

I wrote this paper after reading “Staging the Delinquent: Edwardian Theatre and “The Hooligan.” (New Theatre Quarterly, Vol 36 issue 4, Nov 2020) It is an illuminating article written by Dr Martin Heaney, Senior Lecturer, Drama, Applied Theatre and Performance, in the University of East London. The article describes earlier problems of society and drama that have since become our own. The past solutions were more harmful than the offences they were meant to deal with. The delinquency offended society but the solutions corrupted it. This was the origin of many of our present social and economic problems. But it is worse than that – the class-morality of Edwardian authority and culture eventually led to many of the horrors of the last hundred years and to our present chaos. And now, as in the past, because we still don’t understand our problems our solutions make them worse. Reading the article it was eerie to see how drama, because of its relation to authority and culture, was trapped in the heart of the problem. It still is and because of the power of modern media it gets worse. Drama is the fingerprint of the human brain and, freed of ideology, it is the only form of self-consciousness civilized society can have.

After I’d read his article Martin Heaney sent me some questions. Instead of answering each question individually I am giving a general answer. I do this because the human and social situation is changing so much and so fast that anything else would be like repairing the attic when the foundations of the building are blown away. This is theatre’s present situation: plays are written that deal with particular situations and problems and hopefully seek solutions. But that’s like a shipwrecked mariner in the middle of the Atlantic seeking a towel to dry himself on. We need a radically new theory of drama because existing drama is febrile and corrupts our society. Drama uses itself to situate the human self in its situation, the situation that ultimately dramatizes drama.

Anything that exists is a thing in a site. The relation between the two is the immediate reality. This is so of a stone on a mountain or a fish in the sea. It is for example true of a coronavirus in a human being. If the virus were conscious it would see itself as the thing and human being as its site. In this sense there is no difference between a human being and an earthworm. That is the logic of reality. In natural evolution there are really only sites. In evolution the relation between the sites is what the “self’s” function is in humanness. In natural evolution there is neither pathos nor morality. Instead in evolution consequentiality acts as what is known in humans as a self. Only human beings have selves. Self is formed by consciousness of self. This is why I describe the situation of the neonate (the new born child) and its creation of its self in – as -- consciousness. In evolution chance plays the part, the function, that consciousness has in the self. There are no accidents in evolution. Its the responsibility of being human to avoid accidents.

The self adds consciousness to thing (denizen, inhabitant) and site – it creates situation. Drama is about the meaning and is part of the practice of the human situation. This suggests that a map creates the site (the land or sea) that it’s a map of. This isn’t so because of the logic of reality. Hitler says Jews aren’t human but he is wrong: Hitler substitutes ideology for reality. Baden=Powell, the creator of the UK Boy Scout Movement, said that if working class youths weren’t fit or willing to fight in (imperialist) war they might as well be dead. It’s a distortion in Ideology (Ideology can never be logical) that youths would be killed in the war they are not fit (culturally and physically) to fight in.

I describe these things schematically to clarify the oddity in theatre-plays and in social organisation. Drama is the only means humans have – and probably the only means they can ever have – of enacting the reality of being, that is of taking responsibility for their “thing-site” and “self-site” situation. War would be a return to pre-human existence were it not for ideology (ideology may describe war as the ultimate moral humane: pro patria etc . . .)

It may seem complicated but is simple. We need to clarify the relationship between (A) “animal (including people) site (where we are) and culture and technology (our situation including society and economy),” and (B) between “theatre and drama”, “imagination and ideology”, and “consciousness and morality”. Confusion arises when we forget the basic structure of thing and site. Drama is opposed to theatre. and certainly to what often passes for poetry but really is just “brain-booze”. Together these things are “the box of problems.” All are part of the shared problems of humanness. They and their relationship must change as our relation to the site changes – they express the change. This is the centre of human consciousness because the change enacts morality and that is “what a human being is”. A change in any part of self and site effects the whole. Nothing is an island complete unto itself. These notes are about “the box of problems”.

A complication is Leibnitz’s unanswerable question “why is there anything rather than nothing?” The question leads to false answers in Ideology. The question haunts drama because it confounds consciousness (I explain this in my paper “SHPP”, also available on this website). Drama springs from and embodies Leibnitz’s question. His question haunts all existence. Knowing that that is so makes it possible to usefully look at the problem of modernity and the function of drama.

Greece founded the first mass democracy. As its technology was limited It needed human slaves. Slaves were seen as human cattle. Democracy needed to maintain and organised society through consent not force. It needed morality, conduct through reason. How to decide what was right when, for instance, often rights dramatically conflicted with each other. Morality has no casuistry. The Geek solution was drama. The Greek stage was a government-and-religious institution. Drama could minutely, externally and subjectively, reproduce and examine conflicts. When conflicts were ineluctable Gods would decide. So both slaves and gods were holes in the structure of democracy. Euripides showed that Gods made mistakes. It followed that the two institutions – state and religion – had to be divided. The state particularised, religion generalised. Christianity combined both and this made it the last Greek play. You can act Christ, you cant act God. The Crucifixion (the self-sacrifice of God) was the subtlest Greek drama. After that (because of the holes) drama and religion had to be divided.

Religion and government (democracy) were now institutionally separated. For reasons that were intellectual and eschatological the church was not democratic. But slavery, on the contrary, existed for practical, technical reasons – government depended on it. It was as if society’s relation to the site could be split into two. This violently distorted the logic of reality, as if there were two human species – as conceived by Hitler. The holy inquisition made God an undemocratic tyrant. And without the figure of God theatre became the hell of the Roman arena. At some time It has to be shown how Greek drama’s question of morality and humanness was shifted to the market place and money. Its not an organisational problem.

This shift “shakily stabilized” society and self. Over some fifteen hundred years society slowly acquired more knowledge of its practical site. Scriptural accounts of physics increasingly conflicted with proven fact. Banking appeared to become part of the practical structure of nature but it created hubris and, hidden inside the human self, panic. Much of this happened in the shadow of the Vatican. It led to the renaissance interest in classical society and its problems – and morality could be shuffle off to the church. This conflicted with the logic of the self that is created in and by the neonate – the founding relationship of human existence. Subsequently in the renaissance and the reformation the self created a radically new understanding of its self and its practical and symbolic relationship to its site. The relationship is so close that in any change its as if the blackboard wrote what was written on it. The earlier “classical” relationship between government and morality had to change. Humans became the mirror of themselves in a new way. This created a new drama, significantly particularly in reformation Britain, which became the first industrial society.

Prominently, Shakespeare's dramas explore the human self in its changing relationship to the site. He examines and questions the nature of the self, the self's relation to its self and its relation to society and government. It was a return to the situation in which Greece created drama. Greek drama exposes its problems and the need for a solution but it cannot solve the problem. It renews the problem's urgency but leaves its solution to government. Shakespeare confronted the same problem of self and society and could not solve it. In the end he returned to myth but unlike the Greeks he could not, in the dangerous reformation, create new myths. Myths are not adequate in the face of restless, protean, fact. Shakespeare makes the need for understanding clear but he can't provide it. The play he didn't write is the puritan revolution and its beheading of the king. The English have never woken up to the meaning of that beheading. Puritanism is a direct claim to own God and morality – it owns them by total submission to them. This leads to a hidden neuroticism that later in the market can be turned into an apparent insouciance that is really a sadistic obsession with laissez faire. The puritan proclaimed "not me" but "Him." This was an attempt to leap into Leibnitz's "nothingness." Its power is that it combines frailty with absolute force, part becomes totality, abjection becomes potency. Capitalism is a form of Stalinism. It has abandoned morality – social justice – to a law of nature which it thinks it can scrape up off the mud of the world that existed even before there were any humans. Capitalist "creativity" is really nihilism. It combines frailty in an absolute form, in the way Stalin could, with egotism and self-authority. It theoretically distanced itself from the new technology and yet was totally possessed by it. Modern capitalism is a "water-colour" version of Nazism. Politics – and much of society – has become a form of alchemy

(----- Yesterday I wrote the last paragraph above. Then overnight Trump's hooligans invaded the USA Capitol. These notes are about the way atavism and reaction are hidden in modern progressive forms. It comes from the way subjectivity relates to its site, as if we were expressions of our technology." Keep America business great" -----)

The dynamic of the enlightenment integrated itself into the industrial revolution. This was a strange crowded vacuum: the working-class became types of the Greek slave. Salary replaced democracy – the working-salary was a pittance. This was the ethical relationship between technology and moral-authority. It turns upside down the Greek creation of the classical world. Democracy becomes a form of slavery, of being owned by authority. Compulsive consumption is a form of totalitarian force-feeding. At first this is tragic and is politically contested (in socialism) – but the tragedy turns into farce. Farce is tragedy without morality. It produces Trump and Johnson.

The Industrial Revolution diverted and debased the Enlightenment. This led to political struggle that was diverted and debased by a hyper-technology revolution. Puritanism had led to capitalism. God and morality were replaced by the finance-industry. This industry flourished through two world wars, terrorism, financial-economic crashes. To anticipate briefly: the sons were sent to die in the wars of the fatherland and the motherland. Ideology couldn't say "parents-land" – to conceal its barbarity it must fake the morality of drama by referring directly to persons.

There is a sense of ghostliness in modern subjectivity. Of somnambulism. There is a noise in the door as if someone were entering, but it is only the creaking of the hinge. Trump and Johnson are not "real," Democracy is now a form of sleepwalking on a cliff-edge or the edge of a pit or the edge of a grave. This is so in spite of all the hype. I've described the basic structure of site and object, site and denizen, site and self, that gives us reality but enables us to give objective and subjective space to the self. Hyper technology has replaced (and often literally occupied) the site – both natural and subjective. It occupies the actual relationship between site and self. This means that the self becomes its own site. That is a catastrophe. The self becomes its own prison.

It is essential to authority that the self is a site of (apparent and illusory) freedom, or the self would have no obligation other than money, which is an obligation authority always needs to hold in

suspension. The freedom is an illusion. Freedom is subjectively three-dimensional but modern democracy is the subjective illusion of consumption and debt. It is two-dimensional, is conformity. It is the way in which the self becomes its own site. This is subjectively true but the objective evidence for it is obvious: climate and territory destruction. They are symptoms of capitalism. So is the spread of corona virus. In capitalism there can be no post-virus time. We have entered the pan-epidemic age.

The cruelty, oppression, and exploitation of the past were appalling. People were trapped in the fluffy-iron of Ideology. The trap was baited with poverty. But even in the superstitions of divine judgement and hell there was a sense of moral community. Now more and more there is only the self, consuming and getting. Morality becomes sentimentality and panic. The sense of world-and-meaning is lost. I give only one indication of this, It is on your doorstep: the letter box. Through it come the glossy sale-leaflets for curtains, couches, dining suites, kitchens, beds, wardrobes, plastic-leather pouffes, and holidays to get away from it all, and all as bargains. The modern ideal middleclass home as an equivalent of medieval images of heaven. Through the letter box come also the glossy images of old and young living and sleeping in doorways, skin tattooed with the scars of drug syringes. Images of hell. The self-as-its-own-site impoverishes the world.

The great shift was industrialisation of body and mind. In the industrial revolution the peasantry became the working class. To survive it fled to – or was herded into – ghetto-slums. Traditional culture was viciously turned against itself by Ideology. The workers became white slaves. Children, still almost toddlers, are chained to the machines they worked. The condition was documented by Engels, Jack London, the Webbs and others. But I am not writing an economic history, I am concerned with drama. The need for bigger markets and raw materials produced European imperialism. The industrial ghettos turned traditional community culture against itself. In its place there was the strained, desperate and suspicious culture of a prison. Slums made domestic-quasi-sacred by outburst of desperate hilarity. A spectral emptiness supervised by Ideology. The work-people and their families were re-incorporated into society by war. The work-slave became a human member of society by dying for it. It was a new industrial ice age. It was all this that enabled Baden-Powell to smugly boast that the new working-class consciousness of the “factory lads and lasses” could be used by “us” the owners – and those who could not be used might as well be dead (he did not - yet - have to use the word exterminate). Many workers were too frail and un-nourished to fight. Many too un-nourished even to be enlisted into the armies.

The first world war mobilized the human race. The war was followed by economic depression and fascism. Money was counted by human claws. Economic depression justifies Ideology, makes it true: The second world war was a moral fight against fascism. It was a people’s war and afterwards the people sought a people’s peace: the welfare state. This interfered with profit-making. Thatcher and Regan were culturally haggard spectres that climbed out of the trenches of the first world war and the death-pits of Auschwitz. Of course, we dont usually see it like this -- trenches and Auschwitz are the products of technology and Ideology. That is how we see them – we do not see, understand, the Ideology that permits and uses them. But it is the ideology that makes them happen. In politics cause-and effect are not “nature,” not the situation of natural self-and- site – they are culture. Nature in its own evolution produces monsters and abominations and they are then discarded as fossils. It is not the same in culture, which has its own process that comes from the interrelation of nature and consciousness. Nature has absolutely no consciousness of itself. It cannot speculate or plan. This means that technology is part of nature. It has no human purpose. Ultimately this is why drama is the logic of human morality, why it is the logic of reality. Thatcher and Regan (and the Chicago school of economics) return to a pre-human form of evolution. Pre-human evolution “experiments” with monsters because that is the only way it can proceed. When human society reverts to pre-human evolution it produces monsters – and to Hitler we can add Trump and Johnson. In nature the monstrous would die out, be replace by the economical-efficient. That cannot happen

in society. Instead what happens is that human culture makes nature monstrous – for example it turns the atom into a bomb. Boris Johnson said that Trump should be given the Nobel Peace Prize. Hidden in Johnson's psyche, hidden above all from himself, is the idea that Auschwitz is a sort of Kew Gardens. He chooses the living freak--fossil Rees-Mogg to run the House of Commons.

This leads to the present world crisis. The enlightenment and the growing awareness of the reality of non-Ideological nature -- that the Garden of Eden was not there to be colonised. Instead nature was taken over by the technological revolution. This pushed aside the post-second world-war welfare-democracy and replaced it with the possibility of increased consumption. Money to capitalism is what blood is to the body and venom to the snake. It leads to a cultural apparatus that is quite monstrous. The worker is incorporated into the system by money. For the system to work there must be money-profit for the owner to invest in more production. Technology is developed and exploited to create new forms of consumption. Workers become the consumers and must constantly be given new forms of consumption. Workers are paid wages, salaries, so that they can continue consuming. Consumption has become another form of Ideology. You must consume in order to be a decent respectable voting member of society. Consumption replaces the sought holiness of the middle-ages and the assertive-submissive patriotic obedience of the inter-war working class. To manufacture the consumable goods the owner must have money to pay the worker. The money is provided, of course, by the worker's work. There is a hectic desperate inventiveness to produce more goods to consume so that the owner may produce more goods to consume so that the workers can produce more goods so that the owner may pay them to produce more goods. . . so that the workers may make the owner a billionaire. That is, structurally the worker consumes not for satisfaction, as system that is incidental, but to provide the owners' profits. Structurally the worker employs the owner to rob him – and in war to kill him. It is the economic-metabolism of hell. Consumption becomes an industrial waste product on the route to profit. Capitalism seeks to bribe the logic of reality. The modern marketplace is a sanitised 19th century workers' slum. Outside the legal contortions of the law the worker is employing the owner. This is now the situation in the relationship, that I have described, between site and self. In capitalism the self becomes its own site. This changes even the hard objectivity of nature (in contact with humans) into debris, into industrial waste. It is a fantasy reality sustained by unjust class-culture. Contemporary culture is pitted against the logic of reality. This makes morality a form of violence. Historically that was always a threat but capitalism makes it a reality. It is a contradiction that consumption cannot eradicate, cannot heal the wounds it makes. When this situation, this set-up, is placed in the reality of the non-discursive site of nature, the spread of the coronavirus is a symptom of capitalism. Consumption becomes not a drug but something even more basic – a sort of new spectral-reality. The medieval peasant is told what he is doing by the wheat he grows. Modern consumables speak the language of accountants. Modern culture is now parasitic on its users. Modern civilization is jammed.

The question of the difference between youth in the nineteenth century and in inter-war years, and youth now, is a difference of culture and Ideology. I've already mentioned the earlier 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries pseudo-traditional Ideology that was swamped by industrialisation. The Greeks created mythologies to explain existing anomalies and contradictions in natural phenomena. Modern society adopts myths to redirect behaviour. How does this relate to drama? Drama hovers over all societies and is indicative. Drama is like a signpost made of mist and when the mist clears it is seen that the signpost was pointing to itself. Kipling is a case study. As an imperialist he would agree with Baden-Powell's use of young men as war-fodder. Kipling's son Tom fought and died in the first world war. After the war Kipling became an ardent spiritualist and tried to contact his dead son. Relate this to drama. Hamlet was a university student – would have been an inadequate soldier-- but he raised a spirit and murdered his father twice. (Three times if you count the play-within-the-play.) What hovers in drama, In all Ideology? -- Oedipus. Oedipus murdered his father. Kipling as jingoist murdered his son Tom – sent him to the jingoist war. If Kipling had raised his son Tom back to life

Tom would have murdered Kipling. And once, in the past, God had murdered his own son. That changed the tenets of society to free it from the compulsions that Ideology has since re-imposed. Given that drama hovers over every society, what would modern youths do to change their society as its consuming becomes always more destructive? Nothing. That is because capitalism has changed drama not just practically but structurally. Capitalism has turned drama into the entertainment industry. Another form of consumerism. To do it, Capitalism dug up the past to bury the present. Trump was a TV star, and Johnson would be if he were intelligent enough not just to be stupid but stupid and sly enough to appear to be a friendly chat-show host. Now only politics can reform society – but the logic of drama is politics. Even more, the logic of reality is drama (which Brecht did not understand).

Neither the Greeks nor Shakespeare could solve this problem which was theirs and is ours. We vulgarise the Greeks because we think their problems are ancient, and we know Shakespeare depends on chance and accident. Of course, so does reality but not in the logic of reality. The holocaust is not an accident, it's the consequence of its time's Ideology, just as Hiroshima and Nagasaki are the consequences of still nascent capitalism. And just as the age of pandemics is a consequence of mature capitalism.

I describe the problem in terms of masculinity in answer to the question asked. But the subject is also feminine. No characters in literature or drama are more political than say Antigone, Hecuba and Medea. Antigone for instance sees the problem more clearly than her father can see it even by the expedient of gauging out his eyes with his wife's brooches. And Dea (in my play of that name) knows that her husband sends his son to war to be killed -- she knows more than Kipling knows about his own society. Sometimes the Greeks use women characters to investigate their society's problems because women are less constrained by masculine state – and even moral -- protocol.

#### END NOTES

"Theatre industry" is a form of consumption not creativity. It is afraid of drama and has damaged it and acting as far as it can. It plunders and vandalises drama's purpose and practical skills but can't destroy it. Drama will create even in ruins and debris. But in productions of theatre-industry plays it's as if you are asked to understand the expression on someone's face by looking at the back of their head. Screen acting necessarily concentrates on personality and this is like a self without a site. It can be effective but isn't drama. Ironically the camera's facility in changing sites is both a strength and a weakness. If this were understood and explored the whole use of screens would change.

Drama isn't about text but performance. The text and director must trap the actors in the play's centre, always direct them to it. I've written about this in connection with enactment, the triple-brain, the centre-site and so on. But these are problems of drama and acting too big to go into here.

I'm told my plays have influenced other playwrights. I can't know about that. Sarah Kane told me my plays had influenced her. I saw the first production of her "Blasted." It was in the Royal Court theatre upstairs. It was obviously an important play. Later she asked me to direct one of her plays. At the time I couldn't. Later still I saw a West End production of another of her plays. She'd directed it herself. I didn't talk to her about it. She had personal problems but she was destroyed by the theatre industry. Drama had been her umbilical lifeline but the theatre industry tuned it into the rope with which she hanged herself.

How do young people relate to my plays? They relate well. And often they perform them better than

many adults can. That may be because the young are nearer to the neonatal time when they created their self and their relation to the world. Perhaps they use that creativity to relate to my plays. I search for the same creativity when I write them. I leave the ending of my plays open because I assume the audience are understand what longing is. A play should not finish in an end but at a place where you cant turn back. A play's end should be at its epicentre This was so in the plays I wrote for Big Brum Theatre-in-Education. BB had neither the structure nor resources to develop this.

But BB succeeded. Their young audiences' concentration was remarkable. A few teachers said "Our students wont understand this, they cant concentrate." Those teachers were wrong. Perhaps the students taught their teachers a lesson. At one school teachers wanted to ban a young man from the performance. They said he's a trouble-maker, disturbs the whole class with his antics, tantrums and anger. BB insisted he saw the performance. He watched it with a sort of intense serenity. Perhaps that was because for once something, a play, was listening to him. Only in one school was it once different. After the performance three early teenage boys came up to me. They praised the play with a specifically adult cynicism, a precise reaction that was uncanny in such young people. They praised the play and chuckled. They thought the play was meant to be reactionary. I was dismayed and a bit frightened. Weeks later out of the blue I received a letter from a schoolmaster. He hectored me in the precise phrases the boys had used, but with venom not their fun. I realised he was their teacher. Why had he waited weeks to write, what anger had smouldered in him all that time? He had understood what the play really meant. He was an English schoolmaster Nazi who had corrupted his students.

I worked at the Royal Court Theatre when its people were creative. They and most of society were still shocked by the second world war. They wanted to change the future. But the Court destroyed itself. Its creativity ended up in the Entertainment Industry dustbin. (Ive contributed a little about this to a recent book "Arnold Wesker: Fragments and Visions.") Today there are many talented playwrights, many of them young, but the RSC, RNT, the established theatres and The West End (The Dead End) don't stage their plays they undertake them. Many fringe theatres are creative but the audience is small.

Drama is not an "add on," not just fun, thrill, fear, relaxation or visceral stimulation. In these notes Ive argued that drama is created in and by the relation of self and site. The audience and stage repeat that relation. Drama gives us the chance to be human.

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