, accepted by tacit agreement between author and audience, for solving the problems in representing reality that are posed by a particular artistic medium," (47). In American poetic realism, there is an agreement between the audience and creators that the world on stage exists with a fourth wall removed for the audience to witness its existence. This tacit agreement, or convention, that the world of the audience and world of the play exists in separate places and the audience can see what's happening on stage but the characters on stage are unaware of the audience is that the heart of many theatrical traditions. In non-realistic traditions (including *noh*, *kyogen*, *kabuki*, and *bunraku*), those agreements extend to the codified gestures, costumes

and sounds on stage that mean something to the audience. *Noh* is a slow-moving performance tradition where a small number of actors perform on a bare stage with limited props constructed of paper and bamboo. With the main character masked and a visible chanting chorus and musicians, the performance does not look or feel realistic, but an informed audience can read the conventions on stage. *Kyogen*, the comedic counterpart to *noh*, relies of stock characters and situations that the audience has seen repeatedly for its comedy. *Kabuki*, the bombastic and melodramatic visual feast that began in the 1500s and 1600s, relies on audience knowledge of intricate makeup designs to immediately catch onto characterization before a character has said a word. At a *bunraku* performance, where 1/3 human sized puppets enact many of the same stories seen on the *kabuki* stage, the audience accepts the voice of the narrator and all characters comes from the single chanter at the side of the stage. Japanese traditional performing arts rely on audience acceptance of conventions to tell the stories on stage. Abrams goes on to claim that in more structuralist critical modes “all literary works, no matter how seemingly realistic, are held to be entirely constituted by literary conventions, or "codes"—of genre, plot, character, language, and so on—which a reader naturalizes, by assimilating these conventions to the world of discourse and experience that, in the reader's time and place, are regarded as real, or ‘natural.’” (47-48). Even working outside the bounds of realism, such as in the examples above, these codes help audiences make meaning of the work of art, in our case the play. Codes, however, are culturally dependent. The meaning of a white dress changes drastically between cultures, in one it can be a bridal gown, in another a sign of mourning. When playwrights use conventions from a performance tradition from another culture, as the playwrights in my case studies do, create a play that exists between multiple cultures.

This place between cultures where the playwright is building these intercultural plays is a third space. Third space theory has been discussed by a variety of theorists in a variety of fields, but the term is usually credited to Homi Bhabha, a post-colonial theorist. Bhabha talks about cultures in space. When the location of two cultures meet, the space between them creates a third space, where meaning making is fluid and negotiable. Bhabha created this theory to examine the coming together of the culture of colonizer and colonized, arguing that the colonized hold a certain amount of cultural power in these third spaces and they force the colonizer to communicate in their cultural terms. This reclaims power for the oppressed in the analysis of these third spaces. This theory has been used and adapted to a wide array of fields and situations outside a post-colonial context. Edward Soja notably uses the term in his theorizing of urban geography (Soja). For Soja, third space is understood in relation to first and second space, two physical or cultural locations. Third space is distinct from but also encompasses both the first and second spaces. This has been used to discuss places of leisure as third spaces, distinct from the home and work, but carrying qualities of both. Third Space, in all of its variations used by different theorists, evokes a space of hybridity. In my analysis of intercultural plays being written in third space, the hybridity is created from two disparate performance cultures coming together in one play. I apply the metaphor of playwright as architect as an analytical model on a series of play. These plays are built from cultural materials and crafted into meaning by the playwright. The use of Japanese traditional theatre in the case-study plays are examined in comparative close-readings. Each playwright uses different tactics to expose their audiences to Japanese theatrical conventions and build a play in a space between cultures. In my analyses, the playwright becomes the architect of a third space, building their play

form the materials of multiple cultures and I examine the tools the playwrights use in their labor.

Terms

The case-studies used to explore the idea of playwright as architect of third space are examples of intercultural plays written by an American playwright and influenced by Japanese traditional performing arts. This delimiting of scope relies on the definition of the terms “play”, “intercultural”, “American”, “influence”, and “Japanese traditional performing arts”.

I use the term “play” to reference both the text and performance of theatre as dictated by the playwright. As I am most interested in the playwright’s labor and their work in building plays, the script is the primary artifact examined. Any performative elements I analyze are those indicated by the playwright in the text, not any choices the director might make in the interpretation of the text. As a collaborative art, it can be challenging, sometimes even impossible, to disentangle who contributed what element to the live performance. The plays I examine have a script with one credited author. That text, created by the playwright, is then interpreted by all the artists involved in the production. I limit my analysis to elements of that text. I do include analysis of staging if specifically indicated by the playwright within the script. Therefore, when referencing the “audience” of these plays, I am simultaneously referencing the reader, the artists interpreting the script (director, actors, designer, etc.), and the hypothetical audience of the live performance. Scripts are meant to be performed and my analysis contends with that, including noted staging elements in the investigation of the text. Playwrights often include elements of staging in scripts. I am operating under the assumption that the performances of these

plays (hypothetical or actual performances referenced in reviews) honor these choices indicated by the playwright. These plays and their potential and real audiences exist simultaneously when engaging with the script. The text exists as an artifact of past performances, a blueprint for future performances and the vessel for an immediate experience of reading the play. My analyses of the plays allow them to live in all of these possibilities, with a focus on the playwright's contribution to that experience. I use the term dramaturgy to discuss how the play is constructed. A play's dramaturgy can be defined as both the theory and practice of a play's composition. I am more interested in the practice. In this dissertation dramaturgy explores the practice of building plays: how their parts function both individually and as a whole.

The term "intercultural" will be interrogated throughout, including in the literature review. In the most literal sense, intercultural means between cultures. "Intercultural performance" (or theatre, or plays) are performances which exists between cultures. A performance which includes content, style or techniques from more than one culture can be included in this term. This inclusion of content, style and/or technique is what I consider "influence." My dissertation specifically focuses on intercultural plays that were written in America, by American playwrights influenced by Japanese traditional performing arts. These plays exist between Japanese and American culture, in this case moving the content, style and/or techniques from Japanese culture to an American cultural context. I use the term "America" and its derivatives interchangeably with "United States." While the term "American" is broad in its exclusion of Central, South and the rest North America, the term is the dominant one used in reference to culture. "United States" evokes nationhood. While transnational theatre is certainly closely related to intercultural theatre, this dissertation is

more interested in theatre that exists between cultures rather than between nations. The specific Japanese traditional performing arts I focus on are *noh*, *kyogen*, *kabuki* and *bunraku*. As the most represented Japanese traditional performing arts in Western theatre studies, they are the ones that American playwrights have the most access to. As such, they are the traditions I have noticed influencing American playwrights most often. Using the term *bunraku* instead of the more formally correct *ningyo joruri* is intentional, as the puppet theatre of Japan is almost exclusively referred to as *bunraku* in the United States. Most playwrights in the United States would not be familiar with the term *ningyo joruri*, and so I am using the term the playwrights themselves use when referring to the traditional puppet theatre of Japan. The playwrights examined identify as American (culturally, though they are also all citizens of the United States) and are writing from the 1960s to the present. In post-war peace efforts, there were multiple artist exchanges taking place between America and Japan in the 1960s. These exchanges were the beginning of an increase of visibility and impact of Japanese traditional performing arts in America. The 1960s marked a growing infatuation with Japan and “the east” among American artists, particularly experimental artists. Following in the footsteps of William Butler Yeats in the UK and American writers such as Elmer Rice, Thornton Wilder and Ezra Pound, these artists were enamored of the break from realism that Japanese traditional performing arts afforded. Many of these early experiments in intercultural art between Japan and America resulted in highly problematic representations of “the east” appropriating culture rather than exploring it. Art appropriates when it uses elements of a culture out of context without framing where the cultural elements came from. In some sense, appropriation is the artistic and commercial equivalent of not citing your sources. Most of the plays

included in my case studies, I believe, resist appropriation by using framing devices to locate and “credit” their cultural sources.

Need for Study

As indicated in my literature review, most scholars writing about intercultural theatre focus on performance. Postcolonial theorists, intercultural performance advocates and intercultural performance critics look at the productions of auteur directors. Very little work has been done interrogating the specific work of the playwright in this venture. By exploring intercultural plays on the dramaturgical level, a more complete understanding of both the process and product of intercultural playwriting can be created. As intercultural theatre becomes more frequent in our increasingly globalized world, scholars in the theatre need models with which to engage with texts. Intercultural playwriting, as an art form dealing with the complicated ideas surrounding identity, culture, and nation, has the potential to be problematic and as such needs careful consideration. By examining these case studies and theoretical lenses through which to engage with them, I will provide a model to critique these kinds of plays. While my dissertation will focus on the intercultural plays that live between Japanese and American cultures, the cultures I am most familiar with, the synthesis of my exploration could be used with other cultures to understand plays written in other intercultural contexts. As a strong advocate for expanding the traditional Western canon of work that is often the focus of academic study in the United States, I also believe that scholarship regarding intercultural playwriting can assist in educating theatre artists and students about these kind of plays and the “other” cultures they represent.

Methodology

In general, the organization of this dissertation consists of three concrete steps: establish background (in theory and content), explore case studies, and then synthesize that information into a landscape of intercultural playwriting between Japanese and American playwriting. This rest of this introduction functions both as a literature review and exploration of the ideas in interculturalism, establishing the context and theoretical underpinnings of my argument. The first chapter provides background to the practice of American playwrights' influences by Japanese traditional performing arts. The chapter includes an exploration of Tennessee Williams' connection to Japan and his play *In the Bar of Tokyo Hotel*. This play was Williams' self-proclaimed "occidental *noh*" and was written as a direct result of his friendship with Japanese author Yukio Mishima and his subsequent travel to Japan. This, the earliest clear example of intercultural playwriting moving from Japanese culture to American culture, took place during a time of government sponsored cultural exchange between Japan and the United States. The chapter establishes the historical context for the more contemporary case studies to follow.

The next four chapters focuses on each play and playwright, applying the established theory to the texts. The first case study looks at Paula Vogel's *bunraku* play, *The Long Christmas Ride Home*. Though she has backed away from calling the play a *bunraku* play, the use of puppets and dramaturgical models manifest the influence. The next chapter will look at Naomi Iizuka's *36 Views*, a play set in contemporary America that explores Japanese culture and arts, and includes direct references to *kabuki* aesthetics and techniques. Iizuka, as an American playwright with Japanese ancestry, is the only playwright included who both embodies interculturalism and creates it in her work. The

next chapter will look at Erik Ehn's *Saint Plays*. These many short plays – inspired by Catholic saint stories – use the techniques and aesthetics of *noh* with the goal to create a westernized kind of *yugen* in his audiences. As a frequent collaborator with the *noh*-inspired and trained San Francisco Theatre of Yugen, Ehn is known for infusing his plays with elements of Japanese traditional performing arts. The final case study will explore Taylor Mac's *The Lily's Revenge: A Flowergory Manifold*. In this play, Mac uses content, style and techniques from *noh*, *kabuki* and *bunraku* to create an epic performance experience that explores a political and cultural critique of institutionalized and enculturated homophobia. This selection of case studies includes plays in which *noh*, *kabuki*, and *bunraku* are explored in the American theatrical landscape both as individual art forms and in combination. The writers come from a wide range of personal and theatrical backgrounds, and represent a wide range of styles. The diversity among the chosen case studies mirrors the diversity of American playwriting. I could certainly make the case for including other plays, like Stephen Sondheim's *Pacific Overtures* or Chiori Miyagawa's *Woman Killer*, but for the sake of clarity and focus, choices must be made. These case studies seem to be the most compelling for my argument and feel like a balanced group in terms of time, playwright autobiography, content and style.

The final chapter (and conclusion) of my dissertation synthesizes the dramaturgical exploration and criticism of the case studies into a landscape of intercultural playwriting between Japan and America. In this chapter, the process and product of intercultural playwriting will be divided into categories of different ways in which these plays live between cultures. I also theorize why these playwrights used this kind of dramaturgy,

including practical and personal reasons. This theorization of “why” also critiques the ethics of the representation of other cultures in these plays.

Literature Review

While intercultural theatre cannot claim a clearly defined “beginning,” as it can be identified throughout theatre history, the term was first used liberally in the United States within the avant-garde theatre community in the 1960s and 1970s. Richard Schechner, as both scholar and theatre artist, promoted the term and its related practices. The work Schechner and his peers participated in mostly involved adapting non-western narratives into established American theatrical conventions or using non-western theatrical approaches to break away from realism. The term went without any unifying theory or practices across multiple scholars and artists for some time. Scholars and critics were not investigating how and why this performance tradition functioned. Our current definition comes from a conversation in the late 1980s and 1990s, termed by Ric Knowles as “the intercultural wars of the 1980s and 1990s” (“Theatre &” 79-80). As post-colonial theory was developed and embraced by theatre studies, a surge of scholars began problematizing intercultural performance. Another group of scholars began defending intercultural performance, with the caveat that the admittedly delicate enterprise of representing a foreign culture needed to be done ethically. These arguments mostly centered on the work of Peter Brook and Ariane Mnouchkine. At the helm of the two camps of thought were (and still are even though the dust has settled on the skirmish) Patrice Pavis and Rustom Bharucha. Bharucha generally sided against intercultural performance and Pavis generally sided for it, with their opposing articles and books including very pointed and sometime outright derogatory references to each other’s work.

The disputes about intercultural performance stem from two places: definition and example. The definition debate arises from ways of conceiving what intercultural performance is and how it functions. The definition debate also includes a debate over which term is the most appropriate to use. While intercultural is the most frequently used term, a variety of terms are used to describe performance happening with the influence of two or more cultures. Ric Knowles outlines the multiplicity of vocabulary concerning the topic in his 2010 book *Theatre & Interculturalism*.

I prefer “intercultural” to the other terms available – cross-cultural, extracultural, intracultural, metacultural, multicultural, precultural, postcultural, transcultural, transnational, ultracultural, and so on – because it seems to me important to focus on the contested, unsettling, and often unequal spaces between cultures, spaces that can function in performances as sites of negotiation. (“Theatre &” 4)

I agree with Knowles in his preference for the term, and as such will use “intercultural” throughout my dissertation even when certain theorists I reference might use a different, comparable term. In particular cases, such as describing Naomi Iizuka’s familial cultural heritage as multicultural, I will use the most appropriate term to the context.

The examples debate comes from examining specific case-studies and arguing about their artistic merit and ethics. These critiques of case-studies result in theorists arguing about whether or not intercultural theatre should or should not be performed. Through these debates, multiple useful and compelling definitions of just what intercultural performance were developed. Pavis, in his push to defend the practice, claims that intercultural performance involves “the exchange or reciprocal influence of theatrical practices (acting, *mise en scène*, stage adaptations of ‘foreign material’)” (“Reader” 2).

Exchange and reciprocity are key in Pavis' understanding of intercultural performance. This definition would likely be welcomed by most theorists involved in understanding intercultural performance. At its core, intercultural performance relies on the "influence of theatrical practices" between multiple cultures. Different scholars have landed on different models of understanding how this influence functions in practice.

Marvin Carlson, in an attempt to retain some scholarly detachment from the Pavis/Bharucha public disagreement, developed a spectrum of interculturalism in 1990. This spectrum allows for different practices within intercultural performance to be placed into context through categorization and incremental differences. The list of seven kinds of intercultural performance claims no value in its ordering, but a scale denoting degrees of influence:

1. The totally familiar tradition of regular performance.
2. Foreign elements assimilated into the tradition and absorbed by it. The audience can be interested, entertained, stimulated but they are not challenged by the foreign material.
3. Entire foreign structures are made familiar instead of isolated elements.
The Oriental *Macbeth* would be an example of this.
4. Foreign and familiar create a new blend, which is then assimilated into the tradition, becoming familiar.
5. The foreign itself becomes assimilated as a whole, becoming familiar.
Examples would be *commedia dell'arte* in France or Italian opera in England.

6. Foreign elements remain foreign, used within familiar structures for *Verfremdung*, for shock value, or for exotic quotation. An example would be the Oriental dance sequences in the current [1990] production of *M. Butterfly* in New York
7. An entire performance from another culture is imported or recreated, with no attempt to accommodate it with the familiar.

(Carlson, "Cross-Cultural Theatre" 50)

The scale works from 1 being the lowest level of influence to 7 being the highest level of influence. This model relies on intercultural performance with only two cultures at play, one of them being the "source" culture and the other being the "target" culture, terms borrowed from translation theory (source language and target language).

Metaphors dominate the various definitions and models of intercultural performance. Beyond Carlson's vision of a spectrum, other intercultural performance theorists rely on image as a way of visualizing the functional practice and theoretical implications of intercultural performance. Pavis developed the figure of an hourglass to explain how intercultural theatre moves from source cultures to target cultures (see Figure 1). This hourglass metaphor is useful for thinking about the process of creating intercultural performance. The many grains of sand at the top (the source culture) are limited to very few that then mix with the sand at the bottom (the target culture). Pavis recognizes that this model is a tool that must be handled ethically. In regards to intercultural performance between Eastern and Western cultures, he claims that "Although such relationships seem inextricably entangled, there can be no sense in which Asian perspectives are always reversible and symmetrical with those of the West – as a purely

functionalist use of the hourglass, turned over and over *ad infinitum*, might lead us naively to believe” (“Reader” 2). The complexity of the movement of the sand in the hourglass is the focus of this metaphor. Only looking at the tool siphoning the sand is far too simple to stand in for the complicated process of representing a foreign culture on stage.

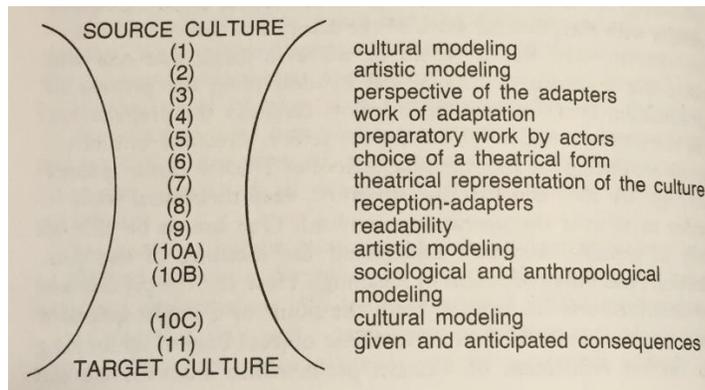


Figure 1: The Hourglass of Cultures from Patrice Pavis, “Crossroads” 4.

Pavis’ also uses the metaphor of fire to represent the exciting, but dangerous, business of incorporating multiple cultural traditions on stage. In his poetic image, he focuses on a definition rather than a process of intercultural performance. He sees interculturalism as “a crucible in which performance techniques are tested against and amalgamated with the techniques that receive and fashion them” (“Reader” 2). This melting and hardening of metal into a fused whole is an apt image for intercultural performance, which can be used to test techniques in new environments. The workshop or laboratory setting conjured by the image also advocates for those involved to learn and grow from these performances.

Pavis’ scholarly rival, Bharucha, takes a less optimistic view of intercultural performance, using the metaphor of a river. “I would like to reflect on the river as a metaphor of cultural exchange in the larger context of intracultural interactions and

interventions in theatre" ("River" 31). Here, and elsewhere in his work, Bharucha uses the term intracultural to reference a more equitable and ethical cultural interaction than those he terms intercultural. For Bharucha, the river symbolizes a sacred gathering place, a life-giving space, a means of travel, where the water from various tributaries mixes and becomes one. A river may seem a benign image for a practice he is so suspicious of. However, it is the political and ecological implications of the river that concern Bharucha. He claims that because cultures rarely have equal footing in political and economic terms, the exchange between cultures through performance cannot be an equal one. Oppression and appropriation are likely results of intercultural performance. Who controls the river? What cargo is placed upon it? How is the river polluted by the movement of this cargo? Bharucha's postcolonial critique of intercultural performance problematizes the "neo-liberal celebration of interculturalism in terms of its naïve, if not ethnocentric, embrace of cultures of the world, with insufficient regard for their social, economic, and political contexts" (Bharucha, "Politics" 4). For Bharucha, "a critique (or at least, a cognizance) of global capital would seem to be mandatory for the democratization of intercultural practice and discourse" (Bharucha, "Politics" 6) and is rarely an articulated concern for intercultural theatre makers.

All of the definitions, models, metaphors, celebration of and suspicion of intercultural performance of these "interculture wars" of the 1980s and 1990s focus on binaries of cultural exchange between two distinct, normally Eastern and Western, cultures. There is a sort of mathematical quality to their understanding. One culture + another culture = intercultural performance, with much debate over the equal sign.

Knowles argues that Pavis is trying to "theorise intercultural performance within what is

essentially a semiotics of communications, focusing on meaning production almost exclusively and enshrining a binary encoding – decoding model from communications theory” (Knowles 28). Knowles provides a new optimism in the study of intercultural performance. In his 2010 book, *Theatre & Interculturalism*, he claims that,

The new interculturalism, as I see it, involves collaborations and solidarities across real and respected material differences within local, urban, national, and global intercultural performance ecologies... These do not function merely as sites of semiotic intersection, or as postmodern collages, but as politicized sites for the construction of new, hybrid, and diasporic identities in space. (Knowles 59)

This new interculturalism recognizes the socio-political situation of each culture but still finds a useful and artistically invigorating exchange. Knowles’ theory does not dismiss the work of Pavis, Bharucha, and their peers. Instead, this new form of interculturalism attempts to understand these performances using both optimistic and suspicious mindsets. As such, all of the definitions, models and metaphors concerning intercultural performance presented can still be used, together, to recognize the patterns at work in intercultural performance.

Currently, much of the work being done around intercultural theatre lives in the realm of postcolonial criticism stemming from the work of Bharucha. Bharucha, Pavis, and their peers of the intercultural wars are still theorizing and writing although early 21st century publications are typically collections of case studies in intercultural performance. Erika Fischer-Lichte, another key voice in the 1990s debates who worked in Pavis’ camp, edited and introduced a collection of case studies concerning intercultural performance.

Fischer-Lichte's work today focuses on the semiotics of theatre and how cultural systems affect the creating and interpretation of signs within the theatrical context. She also promotes the term "interweaving performance cultures" instead of intercultural theatre.

The concept of "intercultural theatre" makes the false assumption that cultures are sealed entities – once Japanese, always Japanese; once European, always European. Instead cultures are immersed in a continuous process of change and exchange. It is often difficult to disentangle or distinguish what is "one's own" and what is "foreign." The difference between cultures are dynamic and continually shifting.

(Fischer-Lichte, "Performance Studies" 130)

Since the term intercultural is so problematic to Fischer-Lichte, she proposes calling this practice "interweaving performance cultures." Another visual metaphor, interweaving focuses on the process of creating intercultural theatre rather than the product. While I will use this term occasionally, its emphasis on process precludes the study of product of the labor of the playwrights this dissertation examines. Dramaturgical analysis of the plays themselves are crucial to the investigation of theater which interweaves culture, and that analysis is focused on product rather than process.

The focus of these scholars, both in the history of interculturalism and today, primarily rests on performance, not dramaturgy. The artist and works these scholars (primarily Pavis and Bharucha) critique include Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* and Ariane Mnouchkine's *L'Indiade*. I contend that the models of analysis developed in unpacking these auteur driven performances can help us understand pieces of intercultural dramaturgy. When a playwright is inspired by or includes theatrical techniques from foreign cultures in their scripts, we move out of strictly performance and into the realm of intercultural

playwriting. The models used to understand intercultural performance are well suited to investigate intercultural playwriting, as they are identifying the same motions between cultures. Intercultural playwriting requires this intercultural performance theory to be applied to the work on a textual level. Where in this play do textual remnants and products of other cultures reside? To what level on Carlson's spectrum does this text show evidence of cultural influence? How are metals of multiple cultural theatrical traditions being forged in this play? How does the river of exchange flow through this play? How are the fibers of performance traditions dispersed through the weft and weave of a play? These are the questions asked of intercultural playwriting using the model of intercultural performance. The term "intercultural" has changed drastically over time. While for some it references a scholarly debate from the 1990s and for others it does not hold the entire complex nature of the phenomenon, for me it is still useful. The fact that the term generates so many differing scholarly opinions to it reflect the nature of the theatre itself. More importantly to my analysis, the term evokes a certain sense of space: inter-cultural, between cultures. This reference to location and the in-between-ness of the performance tradition makes the term useful for analysis of these plays as built from the materials of multiple culture, residing in-between two disparate performance cultures. The "inter" of intercultural also connotes a transference between cultures, communicating between two entities. This element of communication is key to the tactics used by the playwrights in my case studies.

Other literature I draw from outside of clearly delineated intercultural theatre theorists include translation studies, postcolonial theory, and Third Space theory. Lawrence Venuti's postcolonial translation theory and translation theories provide a vocabulary for the transference of cultures. Venuti uses the idea of source and target

language and culture. He sees translation as an often violent act, similar to the intercultural theatre theorists who criticize the practice. In Venuti's 1995 book, *The Translator's Invisibility*, he describes translation in these terms:

Translation is the forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with a text that will be intelligible to the target language reader. This difference can never be entirely removed, of course, but it necessarily suffers a reduction and exclusion of possibilities—and an exorbitant gain of other possibilities specific to the translating language. Whatever difference the translation conveys is now imprinted by the target-language culture, assimilated to its positions of intelligibility, its canons and taboos, its codes and ideologies. The aim of translation is to bring back a cultural other as the same, the recognizable, even the familiar; and this aim always risks a wholesale domestication of the foreign text, often in highly self-conscious projects, where translation serves an appropriation of foreign cultures for domestic agendas, cultural, economic, political. Translation can be considered the communication of a foreign text, but it is always a communication limited by its address to a specific reading audience. (Venuti 18-19)

While intercultural theatre does not always engage in the translation of language, it does engage in the translation of culture. Therefore Venuti's ideas still apply. Intercultural playwriting brings a theatrical tradition from a source culture into the context of target culture. The intention to render that theatrical tradition familiar, or "readable", to audiences of the target culture. In the case studies to follow, this cultural translation attempts to familiarize audiences with Japanese traditional performing arts traditions to varying levels.

Third Space theory, as articulated by Homi Bhabha, will assist in the understanding of how intercultural theatre exists in the metaphorical space between cultures. Bhabha's theory concerning the creation of meaning through communication between cultures resides in the borders, in the places of cultural hybridity:

Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation [...] the borderline engagements of cultural difference may as often be consensual as conflictual; they may confound our definitions of traditions and modernity; realign the customary boundaries between the private and the public, high and low; and challenge normative expectations of development and progress. (Bhabha 3)

This "complex, ongoing negotiation" happens, for Bhabha, in time and space. While the making of meaning seemingly happens in no time or place, Bhabha envisions its positionality. Cultures inhabit time/space and their positionality is at play when multiple cultures encounter one another. This creates a Third Space in which meaning making occurs:

The linguistic difference that informs any cultural performance is dramatized in the common semiotic account of the disjuncture between the subject of a proposition (*énoncé*) and the subject of enunciation, which is not represented in the statement but which is acknowledgment of its discursive embeddedness and address, its

cultural positionality, its reference to a specific time and specific space. The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that the two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy. (Bhabha 53)

Thinking of communications between cultures occurring within passage of a Third Space opens the possibility of non-fixed interpretation of signs. Two cultures exist in time/space and Third Space exists between them when they interact. This Third Space requires a new creation of meaning for signs in a new context. Bhabha goes on to describe the “inter” of the Third Space:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory – where I have led you – may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the “inter” – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *inbetween* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. (Bhabha 56)

It is in this Third Space, in the “inbetween” of cultures that intercultural theatre exists. The ability for cultures to be, as Fischer-Lichte argues, interwoven, allows for hybridity in this Third Space. When conceiving of culture as positioned within time/space, the possibility

for a unique location of meeting exists. In the case studies presented in this dissertation, Japanese culture and American culture meet within the Third Space of the case study plays.

Other scholars who investigate the connection between Japan and American in theatre that I reference include Barbara Thornbury, David Jortner and Samuel Leiter. Thornbury's examination of America's cultural fascination with Japan laid out in her book *America's Japan and Japan's Performing Arts: Cultural Mobility and Exchange in New York, 1952–2011*, tells the story of American experimental artists in New York and their experience with Japanese performing arts. David Jortner explored the history of American scholarship on Japanese theatre in a series of biographies published in *Asian Theatre Journal* and a chapter in the Jonah Salz's *The History of Japanese Theatre*. Samuel Leiter edited a volume which explored Japanese Theatre on the international Stage. These scholars explore the specific cultural exchange this dissertation focuses on and provide historical background for the examples discussed in my case studies.

Playwright as Architect of Third Space

Plays are not written, they are built. The word playwright uses the ending “wright” not “writer.” Shipwrights build ships, wheelwrights build wheels and playwrights *build* plays. Father of *noh*, Zeami, also thought of writing as constructing. Zeami uses the verb *saku*, to construct, in his instructions of writing plays. In *The Three Courses*, Zeami's 1423 discourse on the writing of plays, he instructs, “you should construct your plays and write them out with a careful visual impression of what is contained in these articles” (“Performance Notes” 159). This dissertation seeks to explore the construction of these plays and consider the playwright as builder of a Third Space between Japanese and American culture. Tadashi Suzuki, the renowned Japanese director who is best known for

his staging of Western classics in Japanese contexts, also considers the theatre artist as architect:

It is impossible to consider the crude transplantation of classical styles of movement into a contemporary forum (styles like ballet and Kathakali, or the speech techniques of Kabuki or noh) as a kind of collage or juxtaposition. While the collage is a viable concept in fine art, it runs into problems in the theatre. If various fragmented references to tradition forms of movement or speech – or rather to the physical sensibilities that sustain them – fail to assume a fresh and unique set of relationships in performance, the act of referencing has no creative value. In this way, the theatre is similar to architecture. When architects reference historical forms, they pay special attention to the qualities of the materials used in these forms, and generate fresh combinations while maintaining a kind of structural and functional integrity. (Suzuki 46)

Paula Vogel, Erik Ehn, Naomi Iizuka, and Taylor Mac all function as architects of Third Space within their plays. They use various conventions derived from Japanese traditional performing arts to bring Japanese performance culture into an American theatrical context. Each playwright has their own methodology for this action based on the needs of the particular story being told. Each playwright exposes their audience in these forms with varying degrees of direct reference to the source culture. All of these playwrights are creating theatre within our increasingly globalized society and we must contend with the impact they have on exposing audiences within an American cultural context to a theatrical tradition which may be very unfamiliar to them.

CHAPTER TWO

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: THE LATE PLAYS

While Tennessee Williams has been hailed as one of the greatest American playwrights, critics have generally agreed that he wrote some of his worst plays near the end of his career. From the late fifties and sixties onward, Tennessee Williams's plays did not meet the critical and commercial success that greeted his earlier smash hits. As American theatrical tastes were changing and Off-Broadway experimental theatre was growing, Tennessee Williams's plays began to change, becoming less realistic and more abstract. Puzzled critics and audience members alike found it difficult to categorize these plays and comprehend the theatrical language that Williams was beginning to explore. However, Allean Hale's work has sparked a growing interest in and awareness of the litany of plays produced by Williams in the last two decades of his life. She categorizes the late plays as those written and produced after *The Night of the Iguana*. Almost all of these plays are also generally considered unsuccessful both commercially and artistically.

The Night of the Iguana found Williams enshrined on the cover of the March 9, 1962 *Time* magazine as "world's greatest living playwright." By 1969, after *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel*, *Time's* affiliate *Life* was describing him as "a burned-out cinder." Although other reviewers were more generous, many agreed that Williams's career was in an irreversible decline. What was seen as the downward slide began in 1963 with *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* (Hale, "Confronting Williams" 1).

Critics and scholars today are beginning to re-examine these late plays, which have been mostly ignored for decades. A handful of scholars, artists and theatre festivals are beginning to give the late plays of Tennessee Williams a closer examination. This may have to do with changing theatrical tastes; however, it also comes from a new openness to considering that the shift in Williams's writing was not solely due to his personal troubles of the time, but motivated by an intentional change in artistic consciousness and awareness.

This new style of writing found in *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* and subsequent Williams plays is certainly not uniform. However, the distinct differences from the styles of preceding plays stand out. Hale notes that "it seemed he no longer bothered with the dialogue for which he was famous, but wrote in unfinished sentences or let one character complete another's thought," ("Confronting Williams" 1). Williams's well-known skill with traditional dialogue was being subverted in these new works. Along with smooth and logically motivated dialogic responses, gone too were the dramatic elements of conflict in his narratives. Hale continues that in his late plays "there was none of the plot development – complications and climaxes – that had propelled his earlier scenes; at times it was difficult to know when a play ended or what it was about," ("Confronting Williams" 2). This turn away from Aristotelian models of drama indicates that Williams was moving towards a different way of conceiving the theatrical. In general, most of these new aesthetic choices in his writing moved away from the poetic realism Williams had previously been working in towards abstractions and lengthy meditations. In most of the more than 40 plays considered "late," Williams was pursuing new dramaturgy.

Thomas Keith notes in his 2011 *American Theatre* article, “You Are Not the Playwright I was Expecting,” that:

Interest in Williams’s later works has been growing over the last decade, and when the plays are produced they’re sometimes described in the publicity as “lost,” “found,” “discovered” or “unknown,” when in fact, that is rarely the case. Many were performed during Williams’s lifetime, and would be better described as “shunned” or “sidestepped.” (37)

Productions of these plays are happening more frequently. White Horse Theatre Company in New York revived *In the Bar of Tokyo Hotel* in 2007. Mark Blankenship of *Variety Magazine* claimed that “the current revival by White Horse Theater proves the play is worth remembering.” Paul Vale writes that Charring Cross Theatre’s 2016 “thoughtful, cohesive production [of *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel*] negotiates the complexities of Williams’ dense script with insight.” Something about these plays has sparked the interest of artists and scholars today. As more of the plays are performed more frequently and examined more closely, the late plays of Tennessee Williams are becoming significantly more successful both critically and commercially than they were at the time of their writing and premieres.

This burgeoning interest starkly contrasts against the vehemence with which these plays were originally received. Anthony West’s 1963 review of *The Milk Train Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore* asks of the then living Mr. Williams:

What has happened? There is a sad moment in the career of an artist of the second rank, a point of no return, beyond which his work ceases to develop. The artist loses his gift for selecting viable new material and begins to go through his old material all

over again, reproducing it this time with its salient feature exaggerated in involuntary self-parody. (West 211)

This cry that Williams had lost his artistic talent and was on an inescapable downward trend was echoed by other critics of the time. The contemporary reactions to these late plays seem to indicate that Williams had moved to writing plays with, as this critic goes on to say, “no dramatic substance.” However, this interpretation of a lack of dramatic substance relies on the assumption that dramatic substance can only be found in traditional Aristotelian plots with realistic dialogue from which Williams made his name. Artists and scholars of today are drawn towards these later plays, perhaps intrigued by a dramatic substance other than poetic dialogue in realistic situations.

The late plays of Tennessee Williams do not come off the page as readily as his earlier works. *The Day on Which a Man Dies* (1960) ends with a death you’ve been informed will happen at the opening of the play with no surprises in the narrative. The characters in *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* (1969) often do not finish their sentences and complete each other’s thoughts with no clear logical explanation as to why. Stagehands not only interact with the on-stage action of *The Milk Train Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore*, they speak directly to the audience while being invisible to the characters on stage. These techniques are not clearly explicated by the surrounding text and are in direct opposition to the conventions used in Williams’s earlier plays. Critics interpreted these new theatrical devices as a sign of the playwright’s descent away from art and perhaps into madness. Often attributed to the death of Williams’s longtime partner and his substance abuse, these new dramaturgical tactics were held up in comparison to earlier work as examples of his decline.

As these later plays are being reconsidered today, scholars are questioning the way in which critics responded to the plays at the time of their premieres. Michael Paller, in a 2002 collection of essays on the late work of Williams, argues that perhaps the fault of these plays' lack of success lies with the critics rather than Williams's words. He argues that "Williams did not suddenly become inept or tone deaf to the sound of his inner music. The truth was that Williams had written a kind of play that critical ears had not been trained to hear" (Kolin 25-26). If these critics were missing the training to fully experience and interpret these plays, then perhaps the recent exploration of these works signals a readiness to look for dramatic models outside of the Western Aristotelian tradition. Paller goes on to posit that in writing *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, Williams was writing a *noh* play. This understanding, which lies far from the insistence of the critics of Williams's time to compare these later plays with his earlier works, explodes the idea of this new dramaturgy not only within *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, but in many of his late plays.

It is no coincidence that *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* is seen as the beginning of the "end" for Williams's career and that its writing so closely coincides with Williams' great interest in the theatre of Japan. Some scholars, beginning with Allean Hale and continuing with others like Michael Paller, posit that Tennessee Williams began exploring dramaturgy and dramatic techniques from *noh* and *kabuki* after his exposure to the forms. Williams's documented 1957 to 1970 friendship with Yukio Mishima, one the most well-regarded Japanese novelists and playwrights of the time, was a catalyzing event in this exposure to the Japanese traditional performing arts which eventually resulted in several trips to Japan where Williams saw performances of the *noh* and *kabuki*. In addition

to this friendship, Williams was one a of a growing number of theatre and performance artists becoming infatuated with Japanese culture. Ezra Pound's "translation" of noh plays collected by the late Earnest Fenollosa was published by New Directions (who also published Tennessee Williams' plays and Yukio Mishima's writing in translation) in 1959. Fenollosa's widow had given Ezra Pound, who had an artistic interest but little scholarly education in Chinese and Japanese poetry, access to Fenollosa's notes to be completed and published. *The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan* was one of these publications. The publication is accompanied with an introduction by William Butler Yeats, who was so inspired by Fenollosa's work (through Pound), that he wrote his own adaptation of a noh play, *At the Hawk's Well*, in English. The publishing of this book along with Japanese traditional performing artists' tours in the U.S. contributed to a growing fascination of Japan, particularly by experimental artists trying to push the boundaries of realism. Perhaps it is these biographical anecdotes that are useful to consider when examining the later Williams plays in addition to his grief and declining health.

Just as the late plays are difficult for an untrained ear to appreciate, so is the art of *noh* and *kabuki*. Donald Keene, a scholar of *noh* and translator of Mishima's work, remarks that "the more one knows about a theatre with traditions as deep-rooted as those of Nō, the greater one's pleasure," (9). A knowledge, or even awareness, of the performing traditions associated with *noh* and *kabuki* greatly impacts the understanding of many of Williams's late plays, particularly the plays which directly cite Japanese performing arts in stage directions, titles and theatrical techniques. A far more compelling drama is offered in many of the late plays when we begin looking across the ocean for a lens to understand them, rather than comparing them with earlier plays by the same playwright. Williams himself

lamented the comparison of these new plays to his older work in his 1981 *Chicago Tribune* interview:

In my early plays, there was a great rush of emotion backed up in me that found release. In later plays, I had to dig deeper, and people were always comparing those plays, which were quite different, with the early work...Under these conditions, the new plays suffered. (Williams qtd. in Christiansen E24)

The connection between Tennessee Williams and the theatre of Japan revolves around his relationship with Yukio Mishima. The two famous writers met in 1957 entirely by chance. Their resulting friendship would expose Williams to not only Mishima's plays and novels, but also to the culture of Japan, including *noh* and *kabuki*. Allean Hale has documented the narrative of Williams and Mishima meeting, most notably in her article "The Secret Script of Tennessee Williams." In this article, she describes Williams and Mishima's bizarre first encounter in 1957. Mishima was traveling in New York to promote Knopf's publication of the English translation of his *Five Modern No Plays*. Williams was required to stay close to his psychoanalyst's office during the week, but he and his partner Frank Merlo were renting a place on the West Side for weekend parties. Hale describes Williams's weekend retreat in her article:

In tune with the Zen of the times, he furnished it sparsely in what he called "chop suey modern": mats, bead portieres, paper lanterns. Here he served drinks and deli food to the crowd. One Saturday night when too few showed up, Tennessee himself went out on upper Broadway to round up some interesting street people. He saw coming toward him these two elegant Orientals. "How would you like to come to a party? He asked. So America's leading playwright and Japan's leading novelist spent

a congenial evening together watching the bacchanalia, neither knowing who the other was. They met formally a week later in the office of New Directions, where Mishima was discussing the forthcoming publication of his *Confessions of a Mask*. James Laughlin, their mutual publisher, introduced them. ("Secret" 2)

This introduction was the beginning of a long friendship which would lead to Williams taking at least four trips to Tokyo. Mishima also visited New York multiple times and saw Williams on each trip. Williams describes their first meeting in significantly less detail in a group interview over an international television hookup. He tells Edward R. Murrow that he and Mishima "met in New York, in a rather unfashionable district and in a rather bohemian quarter, but we had a marvelous time" (Williams qtd. in Devlin 69). Due to the privacy of both individuals, it is difficult to say how intimate or deep their friendship ran, but the evidence of their repeated encounters certainly indicates a certain level of familiarity.

After their chance encounter and coincidental sharing of a publisher, their friendship seemed inevitable. While coming from very different cultural experiences, the two had much in common. They were both successful writers in their home country, and well-known for it. This success was also a burden for them both, weighing heavily on them as they were expected to continue producing hits. Both writers were homosexuals, though they enacted their sexuality in different ways. Mishima was married, though published an expose on the underground homosexual community in Japan. Williams had a longtime partner, though Frank Merlo and Williams's relationship was not stable or widely known to the general public. Mishima and Williams also shared a strong affiliation with traditional culture; Williams with the South, Mishima with the samurai tradition. Mishima and

Williams also both made a turn toward the avant-garde in the late fifties, shifting their writing styles. While their disparate cultures and backgrounds make the realization of their friendship a surprise to most, it is easy to see why the two would maintain a friendship over the course of 13 years.

Williams's fourth trip to Japan would be the last time he saw Mishima. Williams writes in his memoir about the experience:

This visit, lasting only a couple of days, was to be my last encounter with Yukio Mishima. I was staying at a hotel in Yokohama while the ship was in port, and Yukio drove out to the port one evening to have dinner with me. At this point I suspect he had already decided upon his act of hara-kiri, which took place only a month or two later while I was still in Bangkok. I noticed when he entered the hotel bar that there was a tension and gravity about him which lead me to believe that he had already decided upon the act, which I think was performed not because of political concern about the collapse of the old traditions in Japan but because he felt that, with the completion of his trilogy, he had completed his major work as an artist. (Williams, "Memoirs" 236)

Mishima was the leader of a small group of extreme right-wing political activists. In an "attempted coup d'état," his group took over the office of a commandant in the Japanese Self Defense Force. After giving a short speech, Mishima committed ritual suicide, an act he had often portrayed as romantic in his novels and plays. Mishima's death was the end of Williams's friendship with the writer, but his fascination with the traditional theatre of Japan would continue, as he made evident in his plays.

Williams had read Mishima's work, including his modern *noh* plays, after meeting him for the first time in 1957. However, it was during his trip to Japan in 1959 when he saw *noh* and *kabuki* for the first time that he was introduced to the possibilities of *noh* and *kabuki*'s dramaturgy. He told a reporter that he and Merlo went to see a *kabuki* performance every afternoon of their two-week stay in Tokyo. This love of *kabuki* led him to write an advertisement for the first ever performance of a *kabuki* and *noh* troupe in America, one year later:

The great traditional Theatre of Japan, the *Noh*-plays and the *Kabuki* theatre that grew out of them, deserve to be ranked... with such historical flowering of drama...as the ancient Greek and Elizabethan theatres and the theatre of Chekhov and Stanislavsky. We are receiving a great honor in their coming to America, and I hope that all our theatre artists and craftsman will be as thrilled, influenced, instructed and inspired as I was when I saw them last Fall in Japan. (Williams qtd. in Hale, "Secret" 6)

This influence, instruction and inspiration would become apparent in Williams's next major play, *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*. This play tells the story of Mrs. Goforth, an obscenely wealthy woman, and her last two days alive. A mysterious stranger is caught trespassing on her Italian villa and the majority of the play consists of their conversations.

While there are elements of *noh* explored in *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, most of the theatrical techniques reflect those of *kabuki*. Williams even mentions *kabuki* in the author's notes. He describes the stage assistants as a pair that "function in a way that's between the Kabuki Theatre of Japan and the chorus of Greek theatre. My

excuse, or reason, is that I think the play will come off better the further it is removed from conventional theatre, since it's been rightly described as an allegory and as a 'sophisticated fairy tale,' (Williams, "Theatre 5" 3). These stagehands are used in the same way as in *kabuki* and act as theatrical expedients to deal with props and costumes. They are in this way "invisible" to the audience. However, these stagehands also execute cues, telling actors to do things and add an element of meta-theatricality that reminds us we are watching a performance. The exaggerated costumes and exotically clothed characters also explore the hyper-theatricality of *kabuki*.

The play begins with a prologue where the stagehands describe their function in the play. This immediately disrupts any expectation in the audience for a representation of reality. They perform a flag raising ceremony, a ritual that begins and ends the performance. The ritual elements pull from the old Elizabethan tradition of raising a flag at the theatre on performance day while also signaling the start of a day within the narrative of the play. The stagehands, named generically One and Two in the script, narrate their actions and provide information about the setting and characters. Continuing in the *noh* tradition of declaiming names and places, they also introduce themselves as a theatrical device:

ONE: We are also a device

TWO: A theatrical device.

ONE: A theatrical device of ancient and oriental origin.

TWO: With occidental variations, however.

TOGETHER: We are Stage Assistants. We move the screens that mask the interior playing areas of the stage presentation.

ONE: We fetch and carry.

TWO: Furniture and props.

ONE: To make the presentation – the play or masque or pageant – move more gracefully, quickly through the course of the two final days of Mrs. Goforth’s existence.

(Williams, “Theatre of” 7)

These theatrical devices explain themselves and the style of the play in the first moments. Williams draws the audience’s attention to his exploration of *kabuki* and *noh* staging techniques at the opening of the play. When One describes the stagehands as “a theatrical device of ancient and oriental origin with occidental variations” Williams is showing his hand as a playwright and offering an explanation of dramaturgical intention to the audience. This prologue also contains the information that we are about to witness the final two days of Mrs. Goforth’s life. This information removes the need to follow the plot for a narrative understanding of the play. Williams is telling us to place our focus elsewhere, since this play, like the plays of *kabuki*, assumes the audience already knows the outcome of the story and is viewing the play for a sensory and emotional experience.

Tennessee Williams donated *The Day on Which a Man Dies (an Occidental Noh Play)* to a UCLA library in 1970. It was included in a box of original manuscripts sold to finance a trip back to Asia. The play went unperformed and unpublished until 2008, when Annette J. Saddik edited and published a collection of late Williams plays. Allean Hale writes about the play in her article chronicling her discovery and analysis of the script:

Tennessee Williams, who aired publicly the most intimate details of his life, left behind one play that is so private it may never be performed. Locked in a California library, it remains secret because of its form – an experiment few critics would accept – its subject, the playwright’s fear of madness and suicide, and because it involves a fellow playwright who did commit suicide in a violently sensational way: Yukio Mishima. (“Secret” 1)

The play was dedicated to Mishima, and Hale suspects it was written in Japan or soon after returning as a gift to thank him for hosting Williams and his partner Frank Merlo on their trip. The very short two-scene play involves characters in a situation very similar to those of *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel*. Hale and other scholars have argued that this short play was a first draft of or perhaps a first experiment into the emotional core of the play which would fail spectacularly in New York almost a decade later.

Of Williams’s late plays, this pulls the most directly from Japanese theatrical tradition. Williams gave the play a subtitle indicating that the play is to be considered an occidental *noh*. While it is certainly debatable as to whether any occidental play can be a *noh* and vice versa, the subtitle indicates intent. Framing the play as an experiment in the dramatic form of *noh* is a clear statement from the playwright on how to read it. This framing encourages us to view the piece in relation to the conventions and dramaturgical structure of *noh*. As Williams also had experiences in the *kabuki* theatre, aesthetic elements from *kabuki* also find their way into the play. However, this is an occidental *noh* play, a contradiction of terms that notes the departure from *noh* into a different cultural context. The play is opened by the subtitle in a way that allows us to experience it without either an

expectation of poetic realism, Williams's *modus operandi*, or an expectation of a pure mimicry of *noh*.

From the very beginning of the play we can see this style at work. The "Oriental" character who begins the play situates us in a very specific context for the writing of the play. Reading the play today, when the term oriental has been so rigorously critiqued, the character name is discomfiting. However, this "oriental" character does not enact a stereotype of homogenized Asian culture. He instead names himself in Japanese, using the Japanese word for "people from Asia" translated by Williams as "Oriental". Upon entering the stage he says "Tōyōjin" and the word is projected in both Japanese and English. In Japanese, this word is an older, domestically derived name for the people of the Asian continent, rather than the Western imported word "ajya hito" made from combining the Japanese word for people and a word made from the sound of the word "Asia" in English. So, in some way, the character named Oriental is enacting a specifically Japanese self. The term was used frequently in the 60s and only began to receive critique in the 70s and wasn't even removed from legal documents in the United States until as late as 2009 (Wertheimer). It seems as though the choice to name the character the Oriental, instead of the Japanese Person, was not done in a demeaning way, but rather a descriptive way using the language of the moment. Naming him the Oriental also gives him a general name which allows him to shift between specific roles. He begins as the Oriental but then becomes more specific characters and theatrical functions such as a law student or chorus.

The character names in this play are all allegorical and symbolic. The Oriental is later joined by the Man and the Woman. While these characters exist in specific realities with identifiable personal histories in the play, they are named in a way that extends them

beyond the play. This Man is one man; however, he can also be seen in some ways as every man, as the first man, as the last man. The Oriental in particular functions within this play as multiple discreet characters, as well as allegorically. Williams uses the Oriental as an expedient stage device, having the character function as a narrator, stagehand and minor supporting characters. The Oriental is also a manifestation of the Japanese influence on the play as many of the theatrical conventions of *noh* and *kabuki* in the play are enacted by him.

As the play begins, the Oriental enters the stage and names himself in Japanese and proceeds to tell us the eventual end to the play.

ORIENTAL: Tōyōjin

(He then moves several paces aside and beneath the title in Japanese appears the title in English, projected in a vividly contrasting color.)

ORIENTAL: (as Chorus) The day on which a man dies begins at the midnight which closes the day before his death-day.

(Williams, "Travelling" 16)

This naming and plot description mimic the *noh* convention of characters naming themselves as they enter the stage. Traditionally, the *waki* character, who is typically a travelling priest who encounters and speaks with the main *shite* character, enters the space first and tells us who he is and where he is going. Here, the Oriental names himself and then tells us both where the play and plot are going. When he speaks of the "the day on which a man dies" he could be speaking of both the play and the day itself. In both readings we are being informed of the outcome, which mimics the pre-knowledge of story found in the majority of Japanese *noh* and *kabuki* audiences.

After this introduction to the play world and its theatrical conventions, we are introduced to the Man and Woman whose quarrel we will follow through the rest of the play. The Man is described in detail in the stage directions. He is wearing:

flesh-colored tights on which are painted in color his anatomical details: pink nipples, blue outlines of skeletal prominences, arteries and musculature, blond hair at armpits. A vivid green silk fig leaf covers his groin. He is still young, his physique muscled and tendoned as if his work were a laborer's. His face is ravaged by the rage apparent in the canvasses. (Williams, "Travelling" 16)

This artist is costumed in a presentation of the human form rather than a representation of it. This mimics the abstract and theatrical *kabuki* make-up where a representation of the character is painted on the actor's face in order to give the audience information about the character as well as present these characteristics in an aesthetically interesting way. The silk leaf used to censor his genitals is also a codified cultural icon, similar to the personality information found in *kabuki* makeup. We have a complex set of cultural associations connected to the use of a fig leaves in censoring anatomical features. This use of culturally codified gesture reflects ideas from aesthetics of both *noh* and *kabuki* and functions as an "occidentalization" of *noh*.

As the action of the scene begins, the Woman enters the scene and the Oriental shifts into the character of a Japanese law student. This ability of the character to shift from a generalized abstraction into a discreet individual is reminiscent of the role of the chorus in *noh*. The shift between characters is reminiscent of the shift between pronouns as the chorus moves from a narrator and commentator to embodying and speaking for the *shite*. The Oriental will fluidly enact these shifts throughout the play, returning as other

characters and stagehands and resuming his position as narrator and chorus. The Oriental is left on stage to sit silently next to the action that happens between the Man and Woman, visually resembling the chorus seated to the side of the action in *noh*.

The Man and the Woman argue throughout the first scene, but their fight does not result in a change of perspective or a resolution of conflict, as we so often see in Western realism. This argument is a suspension of a moment in the couple's emotional reality. The plot does not progress throughout the fight; rather, we explore the moment of the fight, the emotional reality of these two individuals. As such, the Man and Woman circle around their positions, the Man repeating his struggle with his work and need for solitude, the Woman repeating her need for a legal position in the man's life for a secure future. This operates much in the same way as *noh* does, ruminating on a feeling, or a moment before action. Instead of resolving the conflict, the Man and Woman continue arguing and attacking each other physically and verbally until the final moment of Scene One. With no prompting, the Man enters the Woman's room and both sit "side by side in grave silence." A stage assistant enters and removes a panel to reveal a painting of a tree in bloom. This revelation of a direct reference to the tree painted on the *noh* stage in this climactic image of the first scene reminds us of our physical and theatrical context. The stage assistant then places a flower in a vase between the couple which Williams calls the "pale, delicate, and sorrowful flower of reconciliation." (Williams, "Travelling" 33) The Man and Woman make a gesture of reconciliation by holding hands. This silent moment to end the first scene does not address the plot preceding it, but instead is an image that we have been emotionally prepared for by the argument. Just as in *kabuki*, the final climactic image, often a tableau, is the emotional climax of the play, not a narrative-based revelation.

As Scene Two begins we find the woman in tights painted with anatomical details like the ones the man began the play in. This costume shift not only indicates the post-coital moment we begin the scene in, but also a shift in tone. *Noh* plays are often divided into two parts, with the *shite* entering in a new costume as a different representation of their character, often their true supernatural self. The structure of this play experiments with this dramaturgy. Throughout the following scene, the Oriental reminds us of the Man's fate, his impending suicide. The Oriental takes a more involved role in this scene as narrator, speaking long monologues over the top of silent action from the couple.

After the Woman exits the scene, leaving the Man in his misery, the Oriental begins to narrate the set of unavoidable actions set in motion at the beginning of the play. Just as in *kabuki* and *noh* the narrative is unavoidable both through circumstance and the audience's awareness of the story's conclusion; we know that the Man will be committing suicide. We have been told from both the play's title and second spoken line that the Man will die today, and suicide has been the topic of conversation throughout, used as a weapon in the argument between the Man and Woman. This only leaves the completion of that action by the Man. In the traditional structure of *noh*, the final moments are the *shite's* climactic dance. The Man's suicide functions as that dance in this play. He drinks the Lysol which has been on stage from the very beginning. The Lysol was a looming threat since the Woman described it as an instrument of suicide the Man kept nearby to torment her. As he writhes in his dance of death, the stage assistant brings down three rice paper sheets onto which an image of the Woman's body is projected. He breaks through the paper three times with accompanying percussive music. Williams writes this long set of stage directions describing the death:

The percussion is augmented by wind instruments, grotesquely lyrical and mocking. It takes some moments longer for the man to crash through this third projection, and when he does, he's dying. He has his hand in his mouth to gag his cry, and his teeth have drawn blood. The percussion is still building. The man collapses onto his knees and now he tries to cry out but hasn't the breath. He crumples: dies. An abrupt stillness. (Williams, "Travelling" 40-41)

This climactic build of rhythm and movement and shift to an abrupt stillness and silence bring us to where a *noh* or *kabuki* play would traditionally leave its audience: at a climactic final image with no dénouement or resolution of events.

However, this is an occidental *noh* play, so Williams does explore a resolution of sorts by allowing the Woman to have a long monologue of her own, a kind of final dance for her character. She goes through her own struggle of accepting her love of the Man and finally returns to wail over his dead body in an iconic image of grief. This final moment of the play leaves the audience listening to the Oriental expounding on the ideas of life and death while a very simple stage image exploring the emotion of grief is presented. As the curtain falls, the Man has died in fulfillment of the narrative promise of the title and the Oriental. However, the play's subtitle has also been manifested. Williams wrote an occidental *noh* play in all of its contradiction. *The Day on Which a Man Dies* exists as a play between cultures, occupying a Third Space.

A decade after writing *The Day on Which a Man Dies*, Williams expanded the story and idea into a full length to be performed in New York. *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel*, was first performed in 1969 after Williams's career had already taken a turn for the worse. The

basic story is of an artist, Mark, whose deteriorating mental health and deteriorating relationship with his lover, Miriam, has put a halt to his creative work. He and Miriam are in Tokyo trying to rediscover his muse and he inexplicably dies towards the end of the play. The play mostly focuses on their conversations with the hotel's mysterious Barman.

The play opens on Miriam and a Japanese Barman in the location described in the title. The Barman begins the action. The stage directions read "he raises a metal shaker, a few moments after the rise of the curtain, as if to signal the start of the scene" (Williams, "Dragon Country" 3). This image of raising the shaker to above his shoulder, the same position of the traditional drums used in *noh*, and making a percussive sound to start the action of the play can be seen as a direct quotation of the drummers in *noh* beginning the play with sharp strike of the drum. The Barman enacts many *noh* theatrical techniques in the play, such as naming himself directly, and commenting upon and describing action in the play by verbalizing characters' intentions. When Mark, Miriam's husband, enters the bar later in Part I, wind chimes are heard. This musically and rhythmically marks his entrance which also happens in *noh* when characters enter. This not only signifies the importance of his character, but the sound of wind chimes also pulls the natural world into the play, as happens with the trees planted along the bridge to the stage and nature imagery in *noh* plays.

Part way through the play, Leonard, Mark's agent, comes to Tokyo to help get Mark home to recover from his apparent mental and physical illness. This introduction of a new character in order to explain the background of a narrative or give new narrative information is also found in *noh* with the *ai-kyogen* character found in many plays. Leonard is not a developed character in this world, but a theatrical device. He gives the audience

information and he gives the characters a person to send their language and emotions towards. Miriam uses Leonard's presence and absence from the stage as a motivator to narrate her experience in the moment. As he exits the scene she expresses her figurative transformation into a ghost:

MIRIAM: Some women grow suddenly old. They go to bed young, well, reasonably young women and when they wake up in the morning and go to the mirror, they face – what? – A specter! Yes, they face a specter! Themselves, yes, but not young, reasonably young, women, no, not anymore!

(Williams, "Dragon Country" 36)

This shift she is describing reflects the shift of the shite from a human into their true supernatural self. This shift also happens in a way when Mark inevitably dies, just as the Man inevitably died in *The Day on Which a Man Dies*. Mark goes from alive to dead, a revelation of his truth. Since he is fated to die from the beginning of the play, his transformation into death is a revelation of his true supernatural existence as a ghost-like presence hovering over the end of the play.

What Williams learned from his exposure to *noh* and *kabuki* while in Japan and through his conversations with Mishima altered the way Williams wrote. The critics of the time missed the complex experiments at work in these later plays, but by looking at the aesthetics of the Japanese art forms closely and comparing them with the choices made in Williams's later plays, we can uncover a dramaturgy that is "hiding" in plain view.

Williams was writing these late plays at a time when Japanese theatre had begun to appear in the United States. U.S. and Japanese government sponsored tours of Japanese traditional performing arts throughout the United States were a part of a post-war

“friendship” campaign. Barbara E. Thornbury writes of Shochiku, the production company that toured Japanese traditional performing arts around the world:

The prominence of *kabuki* overseas is directly attributable to the very close, cooperative relationship the Shochiku production company developed with the Japanese government. In fact, the initial impetus to send *kabuki* out into the world as a cultural ambassador for Japan came from Shochiku, which in turn has benefited enormously from the prestige of having its contracted performers engaged on official missions. (Thornbury 215)

Kabuki, noh and *bunraku* were purposefully sent as cultural ambassadors from post-WWII Japan and they had a great impact on American theatre artists, particularly those in the more experimental tradition. Tennessee Williams was perhaps the least experimental artist to have exhibited such an influence. He was a commercially as well as critically successful playwright who is used to define the predominant style within American playwriting: poetic realism. Williams’ late plays, in particular plays like *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* and *The Milk Train Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore*, are the predecessors to the following case studies. Williams was carving out a Third Space in his late plays, a blending of American theatrical traditions and Japanese traditional performing arts.

In Third Space, for Bhabha, a space of cultural hybridity is explored through “complex, ongoing, negotiations,” (Bhabha 3). Williams attempts to carve out a Third Space in his late plays by using the conventions of Japanese traditional performing arts in an American theatrical context. He negotiates the blending of conventions and structure in his construction of the plays. From the Barman’s cocktail shaker as an homage to the shoulder drum of *noh*, to the overt adaptation of the form in his “occidental noh play,” Williams is

experimenting with constructing a theatrical Third Space between America and Japan. His experiments are often clunky and strike a contemporary reader as inelegant and even appropriative. In some ways, this is due to a lack of framing. Except in the subtitle of *On the Day a Man Dies*, which was not performed until well after William's death, the plays do not clearly indicate to the audience their exploration of Japanese Traditional performing arts. The references lack subtlety and are often jarringly placed in an American theatrical context. In an attempt to break away from poetic realism, Williams ended up alienating his audience, which (based on his disappointment and anxiety about falling out of favor with the American theatrical crowd, as voiced in his interviews) he was not trying to do. Williams had trouble with the "complex" portion of the negotiations. While our reading of the plays has changes over time, "complex, ongoing negotiations" rely on an informed audience digging deep into William's late plays. Contemporary audiences do react more positively to Williams late plays being performed today. The Variety review of the 2007 New York production praises Williams' writing:

Williams fractures language to enhance the unrealistic mood. Many phrases are cut off, leaving their most important words unspoken. The device creates a tantalizing hole in the dialogue, urging us to fill it with our own understanding of what Mark and Miriam mean. This tactic points to the play's success in making palpable moments out of emotional concepts. (Blankenship)

This nuanced understanding of Williams' text comes from a greater acceptance of non-realistic storytelling, an acceptance that is due in part to the influence of Japanese traditional performing arts on experimental theatre in America. While William's experiments in constructing plays in a Third Space were not overly successful (either

commercially or critically) within the American theatrical landscape of his time, later playwrights would attempt these negotiation with far more subtlety and grace. In the following case studies, we see very different tactics being used by playwrights to build a Third Space. Sometimes, their use of Japanese traditional performing arts are just as jarring in their theatrical context. However, they use framing devices and dramaturgical structures to highlight these juxtapositions as intentional. They invite their audiences to consider the complex negotiations and have ongoing efforts to reframe the intercultural landscape they are working within. These playwrights also have the benefit of operating in far more globalized world: their American audiences have more exposure to Japanese culture by virtue of the time they live in.

CHAPTER THREE

PAULA VOGEL'S THE LONG CHRISTMAS RIDE HOME

Paula Vogel often writes plays about contentious topics and she utilizes a variety of dramaturgical techniques. While her writing style has certain hallmarks (circular structure, fantasy sequences, and memory play, to name a few), she breaks away into new forms with each play she writes. In some ways, it is challenging to articulate what “kind” of plays Vogel writes, or name a certain “Vogel-esque” aesthetic, as she follows a Shklovskian writing practice of merging form and content. Vogel claims:

Form is content. I always have thought that form was content. I've always been more interested, actually, in the formal devices and the structure than in the subject matter, which may seem heretical. But I really am a follower of Viktor Shklovsky, who said that in some ways the subject matter doesn't even matter. It's whether or not we see the subject matter anew that matters. (qtd. in Herrington 255)

Her form shifts with each new play, each new topic. Scholars and critics alike do however find some similarities what Vogel does with her plays even if she constantly changes how she accomplishes it. Jill Dolan writes that “playwright Paula Vogel tends to select sensitive, difficult, fraught issues to theatricalize, and to spin them with a dramaturgy that’s at once creative, highly imaginative, and brutally honest,” (Dolan 127). Time and again Vogel is categorized as a playwright who uses a diverse and complex range of dramaturgical tactics to engage her audiences with politically divisive material. Vogel herself admits this

intention: “I want to seduce the audience. If they can go along for a ride they wouldn’t ordinarily take, or don’t even know they are taking, then they might see highly charged political issues in a new and unexpected way” (qtd. in Drukman). Vogel intentionally resists reducing her aesthetics to a repeatable pattern, but instead investigates new forms that help her tell stories connected to hot button topics: HIV/AIDS in *Baltimore Waltz*, sexual abuse and incest in *How I Learned to Drive*, and domestic abuse in *The Long Christmas Ride Home*. Vogel’s plays also situate themselves within American culture. Bigsby goes on to write that while Vogel “plainly has her commitments, and locates her work in a politicised environment, she is no ideologue. If her plays are, in a sense, a dialogue with her culture, the nature of that dialogue is open,” (Bigsby 289). The openness of this cultural dialogue extends to a dialogue between cultures, not just within her own.

The Long Christmas Ride Home engages both with the American culture of the characters, and playwright of the play, and the culture of Japan (with which one character is fascinated). This full length one-act is subtitled “A Puppet Play with Actors.” The play depicts a five-person family; the mother and father are played by the characters Woman and Man, who seamlessly shift between the roles of narrators, voices for other characters, and the parents themselves. The three children, Rebekah, Stephen and Claire, are portrayed by puppets. Vogel indicates that the puppets could be created in a wide variety of styles. If the puppets are manipulated by more than one puppeteer, the head-puppeteer plays the adult versions of each sibling when they flash forward into the future, with the head Stephen puppeteer taking on the role of both Stephen and The Ghost of Stephen. The final named performer is The Minister, who shifts between Minister character, narrator, both grandmother and grandfather, as well as the Dancer. While there are no other speaking

characters, a chorus of puppeteers/stagehands are recommended to accomplish the stylized actions of the play and puppeteer the auxiliary puppets (representing minor characters in the adult siblings' flash forwards). The Ghost of Stephen frames the play, setting the stage for his story. After the actors take a breath in unison, he establishes the setting for the story about to unfold, "It was a very cold Christmas in a long and cold winter - decades and days ago" (Vogel 9). The Man and Woman take over narrating the story and provide voices for all the other characters. The action takes place in the backseat of a "filthy Rambler" (Vogel 10). The family drives to the maternal grandparent's house for Christmas dinner. The narration reveals that the parent's marriage is falling apart and the father has been having an affair with a woman from church. Along the way, the story flashes backwards to the Church service the family attended earlier that evening. The story then picks back up as the car arrives for Christmas dinner at the grandparent's home. During dinner, the children are given gifts and the head puppeteer for each child begins to speak for the puppet and continues to do so for the rest of the play. A violent argument breaks out between the grandfather and father, leading to hurling homophobic and racial slurs. The children and parents hastily leave the dinner. In the car on the way home, the father slaps the mother. The slap propels each child into a flash forward into a traumatic moment in their future. As each sibling flashes forward, their puppet is removed from the puppeteer who then portrays the adult version of the character. After each flash forwards, we return to the car and a stylistic/deconstructed representation of the act of domestic violence. Stephen, in the final flash forward, reveals that he eventually contracts HIV and dies from AIDS. The Ghost of Stephen informs the audience that he returns once a year to check in on his family. The Minister/Dancer enters to give his breath to Stephen so he can wander the

earth for a day. Stephen then gives that breath to his puppet, his childhood form, and returns to the back seat of the car. The action continues after the slap and the father loses control of the car on the icy road. The car nearly goes off a cliff and the family hold their breath as the father reverses the car to safety. The entire family then breathe a sigh of relief and The Ghost of Stephen asks the audience to witness the beauty of that breath.

The Long Christmas Ride Home tells a dramatic story of family relationships, trauma and memory. This kind of story and these themes regularly appear in contemporary American plays. From Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill, to Annie Baker and Tracy Letts, playwrights in the United States often explore tragic and dysfunctional families. Vogel's innovation lies not with the story itself, but the methodologies employed to tell it: dramaturgical tactics and theatrical techniques inspired by *bunraku* and *noh*. Vogel writes in the "Notes on the Play" that *The Long Christmas Ride Home* "is a fusion of a one-act play and *Bunraku* puppet theatre techniques," (Vogel 5). Pulling from the more familiar (to audiences in the United States) stylized and minimalistic one acts of Thornton Wilder, as well as the less familiar (to United States audiences) stylized and spectacular puppet theatre of Japan, Vogel creates a unique fusion of distinct performance traditions. She crafts a third space between Japanese and American theatrical traditions by equally emphasizing both cultures. Vogel exposes audiences to an unfamiliar art form by blending Japanese traditional performing arts with the predominantly American style of poetic realism. The content of the story, theatrical conventions, and language pulls from both cultures, resulting in an intercultural play. Vogel resists calling this play a *bunraku* play. She instead focusses on the play as a fusion of cultures, inspired by "one Westerner's misunderstanding of *Bunraku*. The misunderstanding is key," (Vogel 5). Vogel situates herself as an outsider to

Japanese culture, not claiming expertise. She embraces her cultural positionality and uses that to frame the style of the play. It can also be argued that by recognizing herself as a non-expert, she is attempting to allow for creative license to adapt Japanese traditional performance traditions without appropriating them. Whether this marker of her cultural positionality is enough to steer the play away from appropriation in performance relies on the director's implementation of the idea in a way recognizable to the audience. The recognition of her "misunderstanding" reminds directors, actors and readers to envision the play as a unique blended form, not an attempt at mimicking *bunraku* for American audiences.

Vogel not only exposes the audience to Japanese traditional performing arts through immersion in intercultural dramaturgy, but also through metatheatrical devices. The Ghost of Stephen uses direct address to inform the audience about the importance of Japanese culture to the play. Stephen, like Vogel's brother in real-life whom Stephen the character was written in memoriam for, considers himself a Nipponophile. Recounting his realization that he had contracted HIV, Stephen says:

As the battle raged inside me, I had just enough time to think. I thought a lot about Ukiyo-e: The Floating World.

And while I was still strong enough, I would walk from my North Beach apartment to Japantown to study Sado – the Japanese tea ceremony.

I admired the bowl. I tried not to think. I contemplated the flowers. I tried not to think. I sipped the tea, I tried not to think.

And in the end, when the patters of the virus dominated my blood as I struggled to breathe, I still remembered how blue Joe's eyes were.

No matter my efforts: I died just another white boy in San Francisco, dressed in silk,
writing haiku to the fog.

(Vogel 66)

Stephen also invokes Japanese traditional performing arts more specifically, “My sisters love to make fun of my adoration of all things Japanese; I’ve tried to enlighten them: books of Zeami, trips to see the imperial collection of screens and scrolls, performances of the Grand *Kabuki* – well! They still don’t know the *kabuki* from their *Noh*, and never will,” (Vogel 63). In these moments of direct address, Vogel introduces her audience, however minimally, to Japanese culture and marks Japanese cultural arts as important to an audience likely unfamiliar with them. This functions in part as a justification for the use of *bunraku* and *noh* techniques in the play. The Ghost of Stephen is orchestrating and controlling the action of the play. His return as a ghost frames the narrative of the entire play. If Stephen loves Japanese culture, it makes sense that he metatheatrically creates a *bunraku*-inspired show for the gathered audience to tell his story.

Direct address is used to explicitly expose the audience to Japanese culture and therefore prime them to accept the *bunraku* and *noh* derived dramaturgical techniques of the play. Early on, in Stephen’s recollection of the Christmas service at church, the Minister discusses *ukiyo-e* with an accompanying slideshow inspired by his recent trip to Japan:

I am honored to spend this, my family’s first Christmas back home from Japan, /
here with you... As your minister tonight, as we celebrate the most spiritual night of
the West, / I thought I would share with you the beauty of Japan, / the peace of the
East... I was struck by how akin the great works of Japan/ are to our Renaissance
Nativity scenes – the same Great Spirit that captures the Mother and Child in the

manger / infuses the woodblock prints of Edo...These few slides represent the art of the Edo period in Japan. Artists who wrestled with this relationship of man and nature called this art “ukiyo-e”: / The Floating World...Let us not judge on this night. Let us embrace the *here* and *now*. We are all in this Floating World together. (Vogel 22-30)

The Minister shows slides of woodblock prints, discussing the ephemerality of the world represented in them. He explains, in broad strokes, the concept of *ukiyo-e* and in educating the non-existent congregation of the church, educates the audience of the theatre. Vogel uses content within the narrative to mark, explain and justify her use of dramaturgical techniques inspired by Japanese traditional performing arts.

The most evident and direct Japanese traditional performing arts-inspired theatrical device in the play is the use of *bunraku*-esque puppets. Each child is represented by a puppet in The Ghost of Stephen’s recounting of the slap and the events leading up to it. Vogel writes of the puppets:

The director must decide what type of puppets represent the three children... The puppets may be in the style of *Bunraku*: almost life-sized children. (Other styles of puppets are possible.) There is nothing cute or coy about the puppet children: they are fascinating and quite life-like in their animation. And they may be a little spooky too – as anyone will tell you who has been caught in the stare of a puppet. The puppets may be manipulated by a single puppeteer: if they are, the puppets must be handled by the actors who play the adult children (so the actor playing the adult Stephen puppeteers the Stephen puppet). But if there are two or three puppeteers, the puppet should feature the actor who will become the adult persona of the

puppet child; the secondary puppeteers may use *Bunraku* veils, so that we can focus on the actor's faces hovering above their puppets. (Vogel 6)

While Vogel allows for different styles of puppets to be used, most productions use *bunraku*-esque puppets. Beyond Vogel's "Notes on the Performers," telling Stephen's story with Western interpretations of Japanese traditional performing arts stays true to his character and the style of play he would create. His direct address reminds us that he has created this experience for the audience, and despite his love of Japan, his position outside that culture shines through the style of the play. These *bunraku*-esque puppets live in the same fusion of American and Japanese culture as the dramaturgy of the play.

There are no recorded examples of a production of *The Long Christmas Ride Home* using fully-fledged *bunraku* puppets. The intricate construction of *bunraku* puppets makes them rare in the United States; only one theatre company in the nation performs traditional *bunraku* with authentic puppets (*Bunraku Bay Puppet Theatre* based in Columbia, Missouri), and they have never produced *The Long Christmas Ride Home*. *Bunraku* puppets are manipulated by handles attached to rods within the puppet's body. Strings run through arms and heads to the puppeteers' controls and can manipulate articulated joints in the hand and facial expression on the head by squeezing the controls. These puppets require extremely specialized skills to both construct and manipulate, and are therefore unlikely to be used by the regional, store-front and educational theatre companies that tend to produce *The Long Christmas Ride Home*. Instead, most documented productions use a *bunraku* inspired puppet, a rod-style puppet manipulated by two or three puppeteers. One puppeteer manipulates the head and one arm while the other puppeteers manipulate the other hand and feet.

Dramaturgically, Vogel utilizes the idea of *bunraku*-styled puppets even if she does not require them. The detailed realism of the puppets' movements necessitates a complex and realistic style of puppet. During the scene at dinner with the grandparents, "the puppet children begin to jab at each other, play 'last touch,' pretend-pick their puppet noses and wipe it on each other. Whenever one of the narrators looks at them they angelically bow. The Rebecca puppet tries to strangle the Stephen puppet with her scarf," (Vogel 35-36). These actions require a puppet that, like in *bunraku*, can enact realistic actions in a detailed manner. This information is provided in a stage direction, so the narration is not bolstering the audience's understanding of the action – the puppets must be able to convey these actions through physicality alone. The puppets are also required to interact with props in a detailed way. After strangling the Stephen puppet with her scarf, the Rebecca puppet must also open a gift box and take a diary out of it. The Claire and Stephen puppets then "wrestle" the diary away from her to read it. These are the kind of intricate movements that *bunraku* puppeteer also do with props, sometimes by technical prowess in manipulating the puppets grasping hands, sometimes by sleight of hand, using their own black-gloved hand to manipulate a prop while making it appear to be manipulated by the puppet. *Bunraku* puppets write calligraphy, make tea, and draw swords in traditional *bunraku* plays. Vogel asks her puppets to accomplish similar actions. In a less tangible way, Vogel also expects the puppets and puppeteers to accomplish feats of realism by asking the puppet to express detailed storytelling with gestures, movement, and energy. A car sick Stephen puppet is listening to his sister list off her favorite Christmas foods and "hearing her, the Stephen puppet turns greener," (Vogel 15). Vogel relies on the puppet and puppeteer to convey an increase in nausea. Through subtle changes of breath, hand

gestures and quality of movement, the puppet communicates a physical sensation it is incapable of feeling. The complexity of this puppeteering action indicates a *bunraku* style of puppeteering: detailed, lifelike and nuanced.

The puppetry required by *The Long Christmas Ride Home* also mimics *bunraku* by, at least at the start of the play, having a narrator speak for the puppets rather than the puppeteer. In *bunraku*, the *tayu* (or chanter) narrates the play and speaks for all the different puppets, using different voices for each. In *The Long Christmas Ride Home*, the Man and Woman take on the role of the *tayu* in the beginning of the play and speak for the children puppets. Vogel writes:

The man and woman narrator start the play as omniscient narrators, able to read one another's thoughts and the thoughts of everyone in the car. As the play goes on, they dwindle into parents, frozen in time in the front seat of the car. The adult actors who play the adult children begin as mute puppeteers in the backseat of the car, but grow into narrators of their own, able to narrate and manipulate their memories.

They may also manipulate their parents like puppets at the end of the play. (Vogel 7)

The theatrical conceit of the children as puppets begins much like *bunraku* with puppeteers silently controlling the puppets' movements and the voice of every puppet coming from a narrator. However, in her fusion of theatrical traditions, Vogel shifts to the puppeteers speaking for the puppets and the Man and Woman becoming singular characters by the end of the play. She uses the theatrical convention to metatheatrically explore one of the many themes of the play: agency. Changing who is puppeteering who and who can speak for themselves dives into some of the many questions posed by the play.

Man and Woman function similarly to the *tayu*, speaking for multiple characters and narrating. The adaption of this convention includes splitting the narration voice into two individuals and allowing them to physically embody characters on stage. The *tayu* sits off to the side of the proscenium stage (where the puppets enact the action). The Man and Woman begin their narration without having to be physically present on stage, but transition to becoming more and more physically active throughout the play. This adaptation of the *tayu* not only changes the mode of narration employed, it also highlights the size of the puppets. *Bunraku* puppets use props and move in scenery that is all scaled to their smaller size. The puppeteers are only visible from the waist up, helping the illusion that these 3-foot-tall puppets are adults, alive in a world scaled to their size. By having the puppets interact with full-size humans in Vogel's play, we are reminded of their small size, an advantage in using them to represent children.

Vogel uses other dramaturgical techniques from Japanese traditional performing arts in *The Long Christmas Ride Home* beyond the use of puppets. The play also adapts language use, subject matter and other theatrical conventions from *noh*, in addition to *bunraku*. In addition to the Ghost of Stephen referencing *noh* and *kabuki*, Vogel references other Japanese traditional performing arts in her notes and dramaturgical choices. Vogel writes "I have read that *Noh* plays are always presented in the season they represent: spring, summer, winter and fall. I suggest this play be produced in January, in October – in any month except December (although we played in a December blizzard in New York!) – the before and the aftermath," (Vogel 7-8). Referencing the seasonality of the play embraces *noh* in both its engagement with the passage of time in the natural world and its engagement with religion. January and October are the "before and aftermath" to the

holiday season in the Christian context. *Noh* plays dramatize and reference elements of both Buddhism and Shintoism, the predominant religions in Japan when *noh* was created. Vogel similarly references and dramatizes Judeo-Christian religions. The nativity is created during the church service. The mother is Catholic, the father is Jewish and they are raising their children in the Unitarian Universalist tradition. The youngest child, Claire, questions the family's involvement with religion, repeatedly asking "But what do we believe?" *Noh's* awareness of its religious context is adapted to the Judeo-Christian context. This adaptation moves from reifying Shinto and Buddhist beliefs/practices in *noh* to questioning Judeo-Christian values in *The Long Christmas Ride Home*. Unlike *noh*, Vogel specifically critiques the religious context her characters are operating within. Whereas *noh* reifies Shinto and Buddhist beliefs, Vogel explores the hypocrisy of a multiple Judeo-Christian religions. The Woman points out positive stereotypes of Jewish men, that they adore their wives, are frugal and care for their children while the narrative shows her husband doing the opposite of all these things. The Woman's Catholic faith is also mocked by Rebecca, as she fantasizes about "hot" Catholic altar boys. The Unitarian Universalist minister is presented as a dope, accidentally showing a slide of erotic Japanese art to his congregation. The play's engagement with a religious context, albeit criticism rather than reification, is another fusion of the Japanese and American cultures at work in this play.

Vogel also uses language in *The Long Christmas Ride Home* stylistically similar to the use of language in *noh*. In *noh*, the chorus speaks both for and about the characters onstage, seamlessly shifting between personas. This is facilitated by Japanese grammatical structure and the ability to communicate more ambiguously than in English. By splitting the narrator into two bodies, this technique of shifting persona emerges often in Vogel's

play. Man and Woman both speak for each of the children and each other, narrate and speak for themselves, sometimes within the span of two pages, sometimes alternating voices within the same line. Vogel also uses heightened language just as *noh* plays do. While characters often speak realistically, there are also passages that verge into poetry. As the family enters the car to leave the grandparent's house, the Man and Woman describe their surroundings:

MAN: The night was blue with cold

WOMAN: Black air on blue snow

The wind threw them back as they rushed to the car. (Vogel 47)

This heightened language feels similar to the poetry of *noh*, and the *tayu's* poetic descriptions of setting and action in *bunraku*.

Vogel uses various stage conventions from multiple Japanese traditional performing arts to further solidify the fusion between cultures she strives for in the play. Stagehands perform practical tasks in *noh*, *kabuki* and *bunraku*, like changing an actor's costume or handing off a prop to an actor, often in full view of the audience. Vogel uses and adapts this tradition multiple times in the script. Stagehands create sound effects by ripping wrapping paper while the children open presents. They drop off props to the puppets, like Claire's kite that she flies. In an adaptation of the convention, they also create atmosphere and represent another reality on stage. As Stephen is being gifted a soccer ball, "Two stagehands enter and deftly kick a soccer ball across the stage," (Vogel 37). This could be the boys that Stephen describes watching kick the soccer ball. It also creates a nostalgic and playful atmosphere on stage to underscore Stephen's mood. This use of stagehands breaks from Japanese traditional performing arts convention and creates the adaptation blending

performance cultures. The stagehands are also responsible (in many productions of the play) for creating the *ki* sound effects scattered throughout the play. *Ki* is the sound that *hyoshigi*, or wooden clappers, make in *kabuki* and *bunraku* productions. Woodblocks are used in *kabuki* to highlight extreme emotional moments, as sound effects in combat (sounding when blades clash or a strike lands) and as cues to actors for stylized movements. They are also used to mark the start of a performance as the curtain is pulled back in both *kabuki* and *bunraku*. The *ki* sound contributes atmospheric and practical sound into the world of the play. Vogel also uses woodblocks in a variety of ways. Each time the adult characters are separated from their puppets, Vogel indicates the use of woodblocks. With Rebecca: “The woodblocks beat. In the crash of percussion, the puppeteer rises with the Rebecca puppet. Puppeteer and puppet rip apart – a chrysalis bursting open – the adult Rebecca emerges from the car,” (Vogel 51). For Claire: “The woodblocks beat again as the puppeteer holding Claire rises, stripping off the Claire puppet as she tears from the car,” (Vogel 57). Finally, for Stephen: “Woodblocks strike their discordant sounds, propelling an adult Stephen away from the car, away from the cast-aside Stephen puppet,” (Vogel 60). Vogel describes this sound effect by using violent vocabulary: the woodblocks “beat” and “strike” just as the Father beats or strikes the Mother. Vogel includes the use of this sound effect to highlight emotional moments, the same way they are used in *kabuki* while also highlighting the thematic relevance of the sound in her stage directions.

Vogel calls *The Long Christmas Ride Home* a fusion of a one act play and *bunraku*, but she also directly references *noh* in the action of the play:

The Minister/Dancer [character] will dance for Stephen. I do not pretend to understand the *hayashi-goto* of *Noh*: it is as unknown to me as the back room of the bar. It is up to the director and the choreographer to interpret the *mai-goto* for Western eyes. But let the Dancer slowly, hypnotically come to life in the dance. And as the dance progresses, let the Ghost of Stephen become flesh – as the movement becomes stronger and faster, the Ghost of Stephen becomes angry with life. The dance should celebrate the beauty of this anger that drives the life-force in the young. (Vogel 68)

While Vogel frames her experience with Japanese traditional performing arts as that of an outsider with no expertise, she is referencing detailed structural elements of the construction of *noh* in her description of the dance. *Hayashi-goto* are one of *noh's shodan* types. Samuel Leiter defines *shodan* as “the 100 or so ‘modules or building blocks of which a no play is composed,” (Leiter 521). *Hayashi-goto* are the instrumental *shodan* which are accompanied by music. *Mai-goto* is a further subdivision within the *hayashi-goto*: dance *shodan*. So, by referencing *hayshi-goto* and *mai-goto*, we know this would be one of the many possible *noh* dance pieces accompanied by music. Vogel does not request a traditional *mai-goto*. She asks the director and choreographer to “interpret the *mai-goto* for Western eyes.” As Vogel has done with both the dramaturgy and theatrical conventions of this play, the physical action is also a fusion of two cultures. Using technical terminology from the structuring of *noh*, she requires the creators to do some research into *noh*. To find those terms in texts translated into English, you have to find in-depth resources from high-level academic sources on *noh*. Vogel asks for an adaption of the dance within an adaption of literary and theatrical form. This exposes the audience to Japanese traditional

performing arts through immersion, but immersion within Third Space. Neither a traditional *mai-goto* nor a traditional Western dance are being presented. Instead, Vogel creates a third space between the cultures of Japan and America by asking for a dance built of fused choreography. Characters have referenced *noh* and other elements of Japanese culture and now will experience choreography inspired by but not replicating those art forms.

Paula Vogel created a fusion of theatrical cultures in *The Long Christmas Ride Home*. Rather than adapting one theatrical tradition to another, simply borrowing devices or referencing another art form, Vogel created a new and blended art form. *The Long Christmas Ride Home* is less inspired by Japanese traditional performing arts and more of a melding of American theatrical traditions (in this case the minimalist one acts championed by Thornton Wilder). In the use of theatrical convention, dramaturgical tactics and literary construction, Vogel constantly strove for the muddy ground of Third Space. She did not take any element of any theatrical form wholeheartedly. Each form was tempered with elements of another. In part, this was accomplished by her intentional fluidity in the use of *bunraku* and *noh* traditions. The play begins closer to the established practices of *bunraku* and then gradually inverts them: puppeteers become narrators and narrators become puppets. The play begins by referencing *bunraku* exclusively and then expands to include practice from multiple Japanese traditional performing arts. The fluidity of her adaptation assists in the creation a Third Space in which the audience encounter a fusion of theatrical traditions.

Vogel, in her building of an overtly intercultural play, creates Third Space through the “complex ongoing negotiation” that Bhabha describes. The play negotiates between the

theatrical conventions between two cultures by both alternating between conventions and blending convention from Japan and America. At times, the play functions like a minimalist one act. At other times it functions like a *bunraku* play. At times – most interesting to my analysis – the play blends the conventions from both traditions, creating something new. As the play progresses the negotiations between cultural theatrical conventions are ongoing, shifting moment to moment. This negotiation is complex and that complexity creates a wide variety of reactions. Markland Taylor wrote in their *Variety Magazine* review of the world premiere production: “With its adventurous blend of puppets, live actors and Japanese theatrical elements, it's also Vogel's most daring work -- and one of her best. It's one of most absorbing evenings in the theater to come along in some time,” (Taylor). Clearly, the play resonated for Taylor. However, not all the reviews were nearly as positive. John Simon of *New York Magazine* wrote this scathing critique of the same production:

Paula Vogel deserves an A for effort with *The Long Christmas Ride Home*, but, unfortunately, a D for achievement. An attempt to amalgamate Western and Eastern theaters, drama and dance, story theater and conventional drama, puppetry and shadow theater of silhouettes on a backlighted canvas, the piece is as enterprising as it is, in the last analysis, unsatisfactory... There is much literal and figurative heavy breathing—not least on the part of language sweatily straining to be poetic—but the play's world, instead of floating, collapses into hodgepodge. (Simon)

These contradicting views tune into the innate challenge of intercultural plays. Differing levels of knowledge and interest in the audience create wildly different experiences. As another reviewer keenly notes, “Perhaps Vogel is remaining true to her influences and perhaps it's a failing of Western sensibilities to find this approach unsatisfying, but a play

feels dramatically impaired when so little is shown and so much is told," (Finkle). These varying reactions to Vogel's intercultural architecture rely so much on vantage point. This in many ways problematizes Carlson's neat and tidy numeric scale of interculturalism. What might be 4 on the scale to one audience member could read as a 9 to another. Those simultaneous experiences are what make the "complex negotiations" of the Third Space "ongoing." The variety of simultaneous experiences, based just as much on an audience member's knowledge and interest in the other culture they are encountering through the play as the playwright's use of the other culture's theatrical conventions, understandably creates tension. There is a certain amount of anxiety about engaging in the often ugly business of appropriation. However, Vogel's acknowledgment of her cultural positionality, her acknowledgement of the originating culture within the play and her creation of blended conventions helps avoid the greatest sins of appropriation: taking without acknowledging. Chris Jones of the *Chicago Tribune* summed up this graceful move in his review of Strawdog Theatre's 2015 production:

"The Long Christmas Ride Home" is a formatively experimental piece, not just because of its use of puppets, but also because of a broader expression of elements of *Bunraku*-style theater, ranging from music to other imagery. I was struck by how this kind of cross-cultural work is often now condemned out of hand as cultural appropriation, although Vogel's exquisite work in fact makes the case for how theatrical aesthetics can travel across time and place (and, yes, ethnicity) without necessarily giving offense. (Jones)

Paula Vogel skillfully navigates Third Space by acknowledging the challenge. She writes from a place of "misunderstanding" (though clearly her engagement with Japanese culture

goes beyond a cursory glance). By writing a play which blends theatrical conventions from both America and Japan, acknowledges the influence of Japanese culture and positions herself as a non-expert paying homage to storied tradition, Vogel builds a Third Space for a wide variety of audiences. Certainly, the Third Space won't be appreciated by all, but it is, at the very least, acknowledged.

CHAPTER FOUR

ERIK EHN'S *SAINT PLAYS*

I clearly remember my first response to Erik Ehn's writing. The aesthetics of the short poetic plays in his *Saint Plays* project were very familiar to me: they were *noh* plays. Of course, they weren't *noh* plays, they were plays written in the late 20th century by an American playwright. They haven't been translated from Japanese, they do not follow *noh* character naming conventions and they do not even reference Japan in any way; but my gut told me they contained the essence of *noh*. There was a kind of translation going on here, not in language but in something else. It wasn't just that the plays are short, poetic and center around a supernatural figure, though these qualities certainly connect *The Saint Plays* with *noh* plays. It was something less tangible. Something which I would later comfortably identify as *yugen*, something that was inextricably linked to the dramaturgical structure of *jo-ha-kyu*.

When I interviewed Erik about these plays, I was thrilled to find that the playwright supports this theory. While of some of *The Saint Plays* were written prior to his exposure to *noh*, Ehn admits that they still have a connection to the form.

I'll say they definitely have a connection. Sometimes that connection is unintentional. I began writing *The Saint Plays* in '89 and I didn't really get into *noh* theory in a conscious way until about '93. But I've been writing the plays for a long time. Once bitten by *noh* there was no getting away. *Noh* patterns are at the

forefront and back wall of my thinking in drama. The plays that were written before I began to have a look at *noh* I think made me a ripe candidate for brainwashing.

(Ehn, personal interview)

This connection resides at the very core of Ehn's playwriting, something that moves underneath the text. Beyond the elements of structure and dramaturgy, Ehn's *Saint Plays* share an almost soul-like connection with *noh* plays. Or maybe a genetic code. Unlike the other plays included as case studies in this dissertation, the playwright of *The Saint Plays* is not directly referencing or translating a Japanese traditional performing art. Instead, the playwright's core understanding of how plays function, how they are built, connects to the foundational theories of *noh*. This sharing of an understanding of dramaturgy reveals the role of playwright as laborer. The playwright, as a builder of plays, can mimic the dramaturgical techniques of another culture. Without setting out to write intercultural plays, Erik Ehn's *Saint Plays* can be read as intercultural. Their structure, language and technique share many qualities with *noh* theatre and that sharing creates a Third Space. Dissecting the shared playwriting techniques between Ehn's *Saint Plays* and *noh* provides a foundation for my argument that by sharing theatrical beliefs (an appropriate term for both the openly Catholic Ehn and the overtly Buddhist and Shinto Zeami) Ehn produces plays with technical similarities to *noh*.

Ehn's first exposure to *noh* took place at a desk in a literary management office at Berkley Repertory Theatre in 1990. Deborah Bevoort submitted her play *Blue Moon over Memphis*, a *noh*-mic telling of Elvis Presley's biography, to the theatre. Ehn read over this "very odd play." As a literary manager, he knew the play was not a fit for Berkeley Rep. "I was fascinated by the script and we couldn't do anything with it, but there was a little

theatre in town called Theatre of *Yugen*, so I sent it to them” (Ehn, personal interview). This began a relationship between Ehn and Theatre of *Yugen* which would later result in the theatre commissioning Ehn to adapt *noh* scripts for an English-speaking audience in San Francisco. He collaborated with Yuriko Doi and Richard Emmert, two outstanding *noh* artists working in the United States, to assist, as adapter/playwright/dramaturg. Eventually, as he felt more educated in and exposed to the conventions of *noh*, he “began writing original plays in response to *noh*. I can’t really call them *noh* plays because there’s too much to understand [in *noh*]. In the meantime, I worked with Richard Emmert and took a couple of his *noh* workshops which gave me a little more grounding in the formal requirements of *noh*” (Ehn, personal interview). These plays, while far more intentional in their grappling with *noh*, are not the plays highlighted in this case study. I have instead chosen to focus on Ehn’s more well-known project, *The Saint Plays*, to uncover the rich and complex interaction between cultures that happens with less intention. By diving into the components of these unintentionally intercultural plays, we can isolate the impact of dramaturgical technique, rather than narrative content. While Ehn does not claim expertise in *noh*, he certainly has been exposed to the art form. It is important to reiterate that *The Saint Plays* were not written as *noh* plays and any connection is left to the reader, critic and audience. As such, these plays use no dramaturgical tactics of framing devices, metatheatrical audience education or referencing of Japanese culture. This case study is interested in how the plays can be read and how shared philosophical beliefs of how and why theatre works can impact the building of a play as much as intentional translation and adaptation. This acknowledges the affect of the playwright as a person in the building of the

play. Plays are built and who is doing the building affects their architecture as much as their intentions.

The case study's analytical methodology references the "as/is" mode of performance studies as articulated by Richard Schechner. Performance studies has two modes of observing subjects: "is performance" and "as performance." Plays, operas, ballets, etc., tend to be considered performance and so their analysis starts from an understanding that the event "is" performance. However, according to Schechner, some events are not so clear cut as to whether they are actually performance or not as "there are limits to what 'is' performance. But just about anything can be studied 'as' performance. Something 'is' performance when historical and social context, convention, usage and tradition say it is," (Schechner, "Introduction" 30). This same approach is used here to read plays "as" *noh* plays, though they are not *noh* plays by the standards of "historical and social context, convention, usage and tradition." Ehn's *Saint Plays* read "as" *noh* plays gives light to the more mysterious nature of Third Space. In these plays, the "complex, ongoing negotiations" began in the subconscious, are undertaken by the audience, and then only by choice. The plays can easily be fully and satisfyingly analyzed without any knowledge of or reference to *noh*. Using the "is" performance methodology to examine these plays in their own cultural context provides a compelling understanding of their dramaturgy. However, by engaging with these texts "as" *noh* plays, a fascinating Third Space between experimental American theatre and Japanese traditional theatre emerges.

Spiritual abstraction

There are two major subdivisions of *noh* plays, *genzai mono* and *mugen noh*. In *genzai mono* the story focuses on a living person. The main character (*shite*), while often a

historical figure or folk hero, exists within our physical world. *Mugen noh*, arguably the more studied and discussed form of *noh* among western scholars and educators, focuses on supernatural characters. Samuel Leiter defines these *noh* as “phantasmal” or “dream” *noh*, “to many, these works epitomize the essential nature of *no* as an otherworldly drama” (Leiter 363). *Mugen noh* capitalizes on the expansiveness of minimalist theatrical conventions to tell stories about figures beyond our world. Tom Hare, in his translation of Zeami’s theoretical and practical writing, claims that *mugen* plays:

most characteristically treat the interior life of a ghost. Why a ghost? Perhaps because there is so much to be gained dramatically in the perspective afforded on a life that is over but not complete. The main characters of these plays, called *shite*, literally “doer” or “agent,” remain in the world because of some deep attachment to a past love, anger, pride, or some other strong emotional tie or obsession. As ghosts they return to the world not to terrorize or haunt the living but to reenact an important unfinished episode of their lives. (Hare, “Performance Notes” 16-17)

Mugen noh explore ghosts, and other supernatural entities, and their interactions with our natural world.

Ehn’s *Saint Plays* also explore the intersection of the natural and supernatural, often in the form of saints and heavenly miracles. This surface connection, while not the only element tying *noh* to Ehn’s writing, provides a tangible space for comparison. While saints are not ghosts, they can be considered supernatural. *Noh* operates within Buddhist and Shinto spiritual contexts, and therefore explores supernatural figures such as ghosts, deities, demons and spirits of the natural world. Saints are an equivalent subject matter

within a Catholic spiritual context. Ehn argues that the saint, as well as the ghost of the *noh* play, manifests the discourse of body/soul:

There is something natural in the idea of a saint. It's not quite a ghost. It's more corporal or urgently embodied in a way than a ghost is. It's not moving away from life, it is intentional with life. So, a saint story, and I think a *noh* play, is generally about how the body and soul witness to each other and engage with each other, the contract maybe between body and soul. (Ehn, personal interview)

Ehn's *Saint Plays* dramatize not only the life and/or death of Catholic saints, but also the spiritual dimension of these entities. Just as *noh* operates within an "East Asian syncretism, combining Confucian, Buddhist and Shinto elements" (Hare, "Performance Notes" 6), *The Saint Plays* operate within a Catholic context. Ehn writes that the landscape of *The Saint Plays* "is Christian according to the accident of my spiritual education, but the plays are religious chiefly in the sense that they look at individuals as inappropriately cast in division. Christianity is explored for its ways of believing and the patterns of its mysticism, abstracted to an esthetic physics" (Ehn, "Saint Plays" ix). The dramatic techniques employed by Ehn in *The Saint Plays*, their "esthetic physics," reflect not only Christian, more specifically Catholic, tropes, they also engage with tactics found in *mugen noh*.

The most common pattern of events in *mugen noh* involves the discovery by the *waki* (a secondary character, often a wandering priest) that the *shite* is no random individual, but a supernatural figure who is well known to the area. This discovery typically breaks the play into two acts: the first dominated by disguise, when the *waki* believe the *shite* to be an ordinary person, and the second dominated by transformation as the *shite*

reappears as their true supernatural selves. Ehn ties this narrative of transformation and disguise to the liminality of saints:

How does spiritual energy find narrative and empathy and activity in the world when they have the option of moving in the other direction? Sometimes they don't know it, they just get stuck, they can't move on. The liminal toggle of a saint, human and divine, trying to bridge the two, relates to *noh* I think. Transformation and disguise. (Ehn, personal interview)

This dramatization of the liminal also applies to the liminal third space Ehn creates between Japanese and U.S. culture.

Ehn introduces *The Saint Plays* in their 2000 publication by explaining their subject matter. "These Plays are some of many short pieces from an ongoing series on the lives of Catholic saints. The subject matter is exploded biography, or the means by which the self is overmastered by acts of the imagination, by acts of faith" (Ehn, "Saint Plays" ix). *The Saint Plays* connect to *noh* by their very nature: short plays about supernatural figures. This connection is the root of my initial impulse to connect the plays to the seemingly distant art form. However, it is in the mechanics of "exploded biography" that the shared dramaturgical foundations of *noh* and Ehn's *Saint Plays* gains clarity.

***Jo-ha-kyu* Structure**

Zeami codified the structure of *noh* plays in his various treatises on best practices in the performing and writing of what would come to be known as *noh*. The three-part structure could be found in not only *noh* plays, but in all levels of *noh* performance. Each play has a *jo*, *ha* and *kyu*, but so do each day of performances and each gesture made by an actor. Zeami found this structure in both the macrocosm and the microcosm of *noh*.

The terms were borrowed from *gagaku* (court music) where they categorize movements in a composition. In Tom Hare's translation of Zeami's various writings, he defines *jo* as "preface," *ha* as "break" and *kyu* as "fast." The "smooth and even" *jo* is broken by the *ha*, which changes the tone of the play, leading us into the *kyu*, a rapid finale, the emotional and tonal climax (Hare, "Performance Notes" 481). *Jo-ha-kyu* operates differently from the Freytagian inspired structure of exposition disrupted by an inciting incident that leads to rising action which culminates in a climax and resolves into a denouement. *Jo*, the preface, encompasses the majority of the play. Its smooth and even tone gradually builds, including exposition but resisting the miniature dramatic arcs of complications found through the rising action of Freytagian-structured narratives. In *mugen-noh*, this is most often the experience of the *waki* exploring a new area and gathering clues about who the *shite* is. This gradual build eventually breaks into the *ha* (often in the discovery of the *shite*'s true identity) only to rapidly conclude at the height of action. *Noh*'s structure does not allow for time to experience the new reality caused by the actions of the play. Instead, we leave the play at its dramatic peak, often an energetic dance performed by the newly transformed *shite*. Perhaps due to the borrowing of musical terms to codify this structure, Zeami's description of structure grounds itself in music rather than action. Japanese theatre scholar Jonah Salz writes that Zeami "developed a dramatic prototype in which chanted text and choreographed movement formed the primary media for staging mimetic scenes. Rather than plot development, a sequence of musical components determined the play's structure, acting as its soundtrack, and consequently determining its mood" (Salz 39). This emphasis on tone and mood rather than plot development is also a hallmark of Erik Ehn's writing.

Ehn calls the structure of *jo-ha-kyu* an “energetic principle,” tracking the energy of the story in *noh*, not the action. He notes that his work pays attention to this principle:

There are the habits of *noh* structure, then there’s *noh* aesthetics, especially as expressed by Zeami, maybe most indelibly, the energetic principle of *jo-ha-kyu*. Even if I’m not writing a play that’s pointing to *noh*, I’m very conscious of *jo-ha-kyu*. It’s one of my key tools as a director. I’ll draw wall charts and be looking at my watch and mark where I perceive the flow moving to make sure that it is moving in that pattern. (Ehn, personal interview)

The pattern of *jo-ha-kyu* moves through *The Saint Plays*. Ehn resists traditional Freytagian structure and writes that in *The Saint Plays*, “there is no synthetic ending overall, or generally, per play. Texts move forward in time but out from under the myth of rising action. All action is risen and unravels into exhaustion, drowning, decay or bliss” (Ehn, “Saint Plays” x). This movement through time does not adhere to a Freytagian structure of rising and falling action with a neat conclusion to dramatic action, but instead mimics the prefacing, breaking and rapidity of *jo-ha-kyu*.

In *Polio Comes from the Moon* (1993), which tells the story of St. Bernadette’s life and death, Ehn uses *jo-ha-kyu* to bring us through the narrative, rather than using the narrative to bring us through the play. While there is certainly a kind of narrative at play, it is the shifting and development of the tone and mood that draws the audience through the play. As often found in the *jo* section of *mugen noh*, the exposition is in poetic form. The vision of Mary seen by a young Bernadette opens the play:

MARY: Bernadette? (BERNADETTE sees her, MARY sings.)

Interrogate the landscape

Reveal, Reveal me

Take my colors from the snow and sky

Stars from the sky

My girl, reveal me (Ehn, "Saint Plays" 87)

This verse-based poetic style continues throughout the *jo* of the play, revealing narrative elements in a slow and even pace. The more plot-based elements of the narrative begins as many *mugen-noh* do, with a journey. The Mother sends the sisters out to search for Bernadette:

MOTHER: Bring her back

MAILLE: She says she has another mother now.

MOTHER: I'm her mother, Maille, and yours too. She'd been out there long enough. And she's lost her mind. Bring her back.

(MAILLE and her SISTERS set out) (Ehn, "Saint Plays" 87)

Bernadette's sisters then enter the play as a kind of chorus, similar to the *noh* chorus, speaking in unison and narrating the action rather than physically enacting action on stage:

SISTERS: The sixth sister missed her mother's cry to come home

She always gleaned the shore for what the river gave

Five sisters missed her and they searched her in the eddy's foam

The noon sun comes and water starts to rave (Ehn, "Saint Plays" 88)

The play continues in the smooth and evenly paced *jo* style until near the end of the play when Mary leaves Bernadette. Mary's leaving breaks the meditative and flowing tone and brings us into the longest monologue of the entire play as Bernadette describes the despair of no longer seeing visions of Mary. Lianne, a young Korean girl afflicted with polio (far in

the future in linear time, but represented simultaneously on stage in the play) begins to overtake the play as her voice is highlighted more often than the Sisters and Bernadette's. The play finds its rapid end as Lianne, Bernadette, and her sisters describe the beauty in the lack of miracle for Lianne as we visit the holy spring Bernadette revealed. The audience is left in the lack of resolution as Lianne leaves the spring unhealed and Bernadette's sisters continue to care for the chapel. The *kyu* ends the play rapidly, without a satisfying narrative denouement, but instead with an energetic swelling of language and image.

Metatheatricality

Noh functions within a metatheatrical context. Unburdened by a desire for mimicry and realism, *noh*, according to Salz, "does not require large stage scenery, and often only has a simple stage props (*tsukurimono*)" (Salz 30). *Tsukurimono* are made of primarily paper and bamboo, implying objects and settings rather than representing them realistically. *Noh* masks, while used only for the *shite* characters, also continually remind the audience of their position as observers of a performance. Stagehands provide props and costume change support in full view of the audience. Musicians play their instruments not only in view of the audience, but in one of the most visually powerful positions on stage, upstage center (from the viewpoint of the seats traditionally seen as the best). Beyond staging, *noh* also exhibits metatheatricality in the text. The chorus describes and comments on the action, but also occasionally engages with the other character through their shifting persona. Most notably, the chorus speaks for the *shite* at the height of complex dance sequences that prohibit vocalization by the actor. Ehn also utilizes metatheatricality of staging, narration and voice shifting in *The Saint Plays*.

Dashboard (1994), St. Christopher's play, relies on textual metatheatrical devices. The play depicts both Earle witnessing the scene of the car crash that kills his father and sister, Agatha, and the car crash itself. A St. Christopher statue, meant to ensure safe travel, resides on the dashboard of the car. The story of St. Christopher carrying a young Jesus across a river is discussed both by the sister and father in the car in the main action of the play, taking place just prior to the crash, and by Earle outside the action, narrating from a time/place distinct from the action occurring in front of him:

EARLE: Christopher is drowning under
 Neath the baby boy
 The child is smiling patiently
 Waiting out the ploy

They reach the western bank and
 Christopher plants his staff
 The staff breaks into flower
 And the passenger has to laugh

What teeth hold the body
 Is that a dream?
 Is that a dream too?

I lost someone in the river
 I lost my sister

I lost you

Boy-Jesus hermaphrodite ruler

Points with one hand to the tree

And there my sister hangs in piece

Drowned and waiting just for me (Ehn, "Saint Plays" 13)

In this monologue, Earle narrates the St. Christopher story, as a foil to the action of the play, while also speaking of and to his dead sister at the scene of the crash, where the dashboard St. Christopher statue points to her body in a tree.

Ehn also explores more traditional textual metatheatricality in the narration of the accident by Agatha, Earle's sister. Instead of representing the crash in any realistic way on stage, Ehn uses narration to represent the primary action of the play through metatheatricality:

AGATHA: The tire slips the lip, bursts and slurps off. The car spins at a rate of a sweep second hand into red rock. Agatha and her father erupt through the windshield like trout through water-tension. (*DAD takes on his death*) The fins of the old-style car shear off and lance the victims. Dad's caught in the jaws of the red rock, Modigliani head between falling rock molars. Agatha in a crab apple tree. When they find me, they think I am a road kill deer. (Ehn, "Saint Plays" 14)

In narrating her death, Agatha reminds the audience of the theatrical context in which they are witnessing the action. Textually, Ehn repeatedly relies on metatheatrical devices also used by the *noh* chorus.

Ehn also indicates a metatheatricality of staging within his texts, through both stage directions and character voices. In *16670* (1993), the saint play of Maxmilian Mary Kolbe, the character of the Facilitator functions as both stage hand and chorus. The dramatis personae lists the character as follows: "FACILITATOR (The FACILITATOR speaks some of the stage directions and controls the mise en scène)" (Ehn, "Saint Plays" 16). In the control of the mise en scène, the Facilitator would function similarly to the visible stage hands and musicians in *noh*. By speaking some of the stage directions aloud, the Facilitator also reminds the audience of their theatrical context. In this description, Ehn calls for metatheatricality in both the words and staging of the production, much as *noh's* conventions do.

Fluidity of time/space

Textual metatheatricality operates in *noh* beyond narration. The chorus, in their shifts between narration, commenting and speaking as a character, create fluidity of time/space. The position of the chorus as observer/actor in the past, present and future simultaneously disrupts linear concepts of time and physical reality of space. This disruption reminds the audience of the theatrical context, creating a textual form of metatheatricality, and highlights the poetic abstraction that characterizes *noh*. *Noh's* fluidity of time/space is aided by particularities of Japanese grammar, most notably the lack of a future tense and the ability to drop many grammatical markers of time required in other languages. As such, a *noh* chorus or character can speak of both the present and future simultaneously while still being grammatically correct. *Noh* also resists linear storytelling, regularly breaking the rules of time and physics of geography in this disregard for realism. As a result, *noh* plays have a very fluid representation of time and space. Ehn

references this fluidity in his *Saint Plays* by seamlessly shifting between different times and places, and letting multiple times and places exist simultaneously. In *Dashboard*, the characters seem aware of this shifting time:

AGATHA: Tomorrow is his confirmation

DAD: Oh. That's the present. We're here. You'll like it here. (Ehn, "Saint Plays" 10)

The confirmation is both tomorrow and the present, when they are. The characters not only shift between times from the point of view of the audience, they also metatheatrically comment upon that shift. The characters of *Dashboard* also simultaneously exist in different times/spaces while still aware of or at least affecting each other.

AGATHA: And in an instant and in memory of me he's the Christopher himself.

EARLE: Offero. Yes. The freak.

DAD: Christ-bearer. Yes. That's his name. His name was Offero first, and he was a giant. (Ehn, "Saint Plays" 11)

Agatha narrates from outside the action, Earle speaks from the past before he encountered the crash scene, and Dad speaks to Agatha in the car right before the crash. All three characters are seemingly speaking to each other, while existing in different times and places. These shifts in time and space mimic *noh* chorus's shifting position of time and space.

Fluidity of person

The *noh* chorus also shifts between perspectives seamlessly. They can speak about or for characters on stage. Again, this convention is aided by and sometimes even necessitated by the fluidity of subject in Japanese grammar. It is possible – and often

preferable – to have a complete sentence in Japanese without a grammatically defined subject. Context indicates the subjects of sentences. As such, the sentences “I walk” and “she walks” can both be indicated by the simple present “walk/s” with the context of the sentence indicating who is doing the walking. This has incredible benefits for ambiguity in literature and performance, as abstraction can be bred of simple grammatical choices. Japanese, particularly poetic Japanese, also facilitates the use of pivot words more easily than English. A pivot word can be found at the end of a line and successfully be read as the last word of one thought and the beginning of another thought that continues in the next line (enjambing the line for the second reading). *Noh* chorus’s use these particularities of grammar for poetic enrichment of the text, fluidly shifting between multiples voices and sentences.

While Ehn cannot recreate these metalinguistic intricacies with English grammar, his poetic voice in *The Saint Plays* evoke a similar tone or feeling. Characters and voices abstractly shift in ways that remind the audience of poetic abstraction taking place on stage, further distancing Ehn’s style from realism. In *Thistle* (1998), one of St. Rose of Lima’s plays, the character Girl shifts dramatically from the voice of a witness to enacting the narrative. Girl begins by listening to the radio describe the violence of a historical event and asking questions of the broadcaster. She then shifts into describing the action as witness before being dragged into the action as subject:

GIRL and BROADCASTER: All of this I saw

Animals unmilked and starving

Dancing in the famine moon

Lovers and brother cut down too soon

All of this I saw through a hole

All of this I saw

I saw more when the

Sun rose, as it will (as it will)

This is happening still

I saw, I saw through a hole

(The GIRL is forced to wear the coat of a soldier; she is handed a bayonet. She is pushed into the narrative against her will. She moves towards the man as he dances with Ruffina) (Ehn, "Saint Plays" 50)

In this example of fluidity of person, the character speaks first as listener, then as witness, and then as doer. This dramatically enacts the shifting of persona found textually in many *noh* plays.

Citationality

Noh relies heavily on audience knowledge of its source material. As with other Japanese traditional performing arts, the quality of performance and the evocation of emotion and tone are far more important than plot. The audience already knows what is going to happen due to their familiarity with the story. Laurence Kominz describes *noh* playwriting practices as "creative borrowing" which, rather than detracting from the audience's experience, "facilitated audience recognition and intimacy, lending dignity and authority to a newly composed play" (qtd. in Salz 367). Citing older, established works of literature in *noh* gave the writing cultural power amongst critics while inviting an educated audience further into the play. By writing about saints within the religious context of

Catholicism, Ehn engages in a form of intertextuality similar to that of *noh* plays, citing famous poems and narratives. In at least one of his Saint Plays, Ehn enacts that citationality more directly by citing the Bible from which the story comes. In *Incide* (1994), the “saint” play of Judas Iscariot, characters quote the Bible directly:

POLICEMAN: There’s nowhere to put it. It can’t be given over to the church treasuries - it’s blood money.

WOMAN AND MAN: “Each piece of silver shone – a matter-puncture letting light of God’s hate through.”

POLICEMAN : We killed him at twelve. (Ehn, “Saint Plays” 146)

This moment references the Gospel of Mathew, which includes the most detailed account of Judas Iscariot’s betrayal of Jesus. However, Ehn goes beyond references to the part of the Bible that functions as his source material. He also quotes Psalms, a section of the Bible dedicated to songs of praise, jubilation and remorse:

JUDAS : I got money.

(JUDAS pays the LANDOWNER thirty pieces of silver and the LANDOWNER exits)

WOMEN AND SIMON :“Lord God of all, you hand us over like sheep to be slaughtered, scatter us among the nations. Dear God you sell your people for nothing.”

(JUDAS’ wife enters, stands, and folds her arms, watching her husband.) (Ehn, “Saint Plays” 149)

Women and Simon are quoting Psalm 44. While thematically connected to the Judas Iscariot narrative, this citation is of the source material of the Bible more broadly. *Noh* plays cite a variety of poetic images and source materials, beyond the narrative source

material, lending literary authority through reference. Similarly, Ehn's citationality also goes beyond narrative to image and homage.

Musicality

Noh, with its chanting musical accompaniment, can be categorized as a musical form of the theatre. Music underscores vocalization and movement in *noh* and the vocalizations are often chanted, a form of music in and of itself. Even when actors speak in dialogue, the speech is stylized enough to feel musical if not clearly music (melody, harmony, etc.) in and of itself. Ehn uses musicality as a poetic device in *The Saint Plays* through both rhythm and layering of multiple voices. Ehn creates rhythm through repetition. In *The Imp of Simplicity* (1997), St. Thomas à Kempis' play, a series of short lines and repeated words create a rhythmically dense section of dialogue:

NUN 1 : Sister Milan takes heart medicine.

MILAN : Robin. Wake up.

ROBIN: What?

NUN 2: Robin, wake up.

WILKIE: Sister Milan takes heart medicine.

NUN 3: Morning.

ROBIN: Morning.

NUNS 4,5,6,7,8,9,10 (in sequence): Morning.

NUNS, INGRID, WILKIE: We are all waking up. (Ehn, "Saint Plays" 156)

This rhythm, like the drums beats on the *noh* stage, underscores action with musical punctuation. Ehn also utilizes the chorusing of multiple voices to create musicality through

vocal texture. The Nuns, rather than repeating short rhythmic phrases, repeat the same longer sentences with slight variations of vowels:

- NUN 7: We transcend mere reason on the wings of a burning love for Him.
 NUN 1: We transcend mere reason on the wings of a burning love for Him.
 NUN 10: We transcend mere reason on the wings of a burning love for Him.
 NUN 3: We transcend mere reason on the wings of a burning love for hum.
 NUN 6: We transcend mere reason on the wings of a burning love for hum.
 NUN 9: We transcend
 NUN 8: mere reason
 NUN 4: the wings
 NUN 5: of a burning
 NUNS: Love for Him. (Ehn, "Saint Plays" 167-168)

The Nuns repeat the line with their different voices and "Him"s and "hum"s to then share the line visually descending on the page and ultimately combine their voices into polyphonic chorus. The repetitions and shifting between Him and hum draws our attention away from the meaning of the words and focuses on their sound. Without the use of instruments or chanting indicated, Ehn explores the musical nature of language as performed on stage.

An appropriate time for performance

Throughout history, multiple *noh* plays have been performed at the same event. The number and order of plays has changed over time, but even from the early days of Zeami, multiple plays would be performed in succession. In *Learning the Flower*, Zeami references four to six plays being performed in a day (Hare, "Performance Notes"78). Later, in the Edo

Period (1603-1868 CE), a five-play sequence based on the traditional five categories of *noh* was employed (Salz 32). Today, two plays are performed with *kyogen* and dances interspersed. However, in all these variations, multiple plays are performed in a set sequence. Plays are not only performed in an appropriate sequence, they should also be performed in an appropriate season. Certain plays are considered more suited for summer or winter based on their subject and style. In *Noh*, when you perform a play, both season and order of performance, matters.

The Saint Plays also function within an awareness of time. Multiple plays have often been performed together, in order to make a full-length evening. For one of these performances, at Intersection for the Arts San Francisco in 1993, Ehn composed a “Song for the End.” This song is meant to be available to conclude any performance of a sequence of *Saint Plays*. The plays are also, at least in publication, connected to their saint’s feast days. The plays are published in chronological order of the saints’ feast days according the Catholic calendar. Ehn also plans on producing 366 plays in 2024 (a leap year), with a play each day and a marathon of performances to conclude the year. Even the length of the plays connects to Ehn’s perception of time. In his preface to their publication, he writes that saints “move not so as to be endless (extensive through time) but with intensity, to become instant, infinitely attractive, anomalous in time. And so the plays are short. They want to be over before they start” (Ehn, “Saint Plays” x). The shortness of the plays metatheatrically enacts the brevity of and intensity of the lives of the saints themselves, and maintains a hyper-awareness of the passage of time as it relates to theatre and performance. While none of these connections to time are requirements for producing the plays, they suggest a certain awareness of chronology similar to *noh*.

***The Saint Plays* as Third Space**

Erik Ehn's *Saint Plays* project differs from the other case studies presented, as he is not intentionally exposing his audience to Japanese traditional performing arts. The plays' stories do not connect with Japanese culture and there are no direct references to *noh*, *kabuki* or *bunraku*. However, by starting from similar dramaturgical foundations and assumptions, *The Saint Plays* and *noh* share multiple characteristics. Shared process results in a shared product. Ehn does not educate his audiences through presentation of dramatic technique. The ontology of the plays immerses the audience in a *noh*-like environment, utilizing a kind of exposure through osmosis. If you feel comfortable analyzing and consuming a *Saint Play*, you would likely feel comfortable in a *noh* audience.

Ehn makes no declaration of cultural positionality in *The Saint Plays*, other than the Catholic context of the subject matter. The plays are not loudly "American" nor do they reference particular settings beyond the few historical events portrayed. Even those theoretically set in a particular time and place due to their source material narrative are estranged from the setting by way of poetic abstraction. The style forgoes any specific grounding of cultural positionality. Ehn argues that in writing *The Saint Plays*, he was beginning to find his voice as a playwright, one which he now connects to *noh* aesthetics conventions. "I feel I began to find my voice after graduate school as a playwright when I embraced artificiality and concision. I looked at aesthetic effects that were more meditative. Maybe that was the first step in the shift" (Ehn, personal interview). This artificiality, concision, and the other dramaturgical connections between *The Saint Plays* and *noh* explored in this chapter do the work of carving out a Third Space between the cultures of the United States and Japan. The Third Space does not announce itself nor

communicate an intention with the audience. Instead, it simply exists and through its existence asks an audience to accept its nature. The two core concepts that reside at the foundation of both *noh* and Ehn's *Saint Plays*, and ultimately tie them together aesthetically are *yugen* and *jo-ha-kyu*. By "translating" these concepts into his plays, Ehn constructs a Third Space in his scripts.

How to articulate the concept of *yugen* and how to translate it into English often befuddles scholars and artists alike. Ask 10 different artists and scholars for their definition of *yugen* and you are likely to receive 10 distinct answers. When I asked Erik to give me his current definition, he responded with an unexpected but intriguing translation:

Fucking Beautiful. Meaning that it's the beauty of breaking, specifically. So, the example that Yuriko [artistic director of The Theatre of *Yugen*] used to use was clouds passing across the moon. They're beautiful because they're passing. I think Zeami's example is perceiving a snowflake glinting just before it settles into the snow. That little glint is so mortal, so sort of perfect. And so, it means deep and dark, roughly, so maybe soul affirming and just awful. The ideas of the profound. (Ehn, personal interview)

While Zeami might not recognize immediately Ehn's contemporary interpretation of *yugen*, the concept is in many ways defined by its obscurity and its need for interpretation. For Ehn, the melancholic beauty of ephemerality creates *yugen*, the condition Zeami wrote of as what *noh* should strive for. Zeami describes the use of the structural device of *jo-ha-kyu* in order to achieve this state: in the play, in the audience, in the performance. Beyond incorporating *jo-ha-kyu* into the structure of *The Saint Plays*, Ehn also relies on the concept to describe how he approaches the construction of plays: "You need parts. You need

breaking, or parts, so the idea of *ha*. The bulk of a play is the breakdown, it's all in the breakdown. And you need those fragments for beauty to occur, because the beauty is the balance or unspeakable reconciliation of fragments," (Ehn, personal interview). These concepts ran through Ehn's mind before I presented him with the possibility of reading *The Saint Plays* as *noh* plays. In his preface to the plays, he wrote: "*The Saint Plays* are as broke, broken, broken down, and broken through as I can make them" (Ehn, "Saint Plays" xi). The breaking of the plays into fragments allows for the creation of *yugen* by means of a *jo-ha-kyu* structure.

While it would be difficult to condemn work that only obliquely references another culture as culturally appropriative, Ehn still considered this possibility. When asked about the ethics of borrowing dramatic aesthetics and techniques from Japan, Ehn responded:

I don't feel as if I'm being culturally appropriative if I'm looking at the math and the science of another country. Because math and science are meant to be universal languages. There is a kind of mathematical quality to *noh* that just works. The 2 and 2 of *noh* add up. The scientific idea of *jo-ha-kyu*, we should all take it up, it's just like the penicillin of theatre. But that doesn't mean that one is completely free of the issues there. (Ehn, personal interview)

This view of *jo-ha-kyu* and *yugen* as the mathematics of *noh* resonates with the other case studies presented. Plays constructed in awareness of the principles of Japanese traditional performing arts create a third space using the foundations of dramatic composition resist appropriation by focusing on the mechanics of theatre rather than the contents.

This reading of Ehn's *Saint Plays* as intercultural highlights the impact Japanese culture and arts has on the experimental theatre of the United States. Artists like John Cage,

Richard Foreman and Robert Wilson all credit their exposure to Japanese artists in the 1960s (many visiting under through the friendship initiatives sponsored by the Japanese and U.S. governments) to their experimental style. Ehn is following in this lineage and in some ways Japanese traditional performing arts were “in the water” of Western experimental theatre, so to speak. This influence combined with the timing of Ehn’s exposure to *noh* through Theatre of Yugen as he began writing the *Saint Plays*, resulting in plays able to be experienced as intercultural.

The Third Space created in Ehn’s *Saint Plays* relies on an educated and willing audience to make the connection between the play and *noh*. This case study does not include the direct intention of the playwright to create a play inspired by multiple theatrical cultures found in the other case studies. Instead, the influence is identified in hindsight. In fact, none of the reviews of productions I found mention anything about Japanese traditional theatre. Why would they? Unless you are looking for the connection to *noh*, you wouldn’t see it: the plays don’t mark their potential intercultural nature. The reviews do describe productions that require an adept audience to engage with the material. Hunter Styles writes of Factory 449’s 2010 production of some of *The Saint Plays* in Washington, D.C:

It’s a longform visual poem, sophisticated in style and physical choreography but dangerously thin on dramatic arc. The characters feel thick and declamatory and, ultimately, they prove forgettable. After two and a half hours, some nifty images remain, but the stories themselves have dissolved into the ether...The writing itself often feels glassy, comprised of capsules of language held up to the light to be studied. (Styles)

The idea that the stories “dissolve,” while not necessarily a positive remark from the reviewer, actually rings true of the experience of *yugen* that can be identified in the plays. Celia Wren writes that “Factory 449’s production, directed by company co-founder John Moletress, brings considerable ingenuity to the interpretation of such cryptic material” (Wren, “Factory 449”). Wren was in general more positive about the production and focuses on the interesting interpretation of the material, marking that Ehn’s plays were “cryptic.” In Nancy Churnin’s review in the *LA Times* of a 1992 production, she writes that:

Sledgehammer Theatre is not a company for those who want to sit back and be entertained. This is a young and exuberant theater of excess, and this show requires much head-craning to catch all the good stuff. Although even those in tune with Sledgehammer might question the company's decision to do seven plays in one evening, and, indeed, one leaves the theater exhausted, "The Saint Plays" nevertheless provides an evening of exhilaration. (Churnin)

This repeated notion of the audience and directorial labor required to engage in these plays indicates that Ehn’s writing relies on interpretation. It lives in the “as.” In choosing to engage with these plays as *noh*, audiences can take advantage of experiencing a Third Space built by both the playwright and the consumer of the play experience (whether on the page or stage). This complicates the Carlson scale of interculturality as different audiences have different experiences of the show resulting in different numbers on the scale. Carlson’s scale focuses on the product. This case study proves that process (in this case interpretation) greatly affects the understanding of the product. The complex negotiations of creating the Third Space take place between the play and audience, allowing each audience member a unique interpretation of that space. Ehn exposes his audiences to the

conventions of *noh* and in that process, creates an unconscious Third Space (even in audiences without knowledge of *noh*). After encountering a *Saint Play*, an uninitiated audience member would find a *noh* play more familiar, evidence of their time spent in Third Space constructed by Ehn.

CHAPTER FIVE

NAOMI IIZUKA'S 36 VIEWS

In a 1998 profile in *American Theatre Magazine*, Misha Berson writes of playwright Naomi Iizuka, “born in Japan to an American mother of Spanish descent and a Japanese banker father, she lived in Holland as a child and later in Chevy Chase, Md,” (57). Growing up all over the world, being raised in a family of many cultures and existing in a multiracial body makes Iizuka ontologically intercultural. According to Berson, her pathway to playwriting followed similarly diverse experiences:

Iizuka loved literature but didn't discover theatre until she began studying the classics in earnest at Yale. About the same time she was reading Catullus and the Roman philosopher Lucretious in the original Latin, she was also seeing her drama-major friends perform freewheeling new plays and experimental versions of Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams' dramas. A desultory year of law school at Yale led Iizuka to throw caution to the winds and enter the U.C.S.D. playwriting program, where she studied closely with dramatist Adele Edling Shank. (Berson 57)

After receiving her MFA in Playwriting from UCSD, Iizuka lead a successful playwriting career and in addition to her continued writing, she currently heads her alma mater's MFA in Playwriting program. Considering both Iizuka's personal biography and career path, the diversity in her plays' style and content is unsurprising. Walking the line between realism and theatricalism, Iizuka's plays often use non-linear structures while remaining narrative

driven. Many of her plays pull from her multi-cultural background in both content and style. *The Language of Angels* (2000) uses *noh* structure to tell a ghost story. *Anon(ymous)* (2006) and *Ghostwritten* (2009) look at immigration and refugees. *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West* (2010) focuses on orientalism and the exoticization of the East by the West. Iizuka's 2002 play, *36 Views*, manifests both her personal cultural heritage as well as her winding career trajectory. Using theatrical techniques from the Japanese traditional performing art of *kabuki* and content concerning authenticity of art and culture, Iizuka created an intercultural play. *36 Views* provides an excellent case study in how a playwright has used intercultural techniques to craft a play that is created by and through multiple cultures.

Naomi Iizuka's *36 Views* exemplifies intercultural playwriting by using Japanese traditional art in both the content and form of the play. The narrative of *36 Views* revolves around the forgery of an *zuihitsu*, a woman's diary from Heian period (794 – 1185 CE) Japan. Women, while certainly oppressed in this time, created lasting literary works despite their restricted access to education. Educated men wrote their poetry and literature in Chinese characters, and they were then limited by certain grammatical differences between Japanese and Chinese. Women, however, wrote in a script more in line with their native language. Japanese literature scholar Roselee Bundy writes of this difference in her article on women's diaries from the time:

Women, in contrast, wrote Japanese in a simplified syllabic system derived in the ninth century from the Chinese writing system. Unlike the thousands of Chinese characters, this system, described in the literature of the times as *onnade* or "women's hand," comprised a mere fifty symbols. More important, the syllabic

system made possible a direct transcription of Japanese without the interference of Chinese grammatical structures. (82)

As women wrote in a script designed for their native language, they were able to more accurately and deftly describe their thoughts and feelings than men. The characters used could represent Japanese language as it was spoken, instead of through translation of Chinese ideograms, as was required to read what educated men were writing. The Heian women's writing skill was exemplified in the many *zuihitsu* left behind as artifacts of their lives. *Zuihitsu* literally translates to "follow the brush" and is often translated as "miscellaneous writings" or "pillowbooks." In a form that is most reminiscent of diaries in the West, these collections were short entries ranging from anecdotes and gossip, to lists and poems. *36 Views* not only makes the forgery of a *zuihitsu* the focus of the narrative, it also mimics the *zuihitsu* style. Composed of thirty-six short scenes, the play vacillates from lists, poems, and realistic narrative. Similar to *zuihitsu*, the play is a collage of many different styles and genres of writing.

The layering of Japanese art into the text continues with frequent reference to *ukiyo-e* prints. These woodblock prints, popular in Edo Period (1603 -1868 CE) Japan, were popular art depicting everyday life, such as landscapes, street life, beautiful women, and *kabuki* actors. The connection between *ukiyo-e* and the Japanese traditional performing art of *kabuki* is a strong one. Art historian Richard Lane argues that "*ukiyo-e* prints form a good barometer of the state of *kabuki* at any given period" (63). As *kabuki* scripts were not published at the time, the *ukiyo-e* prints of performances by famous actors were one of the only records of the performance style. The prints are referenced by the artists, collectors and scholars in *36 Views* and also in the overall structure of the piece. The short scenes can

not only be seen as the miscellaneous writings of a *zuihitsu*, but also as a visual narrative: a series of *ukiyo-e* created by stage pictures. The title and number of scenes references a famous series of woodblock prints by the artist Hokusai: *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*. Hokusai's series portrays thirty-six different views of the largest mountain in Japan. The series was so popular, that ten more prints were added, but the title remained: *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*. In *36 Views*, we still get thirty-six views, but the views are beyond image. We get thirty-six views on the story, thirty-six views on the themes of the play, thirty-six views on how the characters interact.

The play's theatrical techniques are an amalgamation of Western narrative-driven realism and *kabuki's* stylized theatrical magic. *Kabuki*, so deeply connected with the *ukiyo-e* and traditional Japanese arts and literature the play revolves around, seems a natural source for the style of performance. Established during the Edo Period around the same time as *ukiyo-e*, *kabuki* is a theatre of visual imagery and highly stylized performance techniques. Japanese theatre scholars Samuel L. Leiter and James R. Brandon write: "it is commonly said that the chief aim of *kabuki* is 'to be beautiful'" (1). This focus on beauty prioritizes stylized performance over realism. Many of the performance choices that Iizuka outlines in her stage directions are found in *kabuki*, particularly the more fantastical *kabuki* from the Edo period. Iizuka calls for the use of *kurogo*, or stage hands visible to the audience, as well as specific methods of costume changes and movement styles borrowed directly from *kabuki*.

In order to detail instances of Iizuka's conscious importation of Japanese traditional arts into *36 Views*, a brief synopsis of the play is helpful. The play is constructed of thirty-six interlocking short scenes, some scenes representing the narrative in a fairly realistic way,

some scenes created out of images with no spoken dialogue, and some scenes a mixture of monologue and tableau. The play begins with a party to celebrate the work of the reclusive artist, Utagawa. Darius Wheeler, an art and antiquities dealer, hosts the party. He is joined by Setsuko Hearn, a professor studying *zuihitsu* at a prestigious university, and Owen Matthiassen, her department head who is also friends with Darius. John Bell, Darius's brilliant assistant, lets the party know that Utagawa will not be making an appearance. John works alongside Claire Tsong, a talented artist who restores artwork for Darius. John, as a scholar of language and culture, has been working on a mock *zuihitsu* which Darius discovers. John, embarrassed to be found working on the project, lies and says that it is a promising antiquity that is being offered for sale. Claire hears of this and plots with John to forge a convincing *zuihitsu* artifact using John's text. Setsuko, who has become romantically involved with Darius, unwittingly authenticates the forgery as real. Throughout, Elizabeth Newman-Orr, an investigative journalist, has been running a sting operation attempting to pin Darius for assisting in the sale of stolen Asian cultural treasures. While the sting operation fails, Claire goes public to Elizabeth with the forgery and both the university department and Darius are humiliated. Setsuko resigns and leaves Darius, believing he only pursued her to authenticate the fake *zuihitsu* and concerned he was only interested in her as an exoticized Asian body. Claire is revealed to actually be the reclusive artist Utagawa (previously assumed to be a man) and John publishes the *zuihitsu* as a fiction to critical success.

Iizuka explores this sometimes complicated, but engrossing, narrative by using Japanese traditional arts in both structure, tropes, and description of performance style.

The structure of the play as thirty-six scenes (in direct homage to the *ukiyo-e* series *Thirty-*

Six Views of Mount Fuji) allows the play to exist as a series of *ukiyo-e* prints, a series of visual moments rather than literary scenes. The emphasis on linking a series of images mimics the visual nature of *kabuki*, often represented and recorded as a series of *ukiyo-e* prints. Just as *kabuki* was an image-based theatre, this play becomes a piece of theatre constructed of images: thirty-six scenes, or views. Iizuka responded to a question about the inspiration for *36 Views* in a 2002 interview in *American Theatre*. She lays out this connection between the content and form of the play influenced by *ukiyo-e*:

I became transfixed by the series of woodblock prints "36 Views of Mount Fuji" by (the 19th-century artist) Hokusai. It's an intriguing work. Each print is a representation of the mountain from a different perspective, in different seasons. You see the mountain and the world around it, but in some of the prints the mountain is actually very difficult to make out. As I was writing the play, the question of authenticity – What is authentic? What is true or real? – became as mysterious and somehow omnipresent as the mountain in Hokusai's study. That question, in some sense, became the mountain. (qtd. in Wren, "Navigating" 32)

The questions asked by the images become the questions asked in her play. In writing a play structured by images, Iizuka asks us to consider which of the thirty-six views is/are authentic?

Intercultural theatre in the West has historically used non-western performance traditions to explore alternatives to the tradition of realism. Peter Brook used the *Mahabharata* to explore his brand of experimental performance. Robert Wilson sometimes uses *kabuki*-esque makeup and tableaux to distance his audience. Iizuka uses specific performance techniques from *kabuki* embedded in her script to explore alternatives to

realism on stage. *Kabuki* is not a representational theatre; *kabuki* often does not reflect our experiences of the world visually or narratively on stage. Instead, *kabuki* is presentational; the audience sees beautiful images, spectacular stage magic and highly stylized acting styles. By layering in performance techniques from *kabuki* into her text, Iizuka uses the tradition to move away from realism. In his exploration of Iizuka's work and its presentation of Asian-American identity, Sean Metzgar writes that "Iizuka's plays frequently deploy images from other media, yet these do not serve as indices of verifiable events but instead as observation points, frames that yield alternatives to linear progressive temporalities" (279). Using these images from other media as framing mechanism, in this case, stylized *kabuki* performance traditions, Iizuka re-orient us away from the comfortable position of realism in Western theatre. Her blending of Japanese and American theatrical traditions gives us a new vantage point to explore the ideas in her plays: a Third Space she has carved out between two cultures.

Kabuki performance techniques, including the theatre magic we see throughout *kabuki*'s history, is placed in a new context in Iizuka's play. One of the first *kabuki* performance techniques employed by Iizuka in her stage directions are indications for productions to use *kurogo*, or visible stage hands. Samuel L. Leiter defines a *kurogo* as a "stage assistant who helps *kabuki* actors and carries out various stage duties. Dressed in black, he is considered invisible, and he makes himself as inconspicuous as possible" (205). Iizuka uses *kurogo* in stage directions throughout, having them interact in ways familiar to a *kabuki* audience, but perhaps jarring to an American audience. They move props, assist in costume changes and, while seen by the audience, are assumed to be unseen and ignored by the other characters onstage. Clothed in black, the universal stage language cue for

“pretend you can’t see this,” the *kurogo* are invisible while visible, a helping hand to performers. However, Iizuka goes further and adapts the *kabuki* stage convention in order to illuminate characterization and foreshadow upcoming plot. In a scene which is mostly stage directions and a character reading from the *zuihitsu* manuscript, the *kurogo* go from unseen to seen:

Pre-dawn light. The sound of the bamboo flute continues. A kurogo enters. His face is wrapped in black fabric. He carries a large rectangular panel covered by a drop cloth. He puts the panel down, then removes the cloth, revealing an Edo-period screen. On the screen is a painting of a garden in autumn. The sound of wooden clappers. The kurogo begins removing his black overcostumes. Darius Wheeler goes to the desk, and notices the transcript that Claire Tsong was looking through earlier. He picks it up and reads. Setsuko Hearn is revealed in a sliver of light.

DARIUS WHEELER: A list of beautiful things:

The curve of a lover's neck,
 The touch of a lover's fingertips,
 The weight of a lover's hair, the scent,
 The rustle of silk undone,
 Your tongue, your lips,
 The taste; salt and wet,
 Warm breath against one's skin.

The kurogo removes the last piece of fabric covering his face. The kurogo is revealed as John Bell. The sound of wooden clappers. The sound of the bamboo flute ends. Setsuko Hearn vanishes. Darius Wheeler exits. (Iizuka 34)

In revealing the *kurogo* to be John Bell, Iizuka both uses the *kurogo* stage convention traditionally and experimentally. She uses the image to foreshadow the unveiling of John as the forgery's author while also showing the audience Darius and Setsuko's developing relationship. The *kabuki* performance convention of *kurogo* becomes a dramaturgical tool in Iizuka's playwriting. She takes a practical performance tradition from *kabuki* and adapts the tradition into a visual dramaturgical device.

Iizuka also explores sonic elements of *kabuki* in her dramaturgy. The sounds of the *tsuke* (wooden clappers) and the *shakuhachi* (bamboo flute) are used aesthetically in *kabuki*. *Tsuke*, sometimes called *ki*, are wooden blocks used percussively in *kabuki*. Leiter defines them as "wooden clappers that are rhythmically beaten in *kabuki* on a square wooden board [...] the beats emphasize the movement of the actors, as when they run, fight, strike *mie* [dramatic poses], or say certain lines of dialogue," (409). Iizuka punctuates her text with *ki* clacks and *shakuhachi* accompaniment. These sounds mimic the aesthetic use of the sounds in *kabuki*. The moments punctuated by the sounds bring the audience's attention to important moments and highlight the visual drama of the scene. In a wordless scene, the *tsuke* and the *shakuhachi* are the only aural communication used:

The sound of the bamboo flute continues. John Bell and Owen Matthiassen appear. John Bell, Owen Matthiassen, Claire Tsang, Elizabeth Newman-Orr, Darius Wheeler and Setsuko Hearn are figures in a woodblock print, flesh figures in a floating world. The sound of wooden clappers. Darius Wheeler and Claire Tsang see each other. It's a moment of nagashime (a sideways glance as seen in old woodblock prints of kabuki actors). The sound of wooden clappers. The sound of the bamboo flute ends. (Iizuka 23)

The scene is given weight, rhythm and depth through the *kabuki* soundscape. This explores one element of the sound used in *kabuki* traditionally and experiments with using it to fill an entire (if short) scene. The dramaturgical function remains the same, but the technique of applying it differs.

Iizuka also uses traditional *kabuki* on-stage costume changes as a dramaturgical tool for character development. These on-stage costume changes create extreme spectacle in *kabuki* performances: with one pull of strings, the fabric of the first costume unfolds into an entirely new costume, creating a split-second costume change in full view of the audience. Iizuka uses these moments of theatre magic to tell us information about her characters visually. Setsuko has the first of these changes:

The sound of the bamboo flute ends. Hikinuki (a kabuki costume change in which threads are pulled and the outer kimono falls away revealing a new costume underneath): Setsuko Hearn is transformed into an urban, late-twentieth-century Western woman. The sound of wooden clappers. (Iizuka 53)

Changing from a woman dressed in classical Japanese costume into a late-twentieth-century Western woman shows us her dual identities. Setsuko is assumed to be of Japanese descent by many of the characters, but she reveals to Darius at the end of the play that she is actually of Chinese descent, adopted by a Japanese mother and an American father. Her layered cultural identity is foreshadowed in this costume change. Iizuka uses a similar dramaturgical tactic with Claire's onstage costume change: "The sound of wooden clappers. *Bukkaeri* (a *kabuki* costume-change in which the upper half of the costume falls down over the lower half revealing a new pattern): Claire Tsong's appearance has completely transformed," (Iizuka 69). While looking like the same costume, the *bukkaeri* reveals a new

pattern, not unlike Claire showing her “true colors” when she goes public with the forgery and with her identity as Utagawa.

Iizuka also indicates *kabuki* movement styles to be incorporated in the performance. These exits take us from a fairly realistic scene to non-realistic stylized movement. Instead of simply exiting the scene, Claire exits, cued by the wooden clappers, in a particular *kabuki* style:

The sound of wooden clappers. Claire Tsong exits. A version of the Kitsune Roppo exit (a kind of kabuki exit marked by leaps and bounds). John Bell vanishes. The sound of the bamboo flute begins. (Iizuka 69)

This stylized exit references a very specific characterization in *kabuki*. *Kitsune Roppo* is used by foxes and fox-like characters. Leiter defines *roppo* as:

a stylized *hanamichi* [through the audience] exit in *kabuki*, named for the “six directions” (heaven, earth, east, west, north, and south) in which the actor seems to be moving as he bounds off, arms and legs making exaggeratedly large movements... the movement is meant to demonstrate the character’s power. (326)

This particularly *roppo* – *kitsune roppo* – translates as a “fox *roppo*,” meant for foxes or fox-like characters. Foxes are seen throughout *kabuki*, as trickster characters. In Japanese mythology, foxes can change shapes and use this skill to play tricks on humans. This fox-like exit is appropriate for a character that changes identity and uses her cleverness to trick people around her to her own benefit. Iizuka uses a theatrical language presumably unfamiliar to her audience to transmit information about the character. While this communication might not be clear to a non-*kabuki* familiar audience, it does estrange the performance from realism in a way that makes intellectual sense. Using codified stage

language of *kabuki* in the context of an American theatre gives the play aesthetic depth and attempts a more visceral communication of culture rather than intellectual explanation of it. Iizuka doesn't tell us about the performance traditions, she shows them in our own theatrical context. Using our understanding of the narrative and characters, we can intuitively understand what might be an estranging performance choice.

Iizuka uses this tactic throughout *36 Views*. Instead of using a foreign theatrical convention to teach us about the character, she crafts the character with psychological realism to help us intuitively understand the foreign theatrical convention. Embedding *kabuki* performance traditions, *ukiyo-e* visual structure, and *zuihitsu* writing style into this play's dramaturgy creates a text which introduces a western audience to Japanese artistic and cultural traditions. Iizuka, inspired by these traditions, wrote a play to connect her audience to something very distant. In an interview discussing the inspiration behind the piece, she remarks on Sei Shonagon's *zuihitsu*:

I came across Sei Shonagon's *Pillow Book* a few years ago. I was struck by it because it was ancient, and at the same time it seemed so contemporary. I was familiar with *The Tale of Genji*, but the genre of the pillow book is very different. It includes lists and poetry, musings and opinions, anecdotes and recollections – a lot of different elements all in one work. It was many things all at once, and that appealed to me. Also, the consciousness of the writer came through in a way that was tantalizing. I try to convey in the play that excitement you feel when you've found a kindred consciousness across centuries. (qtd. in Wren, "Navigating" 32)

Iizuka conveys this connection across time and space not only in the content of the play, but in its style and construction as well.

In her search for a theatrical language through which to explore this narrative, Iizuka landed on *kabuki*. Speaking directly about *kabuki's* influence on the play, she said in a 2002 interview:

The play has a lot of conventions from *kabuki* theatre – like the wooden clappers. When I saw *kabuki* for the first time, I thought it was one of the most exciting theatre-going experiences I'd ever had. It was so completely theatrical. When I began to do research, one of the things I found is that, unlike *noh*, *kabuki* – which is a newer and more secular tradition – has changed over time and has even seemed to welcome innovation. There was a kind of pliability and playfulness in *kabuki* that seemed appropriate to the world of this play. I was really interested in figuring out how to take these structures that were non-Western and finding ways to synthesize them with Western forms. (qtd. in Wren, “Navigating” 32)

This synthesis is not only in line with content and form in her play, but with the nature and history of *kabuki* itself. Leading *kabuki* scholars Brandon and Leiter agree with Iizuka. “The history of *kabuki* can be seen as a constant search for the right balance between tradition and change, between the excitement of the new and reverence for the past” (Brandon and Leiter 6). This search for balance in *kabuki* also occurs in Iizuka's combination of Japanese and American theatrical traditions. In a play that explores authenticity in art and in people, Iizuka asks questions about how we represent Eastern cultures in the West by representing Eastern theatrical cultures in a Western theatrical tradition.

Iizuka uses intercultural dramaturgy to critique intercultural connections in a variety of scenarios. *36 Views* asks questions about orientalism and the exoticization of the Asian female body. The images described in the script with Setsuko stage her body in ways

to evoke western ideals of female “beauty.” She speaks for the Heian era lady and dresses as her, instantaneously changing back into herself. She then narrates over images and sounds of sexual intercourse represented by images of *shunga*, erotic woodblock prints (Iizuka 69). When Setsuko reveals her Chinese, rather than Japanese, ethnicity, Darius Wheeler is shocked, clearly assuming that her Japanese name (and presumed heritage) was what gave her authority as a scholar of Japanese culture. She is represented as essentialized: Japanese in a female body before anything else. Her layered cultural identity (as well as Iizuka’s) questions who gets to tell the story of other cultures and times. The play also examines how academia and capitalism intersect, sometimes towards dangerous ends. Setsuko’s involvement in the forgery scandal is mirrored in her involvement with Darius. This happens visually with her representation of the Heian era lady and reading/translating of the *zuihitsu* text. This labor, both academic and commercial, is part of what leads to her resignation. These thematic elements of the text are bolstered dramaturgically by *kabuki* staging techniques.

The narrative of *36 Views* discusses Japanese culture and art in America, while the form explores Japanese culture and art on the American stage. *Kabuki* stage techniques are explored within the text as dramaturgical tools to communicate themes, character development, and plot. The marriage of form and content gives a depth to the exploration of Japanese culture on the American stage that would be missing from a purely aesthetic or purely intellectual representation of culture. Iizuka creates an amalgamation into a new form, a Third Space, influenced by both cultures. Iizuka has crafted a play that engages multiple theories models of intercultural theatre. From the perspective of an audience familiar with *kabuki*, *36 Views* falls solidly into the middle of Carlson’s spectrum, near 4, as

the “foreign and familiar create a new blend, which is then assimilated into the tradition, becoming familiar,” (Carlson, “Cross-Cultural Theatre” 50). However, the merging of these two theatrical cultures could certainly function differently for an uninitiated audience. The *kabuki* conventions could be read as baffling and shocking to the audience, or a 6 with “foreign elements remain foreign, used within familiar structures for *Verfremdung*, for shock value, or for exotic quotation,” (Carlson, “Cross-Cultural Theatre” 50). However, Iizuka clearly marks the elements of *kabuki* in the stage directions, requiring an ethical director to educate themselves about any conventions unknown to them and find creative ways to include their audience in the experience. The reviews of productions highlight the multiplicity of experiences this kind of Third Space play can illicit. Interestingly, none of the production reviews I found speak about *kabuki* or Japanese traditional performing arts at all. Yet, nearly every one of them references the visual nature of the play, whether they appreciated it or not. These descriptions of visuality are likely referring to the beautiful, yet jarring, moments of *kabuki* theatrical convention indicated by the stage directions and interpreted by the director. In his review of the 2002 New York production in the *New York Times*, Bruce Weber writes that *36 Views* was “written as a kind of rebus, focusing as much on visual clues to its meaning as spoken ones” (Weber). The review finds this a positive aspect of the script and productions, praising the seeming compatibility between the directorial/creative team and the playwright. Dennis Harvey reviewed the world premiere in 2001 at Berkeley Repertory with the same director, same designers and seemingly similar production choices and came to a much different opinion: “He [director Mark Wing-Davey] doesn’t flatter this cluttered work by overwhelming it with a full artillery of visual and aural bombast. The actors appear visibly discomforted by the level of inorganic

stylization thrust upon them,” (Harvey). Perhaps it comes down to taste of the reviewers, but both reviews focus on the visuals and stylization leads me to believe that they were experiencing the same intercultural moments of the play from different perspectives (likely exposure to and taste/distaste for conventions of *kabuki*) resulting in different experiences of Third Space. One reviewer from the website Culture Vulture even advertised her lack of cultural knowledge in the defense of her negative opinion of the production. Suzanne Weiss writes of the 2001 Berkeley Repertory production: “Problem is, it is like one of those dim sum dinners. After all this gorgeous stuff comes at you, fast and furious, you may end up feeling hungry for a real meal,” (Weiss). Her use of a Chinese food as a metaphor for this play exploring Japanese culture, a play that includes a conversation about the problems of homogenizing the vast diversity of Asian cultures into a flat, objectified, and de-humanized “other,” betrays not only her lack of understanding of theatrical conventions outside of American poetic realism, but also the lack of attention she paid to the play’s lessons in the narrative. Certainly, a lack of knowledge of the source culture of an intercultural play will influence an audience’s understanding of it. The brilliance of Iizuka’s work is that an audience open to new theatrical experiences gains knowledge in subtle ways. These reviews, even Weiss’s, focus on the use of visuals to give information about the characters, a key aspect of all the *kabuki* conventions Iizuka employed. Whether they recognize it or not, each of these reviewers came away from the play with a better understanding of *kabuki* and a destabilizing encounter with Third Space. The negotiations of that space made them focus on the visuals as much as the words, unsettling their typical relationship with the play and requiring them to engage within the complex and constantly shifting rules of

engagement that Third Space creates. This results in a simultaneous multiplicity of experiences of the intercultural play, or numbers on the Carlson scale.

Beyond Carlson, Iizuka's *36 Views* provides a compelling example of intercultural theatre theory in action. Conventions from both cultures are blended and merged into an amalgamation, reminiscent of Pavis' imagery: she is testing the strength of the metals of various performance traditions in Pavis' crucible of intercultural theatre. Concerns about Bharucha's river are interrogated in the play itself. Iizuka consciously explores the ethical concerns of cultural representation within the narrative of the play. She is also uniquely positioned to do so as a multicultural playwright. If Iizuka had no personal connection to Japan or if she didn't craft the play around conversation about cultural identity, the play could easily fall into exoticization and appropriation of Japanese traditional performing arts. Iizuka also navigates Third Space both within and outside of the play. By the very nature of her multicultural and multiracial identity, Iizuka lives in a kind of Third Space. The hybridity of cultures in her upbringing and her existence in a multiracial body manifests the post-colonial identity Bhabha used to develop Third Space theory. Iizuka also creates Third Space in her blending of *kabuki* techniques with poetic realism on stage.

When asked about the art forgery represented in the play, Iizuka responded by re-framing what the play is about:

I didn't set out to write a play about art forgery. For me, *36 Views* is more about how we navigate a different culture. All the characters in the play are experts in a field and yet despite their expertise, they're struggling with something that's foreign to them. Having to make sense of alien worlds interests me a great deal, as does the

related question: How do you make sense of another human being, of a consciousness very different from your own? (qtd. in Wren, "Navigating" 32)

Naomi Iizuka reframes the conversation in the play by using Japanese traditional arts in both the content and form of the play, letting us make sense of their complex interactions. The audience is thrown into a Third Space with no intellectual explanation of the *kabuki* techniques used. We are educated through immersion. The distancing use of non-realistic staging practices from *kabuki* reflects the characters and story being presented. The Third Space Iizuka created educates in a trial by fire – the audience learns about Japanese traditional performing arts by living in it.

CHAPTER SIX

TAYLOR MAC'S THE LILY'S REVENGE: A FLOWERGORY MANIFOLD

An adult dressed as a glittery drag queen anthropomorphic potted lily plant runs through the audience: this might seem a shocking image to most American theatre goers, but wouldn't surprise Taylor Mac's die-hard fans. As a genderqueer (presenting male but using "judy," lowercase, not as a name but as a gender pronoun) writer, actor, director and drag/performance artist, Mac's work tends toward the campy and avant-garde, inspired by the aesthetic of Charles Ludlam's Ridiculous Theatrical Company. Mac has explored a variety of mediums, but most of judy's work in the 2010s takes the form of playscripts written by Mac, directed by Mac, with the main role played by Mac. This may seem closer to the auteur work that most intercultural performance theorists focus on, but the key difference lies in the textual process. While the premiere productions of Mac's plays are normally directed and/or performed by judy, the process of writing and disseminating the text is fairly traditional. Mac writes judy's plays alone, publishes the scripts, and grants permission for other companies to perform them. The text functions like most playscripts and can be evaluated on its own merit, regardless of the various productions that spring from it. Mac's scripts have a recognizable style. Descriptions of environment and event are included in the text and interactions with audience, and while expected to be somewhat improvised, are scripted with many failsafes for different audience responses. The main characters are often genderqueer individuals who explore drag and gender fluidity within

the narrative. The stories ride a roller-coaster of emotions, both sincere and parodic. Realism is not valued highly in Judy's texts, with most plays including non-human characters, heightened language, and meta-theatrical elements. Mac also engages directly with political issues in Judy's plays. In Jason Fitzgerald's 2010 review of Mac's work in *Theatre Journal*, the political nature of Judy's writing is highlighted: "For much of his career as playwright and performance artist, Mac has been fighting the forces of conformity, struggling to liberate the individual from the homogenizing snare of bourgeois cultural fashion" (457). In some ways, Judy's political agenda and Judy's use of theatre as a platform for discussions about the political dimensions of gender and sexuality make all of Judy's work a kind of intercultural performance. Writing from a marginalized culture within the U.S., Mac is bringing that cultural knowledge to the dominant culture within the American theatrical landscape.

Mac's 2009 play, *The Lily's Revenge: A Flowergory Manifold*, goes beyond intercultural performance between the LGBTQ community and the dominant culture by incorporating techniques from multiple Japanese traditional performing arts. Inspired by the five *noh* play categories and the tradition of performing each in a day-long event, *The Lily's Revenge* was described by Mac in a 2008 interview:

These days I'm working my butt off on the largest endeavor of my life to date – my new play *The Lily's Revenge*. As I've been obsessed with [mythology expert] Joseph Campbell, the story is a hero's journey. A potted Lily painfully uproots itself and goes on a quest to destroy the modern tool of oppression-nostalgia (portrayed by the Great Longing Deity). The play takes place during the funerals for Ronald Reagan (he was the great communicator of the

nostalgia movement, after all) and uses the countless flowers thrown on his coffin as a metaphor for oppressed and minority people. (qtd. in Svich 95)

The Lily's Revenge follows Lily, played by Mac in the world premiere production, on her journey to disrupt the narrative of Bride marries Groom being put on by The Great Longing Deity, a theatre curtain with the face of a man. Lily meets a group of radical activist flowers who are staging a rebellion against The Great Longing Deity, who has been using flowers for the wedding industrial complex and the funeral industrial complex. The rebellion wants Dirt, The Deity of the Here and Now, to control the narrative. Lily helps the rebel flowers destroy The Great Longing Deity and in the process becomes a man who can now marry the Bride. Instead of marrying the Bride, Lily and the entire cast of the show, asks the audience to marry them. The narrative isn't rooted in intercultural performance: *The Lily's Revenge* is not an adaptation of a story from another country. However, much of the structure, techniques and aesthetics at play are borrowed from Japanese traditional performing arts. Mac speaks about the inspiration behind the play saying that "the insane part of *Lily* is that it's performed over the course of seven hours (including dinner and act breaks) and was inspired by Japanese *noh*: five plays performed in one day. *Lily* has more of an Elizabethan structure and is composed of five acts based on the five *noh* themes of Deity, Ghost-Warrior, Love, Living-Person and Mad-Demon" (qtd. in Svich 95). The intercultural nature of the play is rooted in this structure: the five *noh* play categories imagined as five acts in an Elizabethan play. Charles Isherwood wrote of the world premiere, "Mr. Mac's dramaturgy resembles not a French but an English garden, where no fixed borders rule, and the designing hand mimics the unruly workings of nature. With five different directors in charge of the five acts, the production speaks a polyglot theatrical language encompassing

everything from puppetry to modern dance to bits of Noh to bigger bits of burlesque” (Isherwood). The influences of Japanese traditional performing arts goes far beyond the structure of the play. Elements of *noh*, *kyogen*, *kabuki* and *bunraku* are sprinkled throughout the text, seen in its structure, theatrical techniques, and aesthetics.

The intercultural experiment of *The Lily's Revenge* begins with the acts as *noh* categories. In a traditional *noh* performance, one play from each of the categories is performed in order throughout a long day. *The Lily's Revenge* is organized following this structure. Act I is titled “The Deity: A Princess Musical.” This act introduces our characters, many of whom are deities, a key feature in first category *noh* plays. Act 2 of *The Lily's Revenge* is titled “The Ghost Warrior: An Act in Iambic, Song and Haiku.” This act is written almost exclusively in verse and features the rebel flowers deciding that Lily is their long lost “chosen flower,” an homage to the return of warriors from the dead in second category *noh* plays. Act 3, “The Love Act: A Dream Ballet,” mostly follows the dream/memories/fantasies of the Bride and Groom, who are asleep. This act mimics the third category of *noh* plays: woman plays. These plays often feature a heartbroken woman, which describes the Bride through most of this act. Act 4, “The Living Person: A Silent Film,” sits in the place of fourth category living person plays, also known as madness plays. These plays represent people lost in madness; The Great Longing Deity attempts to institutionalize Lily throughout the silent film shown in this act. Act 5 is “The Mad Demon: A Pastiche,” which is a climactic final battle, which thematically ties to the fifth category demon *noh* plays. These plays are the most energetic of the *noh* plays and conclude a day's performance of *noh*.

Act 1 introduces the deified characters of the play, establishing the mythic proportion of the story. Mac wrote this act to reflect the god category of noh plays. Structurally, Mac uses the act for exposition. Mac introduces the characters as the gods of concepts, the ideals metaphorically in conflict in the play. These concepts are anthropomorphized as humanoid manifestations deified in the mythos of the play. The language of the act feels elevated, creating a mythic and sacred tone. As Time tells the story of her children and warns the audience of the extreme length of the performance they are about to witness, they sound like a storyteller reciting an epic poem around a campfire:

TIME (*Ignoring the Lily*):

These Flower Girls, that lay about the stage in drool, were once AUDIENCE MEMBERS!

FLOWER GIRLS DEITY: Errrrrr.

TIME: My eldest child, the malicious Great Longing Deity, God of Nostalgia, has trapped them in this cock-and-bull story with an institutionalized narrative. Little by little they have turned from lively questioning individuals to cliché crones of mediocrity. Woolgathering junkies of wistfulness. Escape now or the telling of this narrative will reduce you, like these Flower Girls, to an addicted coagulation of nostalgia and hope.

FLOWER GIRLS DEITY: Hope. Hope. Hope. Hope. (Mac 2-3)

The mythic quality of this act reflects the god category noh plays it is modeled after by both introducing the characters of the play as deities and establishing an elevated tone of storytelling.

Act 2 is modeled after the ghost warrior category of *noh*. The Lily is recognized by the other flowers as the Chosen Flower, as such it is destined to lead the flowers in a rebellion. The Lily uproots itself in its quest to become a man. The Master Sunflower calls for the rest of the flowers in the garden to join The Lily, uproot themselves and go into battle:

MASTER SUNFLOWER: The Lily, she has shown the way for all.
 And though it pains me to reject The Dirt,
 it is through leaving home that one does grow.
 Uproot yourselves and take your battle cry. (Mac 80)

This call for battle and glorification of The Lily's destiny is reminiscent of the ghost warrior plays of *noh*, where the ghost of a great warrior from the past returns to the realm of the living to complete some task and is recognized. The Lily enters the garden and is then recognized by the lay-flowers as the great chosen flower destined to lead the flower rebellion.

The third act looks to the category of women *noh* plays for its inspiration. Woman plays, sometimes translated as "wig" plays, focus on female characters, often a heartbroken woman. The Lily watches a dream ballet of the Bride's story and her heartbreak. Near the end of the act, the Bride is heartbroken by her dream that indicates she might not love the Groom. The Bride and Groom are represented by two separate actors at this point in the play. Bride Deity and Groom Deity (our original Bride and Groom) are interacting with the dream versions of themselves, Bride Love and Groom Love:

Bride Deity wakes up. She weeps. Groom Deity wakes as well. Everyone waits to see what she will do. While quietly crying, she writes a dream down on a cocktail napkin. She hands it to Bride Love who hands it to Groom Love who hands it to Groom Deity.

GROOM DEITY (*Reading*): Love.

The Flower Girls take the napkin and attach it to the Great Longing.

THE GREAT LONGING: More.

Bride Love writes down another one. She hands it to Bride Deity who hands it to Groom Deity who hands it to Groom Love.

GROOM LOVE (*Reading*): Romance.

The Flower Girls take the napkin and attach it.

THE GREAT LONGING: Yes. More.

The Brides writes down two more and hand them to The Grooms.

GROOMS (*Reading*): A wedding.

THE GREAT LONGING: Yes. Give it to me. Build me back. Bring back the curtain.

The Wedding party attach cocktail napkins to the Great Longing. They say very general words like: a house, a family, safety, a car, success, happiness, comfort, care, etc. as they attach the napkins. The Flower Girls continue attaching (but without words). The Brides and Grooms step aside and face out.

BRIDES: What if we're not right for each other.

GROOMS: People are never right for each other.

BRIDES: Right.

GROOMS: We could cancel if you want.

BRIDES: We've come this far. (Mac 104-106)

This act focuses on the heartbroken woman and her melancholy. The heartbreak is not resolved at the end of the act; just like a woman *noh* play, we live in the melancholy beauty of *yugen*. We shift our focus away from the hero of the story, Lily, and explore the Bride's experience of heartbreak.

The fourth category of *noh* plays is technically "miscellaneous." Any play that doesn't neatly fit into any of the other categories is placed here. However, there are few common subcategories that find their way into the miscellaneous slot: vengeful ghost plays, plays set in the present, and (the category that inspired this act) madness plays. Madness plays tell stories about characters who are deranged or distraught, often from grief. Mac references a more western and contemporary image of "madness": someone institutionalized and treated with traumatizing and archaic methods such as "shock therapy." The Lily is being coerced into "perfection surgery" which morphs into electric shock treatment:

The Lily sees the TV Bride montage again. It agrees to be made a man. The Lily lays down on a surgical bed. It turns to the flower next to it and sees the White Rose.

WHITE ROSE: Lily I'm about to undergo perfection surgery so I can become the center piece of the wedding.

The White Rose becomes a synthetic flower.

WHITE ROSE: Don't I look perfect enough to be shipped to the Wedding.
Goodbye Lily.

The Lily fights its restraints.

LILY: You've made The White Rose a monster.
Ron, Diana, and John Paul

(demonic laughter)

Ron, Diana, and John Paul give the Lily electric shock treatment. Its final petal falls off.

(Mac 110-111)

This representation of “madness” and its treatment prepares The Lily to fulfill its destiny to marry the Bride as its final petal falls off.

The fifth category of *noh* plays, demon plays, ends the traditional day of performance with a climactic battle. These plays dramatize demons and goblins of Japanese mythology and often end with a priest character battling the demon with prayer. Mac used this category to bring the rebellion to its violent conclusion with a great battle between those following the Deity of The Great Longing and the Deity of The Here and Now:

Tableau vivants (with dialogue) begin. Every time the two flowers get the curtain closed The Subprimes open it up to reveal what’s happening behind. The first scene reveals Prime Deity being eaten by the giant Tick.

PRIME DEITY: Ahhhhhhhh!

The curtain closes and opens and Red Rose is trying to stab Prime Love with a thorn.

RED ROSE: Yaaaaaaaaa.

WHITE ROSE: You’re ruining the perfect day.

It closes and opens to reveal The Daisies punching the shit out of the Brides.

DAISY #1 (*Punching Bride Deity*):

Does he love you now cunt?

DAISY #2 (*Kicking Bride Love in the stomach*):

How ‘bout this time.

DAISY #1 (*Knocking the Brides’ heads together*):

What about now? (Mac 131-132)

This battle completes this long five act play just as the demon play traditionally closes out the day of *noh* performances.

Mac not only used the structure of a day of *noh* performances as an inspiration for the five acts of *The Lily's Revenge*, judy also used the modern tradition of incorporating comedic *kyogen* plays as palate cleansers in between *noh* plays. Though *kyogen* and *noh* are separate art forms, they were developed around the same time, use the same stage, share actors, and retain aesthetic similarities. In the late 19th century, *kyogen* and *noh* plays began being performed in the same program, with *kyogens* being performed between *noh* plays during the long days of performance. During each of the four intermissions, Mac has included what judy terms "kyogens." Similar to Robert Wilson's "knee plays," these short interactions allow the performance to function as a cohesive unit while the audience takes a break and the space is transformed for the next act. A review of the world premiere performance notes that:

The event's expansiveness, each act required different seating arrangements and employed a different pastiche of theatrical traditions, called attention to the processes of production and reception. Audience members, ejected from the theatre for each of three intermissions, were invited to interact with one another and with members of the company in the "Discussion Disco," HERE's downstairs theatre space that was transformed into an oversized dressing room. The evening's "host," a heavily glittered, bosomy woman in a butterfly costume, instructed spectators to turn off their cell phones and regularly checked on their comfort level. (Fitzgerald 458)

These interactions are somewhat scripted by Mac, though the text allows for improvisation and performances created specifically for the space the play is being produced. Mac titles these scripted interactions “kyogens” and provides instructions for different kinds of audience interactions that can take place in this “oversized dressing room.” Some of the suggested “kyogens” include “Box Office Boogie: a gogo flower or flower girl dances in the Box Office” and “Outdoor Originals: Cast members perform their own performance art pieces outside the theater (all having to do with one of the themes of the play)” and “Cafe Camp: Flower Girls all call each other and everyone else Mary back and forth for fifteen minutes” and “Marriage Bashing: three items that represent Prop 8, Gay Marriage, and the Institution of Marriage. Audience members can choose which one they’d like to bash. Maybe little piñatas” and “Wedding Party Photo Shoot Booth: get your picture taken with the wedding party. Cut-out heads on the Bride and Groom so anyone can play either character” (Mac 155). In some ways, these “kyogen” function in similar ways as *kyogen* in relation to *noh* performances. They are mostly comedic and function as palate cleansers for the audience. They break the event into more manageable chunks of time, even as they provide commentary on themes in the five acts.

In addition to the structure of the performance event drawing from *noh*, the structure of the narrative portrayed also takes cues from Japanese traditional performing arts. The stories of *noh*, *kabuki* and *bunraku* rarely follow the classic Freytag structure. The disruption of Freytag comes in the aftermath of the climax: most of these Japanese classics end without a denouement. Most stories in these traditions end in the middle of the climax with no resolution offered. This has to do, in part, with the fact that most of these stories came from well-known historical or mythical texts and the audience already knew the

ending. The point of seeing the performance was not see how the story ended, but how it was presented. *The Lily's Revenge* follows a very Western Freytag-inspired narrative for the most part. In the very last moments, all the characters are dying because the Pope shoots them all with a machine gun in a satirical deus-ex-machina. At this moment, the entire cast asks the audience to marry them, then the lights go down and the plays ends. By ending with a question and not answering it or allowing the audience to answer it, Mac makes a small gesture towards the narrative structure of Japanese traditional performing arts.

Mac uses various theatrical techniques from Japanese traditional performing arts throughout the play as well. Characters name themselves upon entering the stage, a convention also found in *noh*:

FLOWER GIRLS DEITY: Yaaaaaaaaaaaa! We Flower Girls, minions of The Great Longing Deity,

PRIME DEITY: Mary

SUSAN: Mary

SUBPRIME DEITY: Mary

THE MARYS DEITY: And The Marys

LILY: Hey Mary.

The Flower Girls pause -- not sure what to do with an audience member talking to them -- they choose to ignore it.

FLOWER GIRLS DEITY: We Flower Girls must awaken The Great Longing to begin the tale. Oh, fill our dependency to (*An echo*) dreams, dreams, dreams, dreams. (Mac 7)

The Flower Girls Deity not only name themselves, they also directly state what they are doing on stage (awakening The Great Longing). In *noh*, characters enter and say who they are and what they are doing at the naming pillar before continuing to the middle of the stage.

The Lilly's Revenge also employs the use of musicians on stage, a characteristic of *noh*, *bunraku* and many (but not all) *kabuki* plays. Time shifts us from the prologue to the beginning of the actual performance by introducing the band:

TIME: The band enters. The play begins. You are doomed.

The band plays the overture. Time goes back to her wall. Five Flower Girls awaken with screams and determination. (Mac 6)

The inclusion of live music on stage explores the intersection of Japanese traditional performing arts and musical theatre; both art forms are referenced and enacted in this play and both use live music.

The Lilly's Revenge uses *bunraku*-esque puppets to tell its story. The Bride is originally represented by a puppet with the puppeteer visible on stage, in the tradition of *bunraku*.

The Great Longing Curtain opens to reveal The Bride Puppet and The Lily still kissing. Suddenly she starts having spastic fits. The Bride Puppet flails about the stage, trying to hold on to the The Lily, The Flower Girls, the edges of the curtain but she is eventually pulled violently down into the dress as if she were being eaten by a shark. A little blood spews.

BRIDE PUPPET: Ahhhhhhhh!

The dress shakes and shrieks. An older version of The Bride (what we'll call

Bride Deity), forces herself to grow out of the dress. It appears as if she has been under the dress the whole time. She looks haggard and hoary. The Puppeteer tries to maneuver her but the Bride Deity slaps the puppeteer who runs off scared. (Mac 45)

While a human actor growing out of a puppet is not a traditional *bunraku* technique, the incorporation of a large puppet with puppeteer visible on stage certainly hearkens to *bunraku*, in the context of a play with considerable influence of Japanese traditional performing arts. A full size human actor manipulated as a puppet also resembles the *kabuki* convention of *ningyo buri*, where a human actor makes puppet like movements while a stagehand as “puppeteer” pretend to control him from behind, (Leiter 392). These scenes in *kabuki* are often originally written for the *bunraku* theatre and the performance style is an homage to their origin. Mac uses this convention to explore the Bride’s agency, as she is both used as an object and resists the objectification.

The Lily’s Revenge also incorporates the techniques of narration found in both *bunraku* and *noh*. *Bunraku* narration, where a narrator speaks for a character, is seen when The Flower Girls (Susan being one of them) speak for characters on stage as identified narrators:

GROOM DEITY: You’re not even a man.

(Stepmother acts with her eyes.)

SUSAN: Evil Stepmother says: “What about the Cheyenne girl who married the king of the buffalo. Or the one who married a rattlesnake or-”

LILY: Yeah what about those? (Mac 45)

In the conventions of *noh*, a chorus sometimes speaks as an outside narrator, sometimes as characters on stage and sometimes as a group of individuals experiencing the actions. The transitions in voice are fluid and sometimes unclear in *noh* plays. Subprime Love and Flower Girls Love use this kind of fluid voice as the chorus of flowers outside of the action, speaking as if they were both inside and outside the action:

BRIDE LOVE (*Horried*): Ahhhhhhhh!
 SUBPRIME LOVE: What do we do?
 BRIDE LOVE: Burn the apartment down.
 FLOWER GIRLS LOVE: Burn mother fucker burn! (Mac 92)

Narration techniques from both *noh* and *bunraku* make their way into the play.

Beyond Mac's adaptation of Japanese traditional performing arts for the structure of judy's play and judy's use of various theatrical techniques from the tradition, Mac's drag and camp aesthetic also mesh with the tradition of melodrama and drag performance in *kabuki*. *Onnagata*, the tradition of men playing female characters in *kabuki*, intersects with the drag tradition of gay culture. Considering this aesthetic connection, the successful incorporation of Japanese traditional performing arts into Mac's play makes sense. Pavis wrote of Ariane Mnouchkine's work that "using Asian theatre as a technical device for renewing Western theatre is especially useful for her because it requires and enables a violent rupture with naturalism" (Pavis 93). The same is true of Taylor Mac's work. The incorporation of Japanese traditional performing arts into judy's play's dramaturgy helped judy find theatrical techniques with which to move away from realism, a core tenet of judy's observable aesthetic. Mac's form of interculturalism seems to be the "seduction, imitation, exchanges" Eugenio Barba describes in an interview with Pavis. Pavis writes that

these kinds of intercultural theatre “work both ways in the encounter between the East and the West. Each partner, thought of more as a person than an abstract system, preserves his/her own autonomy and identity and yet avoids assimilating or annihilating the other; seduced, but not reduced” (Pavis 11).

The Lily's Revenge uses techniques from Japanese traditional performing arts and recognizes that borrowing and inspiration. Master Sunflower says “this play has been inspired by the Noh,” (Mac 58) clueing the audience into the inspiration. Time recognizes the play’s turn into multiculturalism as well:

TIME: There is more to life than epic romance. What about a nice succinct multi-cultural folktale about liberation?

THE GREAT LONGING (*Mocking*): Multi-Culti? (Mac 14)

One of the “kyogen” pieces during intermission is a “Context Corner,” where the audience can learn about the traditional arts that inspired the play. Japanese traditional arts are brought into the play, but the play brings the audience to Japanese traditional performing arts as well.

Mac builds a Third Space with *The Lily's Revenge* by investigating the intersections of Japanese traditional performing arts and American traditions like musical theatre and drag. This intercultural playwriting technique examines similarities already present. Theatrical conventions are not adapted, but placed next to one another allowing the audience to draw comparisons. Due to the metatheatrical marking of the use of Japanese traditional performing arts, even an audience unfamiliar with their conventions would mark this production as a 4 on the Carlson spectrum of influence, where the “foreign and familiar create a new blend, which is then assimilated into the tradition, becoming

familiar,” (Carlson “Cross Cultural” 50). Mac certainly creates something new, a unique hodgepodge of theatrical conventions found in both Japanese traditional performing arts and American performance traditions. Bharucha’s concerns about the political, economic, and ecological ethics of this river feel safely navigated. In today’s world, Japan holds a similar cultural position to the United States and Mac’s position within an oppressed subculture disrupts any power imbalances that are at play. Mac also employs direct and transparent framing mechanisms that acknowledge the play’s influence of Japanese traditional performing arts while also positioning the writer as an outsider paying homage to the artistic traditions from another culture. By positioning the writer transparently as admirer, not expert, in Japanese traditional performing arts, and by including a framework for education on the traditions within the text of the script (particularly in the “kyogen” interludes), Mac navigates Judy’s audience away from consuming this play as cultural appropriation. Mac also makes no claims of reproducing or recreating any of the Japanese traditional performing arts. By adapting the forms and taking them further away from their original presentation, Mac avoids claiming any expertise in a cultural and tradition he does not have. It is in the framing, transparency and adaptation that Mac avoids what Bharucha rightfully distrusts in intercultural performance.

Mac creates Third Space with a particular political goal in mind: problematizing nostalgia-based arguments against marriage equality. This issue was particularly poignant at the time of the play’s writing, as Mac was directly responding to Proposition 8 in California. Even as, at the time of writing, gay marriage has been legalized, the current political climate brings this issue back into the contemporary moment. Mac’s play has remained topical, nearly a decade after it was first produced. The political nature of the

play is enhanced by the intercultural dramaturgy. The theatrical conventions Mac focuses on have to do with a refutation of realism by questioning the performative nature of gender. Mac also uses theatrical conventions exploring objectification of performers, asking us to critique oppression outside the theatre walls. Mac's plays are anything but realistic, and following in the steps of many of his intercultural theatre predecessors, Judy employs the conventions of Japanese traditional performing arts to break from realism. In a way only Mac can, the rejection of realism becomes a rejection of the political status quo, a revolutionary act in the theatre that inspires revolutionary acts outside of the theatre. The "complex ongoing negotiations" of Third Space are engineered by Mac to have Brechtian repercussions, encouraging us to question and resist objectional situations both inside and outside the theatre. Sam Thielman writes in his *Variety* review that:

Mac's engagement with big ideas — about marriage, about theater, and about love in general — carries the show a long way, and the sheer audacity of the enterprise makes what could potentially be a grueling experience into something cool and fun and even communal, if you're open to the possibility. (Thielman)

This idea of the play's protentional "if you're open to the possibility" rings true of the other case studies present and the experiment of intercultural theatre in general. Third Space requires an audience to be receptive to it, to choose to engage within it, in order for the experiment to be successful.

Without exoticizing or otherizing Japanese culture, Taylor Mac uses the tools and techniques of *noh*, *kabuki*, and *bunraku* within Judy's play, referencing them in Judy's aesthetics and structure, and embedding them into the dramaturgy of the text. This use of textual elements in structure, language and image of a performance tradition from another

culture is the foundation of intercultural playwriting. Inspiration can take many different forms in the final text of a play. If the inspiration comes from another culture and is consciously explored in the text, the dramaturgy of the play becomes intercultural. With *The Lily's Revenge: A Flowergory Manifold*, Taylor Mac engaged in the practice of intercultural playwriting, creating a third space between cultures.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Playwright as Architect of Third Space

The playwrights highlighted in this study built intercultural plays from the materials of both Japanese and American culture. Their reasons for doing so are as varied as the playwrights themselves. While the plays do not reveal the intentions of the playwrights, their biographies lend some insight into possible explanations for their foray into Japanese traditional performing arts. Tennessee Williams experimented with stylizing his plays after becoming enamored of Japan and its culture. Paula Vogel explored her deceased brother's love of Japanese culture in memorium. Erik Ehn felt inspired by Zeami's dramatic theory. Naomi Iizuka wrote from her multicultural background. Taylor Mac utilized a distant culture to estrange western audiences for political purposes. Biography can help us understand why these playwrights might have endeavored to write an intercultural play. However, I'm more interested in exploring how the plays chosen for the case studies function as intercultural playwriting. The dramaturgy of these plays, how they work on the page, emphasizes the labor of the playwright as builder of intercultural plays.

The metaphor of plays being built intersects with Homi Bhabha's Third Space theory. Bhabha envisions culture in three-dimensional space. Third Space theory relies on an understanding of culture through the imagery of place. Each culture occupies a location; where two locations intersect becomes the third space: a liminal place of hybridity. A

hybrid of the two cultures exists, evoking the liminal. Those places on the threshold, the border between two cultures, begins to blur identity, hierarchy and privilege. As Victor Turner writes in his seminal text on liminality, *The Ritual Process*, “liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (95). In the liminal, we can see a new reality outside of ordinarily rigid systems of sociopolitical interactions. Third Spaces ask everyone entering them to reevaluate their positions and understand their new identities in this new place. All theatre can be considered liminal: a space between a fictional world and the real one. Intercultural theatre extends that liminality to the cultural artifacts (performance conventions, storytelling modalities, etc.) being used to tell the story. Playwrights control the use and arrangement of the performance traditions at work in intercultural plays. They design and shape the Third Space between performance cultures, as the architects of the plays being built.

Techniques of Intercultural Playwriting

These case studies highlight a variety of methods to write intercultural plays. These techniques, some shared between multiple plays, demonstrate a breadth of possible ways to incorporate multiple cultures into one play. Some playwrights justify the choice to incorporate a foreign performance tradition by including narrative content that is connected to that culture. Meta-theatrical techniques are sometimes employed to flag the inclusion of the other culture to the audience directly. Some plays mimic the performance traditions wholesale while others adapt the conventions by blending them with those more familiar to the audience. Some playwrights begin with a shared understanding of dramatic

theory that can lead a director to shared performance styles. These various techniques all result in a kind of intercultural playwriting, each achieved through different means.

Content Justifying Form

Content and form, distinct aspects of plays, often inform one another. Some playwrights, like Paul Vogel, strongly believes that the two aspects are indivisible and should intersect in profound ways. Amongst the case studies, *The Long Christmas Ride Home* and *36 Views* overtly justify the use of Japanese traditional performing arts through the content of the narratives present. *The Long Christmas Ride Home* was written as a tribute to Vogel's late Nipponophile brother. As such, the character of Stephen expounds on his "love for all things Japanese" in the play. The Minister introduces the family to the concept of *ukiyo-e* and the Japanese art of wood block prints. As the Ghost of Stephen controls the narrative, *bunraku*-esque puppets and other theatrical conventions from Japanese traditional performing arts make sense. In *36 Views*, the story revolves around the forgery of a *zuihitsu* and a scholar of classical Japanese literature, again connecting the content to the theatrical conventions used. Tennessee Williams used a less integrated form of this justification, setting his play *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* in Japan, connecting the story's context to an experiment in form. Merging, or at least connecting, the form and content of intercultural plays intellectually justifies the use of foreign theatrical conventions for the western audience.

Meta-Theatre

Referencing Japanese culture within the narrative of these intercultural plays could be considered a meta-theatrical technique. Some plays use an extreme form of meta-theatre, directly communicating with the audience about the influence of Japanese

traditional performing arts. Taylor Mac directly informs the audience of the influence of Japanese traditional performing arts in *The Lily's Revenge: A Flowergory Manifold*.

Characters explain that the play is so slow because it was inspired by *noh* and intermission entertainment educates the audience in the referenced Japanese art forms. These metatheatrical tactics flag the intercultural nature of the play for audiences and encourage searching for connections between the two cultures with the play. *The Long Christmas Ride Home*, with Stephen's direct address discussing Japanese culture, also employs meta-theatre to flag its interculturality to the audience.

Immersion in Convention

Some of these plays employ theatrical conventions of Japanese performing arts within plays written in an otherwise American style. In *36 Views*, Naomi Iizuka uses *kabuki* costume changes and stylized movements to foreshadow plot and indicate character traits. In his *Saint Plays*, Erik Ehn mimics *noh* in the plays' language and style. Neither playwright directly informs their audience of this intercultural dramaturgy. Using the performance tradition without explaining or adapting it can introduce the western audience to the Japanese form via immersion. When a character exits the stage using the *kitsune roppo*, the informed audience member can connect that stylized movement with characterization. The context explains the convention rather than having the convention explain the context. When an audience educated in *kabuki* theatrical conventions sees a *kabuki* play in Japan, the convention (like a *kitsune roppo* exit) reveals information about the character or situation. The intercultural dramaturgical technique of immersion flips that model and introduces the audience to the (likely) unknown theatrical convention by positioning it within a recognizable theatrical context. This use of this methodology relies on the

assumption of an inquisitive and educated audience or explicit audience education on the part of the production in the form of program notes, lobby displays and/or discussions. If an audience with no previous knowledge of Japanese traditional performing arts and no resources providing them with that knowledge encounters this technique of intercultural playwriting, they may well be baffled. The playwright can cue the importance of Japanese culture through the story and metatheatrical means, but it takes a willing audience member to dig deeper for immersion in convention to be effective in terms of education and exposure. This simultaneous multiplicity of experiences problematizes any theoretical model that labels intercultural performance (like Carlson's scale). Instead, it promotes theoretical understanding that takes into account the process of both building and consuming the theatre. Images like Bharucha's river, Fischer-Lichte's interweaving of performance cultures and Pavis' hourglass provide more nuance in their application to these "complex ongoing negotiations" that Bhabha identifies as Third Space. In particular, the concepts of location, motion and presence evoked by Bhabha's abstraction of Third Space provide a rich analytical model for these plays. Each audience member steps into the Third Space with their own cultural baggage, knowledge and curiosity – and based on those qualities – they experience the Third Space differently. In the plays where we are immersed in conventions, rather than having them demonstrated or adapted, the Third Space created requires a willing and educated audience member to make the full breadth of connections between performance cultures. This is perhaps the most difficult Third Space for audiences to exist within, as they might be groping for sure footing of expected performance conventions, but when applied with subtlety and creativity, the effect is transformative.

Adaptation of Convention

Other playwrights adapt the conventions from Japanese traditional performing arts by blending them with American theatrical conventions. Paula Vogel uses an adaptation of *bunraku* in *The Long Christmas Ride Home*. In *bunraku*, the chanter narrates, voicing all the characters from a kneeling position off-stage, but in view of the audience. In her plays, Vogel splits the narrator into two voices who gradually become more involved in the action on stage. This blends a Thornton Wilder-esque aesthetic with *bunraku*. Taylor Mac blends *kabuki* and drag aesthetics with Judy's stylized makeup and extravagant costumes. Mac also merges the *noh* performance day structure of five plays (one from each category performed in order) with the traditional western five act structure. Blending theatrical conventions creates a hybrid performance culture that can be used to slightly estrange the audience (as Mac does) or to make a convention more recognizable (as Vogel does). This tactic explores the liminality of dramaturgy, making the play itself into a hybrid rather than providing a space for hybridity in audience understanding. The former exists as a hybrid itself while the later, as in the case of immersion in theatrical convention, requires the audience to create hybridity in their understanding of the juxtaposed cultures.

Shared Dramatic Theory

All these playwright's personal understanding of dramatic theory share some elements with the dramatic theory of Japanese traditional performing arts. The style of all the case study plays rely on elements of Japanese traditional performing arts theory. The concept of *yugen* influenced the writing of Erik Ehn's *Saint Plays*, resulting in shared dramatic conventions. Taylor Mac's exuberant aesthetic adheres to the *kabuki* tenet that the play could freeze at any moment in order to create a beautiful stage image. The dramatic structure of *jo ha kyu* can be applied to any of these plays successfully. In the case

of Vogel, Iizuka, and Mac, Japanese traditional performing arts were explored intentionally. The characters, stories and accompanying notes of the plays inform us of this. As such, the playwrights' implementation of the theatrical conventions of Japanese traditional performing arts resulted in plays that share a connection through dramatic theory. Erik Ehn, however, was first influenced by the dramatic theory which then resulted in similar theatrical conventions being used. The river flows in both directions.

Framing of Intercultural Plays

Framing mechanisms indicate the context of a play's narrative, delineating the boundaries of the "world of the play." Plays are inherently framed by their consumption context: reading a script is a very different experience than seeing a play produced in a black box in-the-round is a very different experience than seeing a play produced in a large proscenium theatre. Plays can be framed by how the characters tell the story and how the playwright writes the script. Intercultural plays often include some form of framing mechanism that positions the play or playwright culturally. This acknowledgement of the play and/or playwright's cultural position in relation to the source culture being referenced can help avoid exoticization and appropriation of another culture. Recognizing where the intercultural play came from facilitates an awareness of the source culture, a recognition in the target culture as to the origins of the source culture's theatrical convention. Acknowledgement of the source culture removes a large element of appropriation: borrowing from a culture without recognizing it as the source. These framing mechanisms range from a lack of frame to overt framing both within the play text and the supplementary materials.

No Framing

Erik Ehn's *Saint Plays* don't employ a framing device within or without the play. This is unsurprising, as the *Saint Plays* were the only case study in this dissertation written without the intention of being intercultural plays. The *Saint Plays* provide an example of the ability to retroactively identify a play as intercultural through analysis. The plays become intercultural when considered through that lens: it is the consideration of them as intercultural plays that makes them such. The plays are not framed as intercultural, but can be analyzed as intercultural. Meaning is created in art in a dialogue between the creator and consumer of the art via the conduit of the art object. The meaning that the artist intended can be manipulated or even outright changed when examined in a different context by the audience.

Indirect Framing

Indirect framing mechanisms are found in the textual elements outside of the dialogue of the play. Titles and playwright's notes are sites of indirect framing. This information frames the play for the producers and creative team of the play, and will influence the choices made in the production. This framing indirectly educates the audience as to the cultural positionality of the play/playwright. Paula Vogel indirectly frames *The Long Christmas Ride Home* in her extensive notes in the front matter of the script and her stage directions. She directly states her intention to blend Thornton Wilder's one-act style with *bunraku* while claiming no expertise in *bunraku*. She focuses on the importance of her position as a westerner and her misunderstanding of *bunraku*: the same position of her Nipponophile main character. Naomi Iizuka indirectly frames *36 Views* via the title. The title's reference to Hokusai's famous woodblock print series hints to both

production teams and audiences the play's connection to Japanese culture. Indirect framing mechanisms rely on the collaborative nature of the theatre and the skill of a director to implement them in performance.

Direct Framing

Direct framing mechanisms inform the audience of the intercultural nature of the play from within the dialogue and narrative. Characters directly inform the audience about the source culture. Mac has characters inform the audience through direct address that the play is inspired by Japanese traditional performing arts. Stephen directly addresses the audience in *The Long Christmas Ride Home* to explain his fascination with Japanese culture. Vogel uses this moment to remind the audience that this is an American's interpretation of a Japanese art form. Both *The Long Christmas Ride Home* and *36 Views* have characters and plot points connected to Japan in their story, flagging the plays' connections with another culture. Mac, Iizuka and Vogel directly frame their play as intercultural within the dialogue and story.

Intercultural Playwriting

Playwrights build plays using a variety of materials. When those materials are derived from a culture different from the culture within which the play is consumed, the play uses intercultural dramaturgy. Playwrights craft a Third Space between disparate cultures in the dramaturgy of the play. In these case studies, the Third Space is being created between the United States and Japan, two global superpowers. While the political relationship between the U.S. and Japan is complex in both its history and present (with the U.S. once occupying Japan and still maintaining military bases there today) both countries are economic and cultural giants in the world. Both countries are colonizers. Both countries

enjoy status within global politics. Third Spaces constructed between cultures with different power dynamics at play (colonization, socioeconomic status, etc.) would not be nearly so benign. Bharucha's metaphor of the river must be accounted for. In these cases, the river flows between cultures who have both economic and social dominance in the world.

Intercultural playwrights use a variety of techniques to engage multiple cultures within a play including the merging of content and form, meta-theatre, immersion in theatrical convention, and adaption of theatrical convention. Using Fischer-Lichte's metaphor, the performance cultures are interwoven in these plays: their weft and warp are forged by different dramaturgical tactics. The Third Space is carefully crafted by these playwrights. These case studies represent a wide variety of intercultural dramaturgical tactics, playwright biographies and critical/commercial success. The breadth of examples provides a wide array of ways in which these plays can be understood. Each of these examples also avoided overt and gross levels of cultural appropriation. There is nuance in their engagement with Japanese traditional performing arts and if one finds them offensive in their use of Japanese culture, the plays make a case for their existence, allowing for debate. These plays represent the "complex ongoing negotiations" that Bhabha describes and as such, they engage in conversations about culture which are bound to get messy. Each of these playwrights has made at least the attempt to justify their use of Japanese culture. They engage in a nuanced conversation without simply stealing a theatrical convention and using it for crass commercial gain. Importantly, these playwrights expose American audiences to Japanese performance traditions. In a world where the canon of theatrical history skews so male, so white and so heteronormative, it is important that

these plays, written by playwrights of a diverse set of identities, are bringing to light a performance tradition that many American audiences are not familiar with. The sin of appropriation is certainly great, but the sin of erasure, of not including different cultures in the conversation of what counts as theatre, is greater. These case studies all ask their audiences to be more accepting, more adventurous and more global theatrical citizens. In a world constantly becoming more and more globalized, we need theatre that helps us explore how we can talk to one another across cultural divides. These plays help audiences practice the skill of intercultural communication, one greatly needed in a world as connected and diverse as ours. These plays have that conversation in both the content of their play's narratives and in their dramaturgy. They go beyond talking about interculturalism and do it in the building of plays.

Playwrights can mark their plays as intercultural through framing mechanisms, both direct and indirect, that inform their audience of the multiple cultures being referenced. In an increasingly globalized society, we can only expect an increase in these kinds of plays. As artists are exposed to performance traditions around the world, plays influenced by multiple cultures will become more common. Analyzing these plays from their foundation uncovers the labor of the playwright as architect of a Third Space. As our world – and our theatre – becomes increasingly globalized, we need to find new ways to analyze plays influenced by multiple cultures. The metaphor of playwright as architect of Third Space provides a useful tool for considering this work, but as the phenomena of intercultural playwriting evolves, so should the tools we use to engage with it. Perhaps a radical re-envisioning of Carlson's scale or merging of Bharucha and Pavis' once opposing theories will emerge in the future to help us make sense of these complex theatrical

negotiations. For now, the image of a playwright building a space for many cultures, many peoples and many ideas to come together helps me to understand how and why these plays function the way they do.

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