

Terrifying Grief

Sam Trubridge

Our everyday life will never fill it. And yet that empty space is waiting for Life.
We took everything with us, brought back everything, except Life!...
(Appia, 1922: 135)

This paper examines the structures (performative, architectural, and cultural) that are produced in response to the crisis of large-scale fatality, disaster, and bloodshed. It responds to the statement in Robert Bevan's book *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War*, that '[t]here is a danger in life becoming reified in permanent honour to memories of suffering' (2006: 176), elaborating on this statement with the suggestion that expressions of grief can quickly become acts of aggression, thus turning the victim into a perpetrator.

There are two significant architectural spaces wherein the public gathers to confront its tragedies, crises, and suffering. The first of these is that artefact of the city/nation's collective grief: the 'memorial monument' where the loss is memorialised through an enduring architectural statement. The second is the theatre: another 'memory space' like the monument, wherein the public examines its suffering through the conventions of the stage tragedy and its various derivations. Of these two spaces the monument is possibly a more potent symbol, since it reaffirms social values, tribalism, and national identity in the face of (and memory of) the outside threat, or threat of the other. The theatrical space on the other hand, is ambiguous and temporal: a container for ideas rather than a single enduring statement, where the physical bodies of performer and audience occupy the same environment at the same time. This potential for 'complicity' that is found in the theatre suggests some solutions to the familiar programme of the memorial monument. Thus performativity (as the body's conscious, responsive relationship with the work) can disrupt the permanence of the monumental statement by providing a multivalent, transient, and embodied transaction between the public and its collective pain.

This article will consider two artists whose works have examined the representation and sharing of tragedy and grief in the public spaces of the memorial monument and the auditorium. The first of these is Kingsley Baird, a New Zealand based artist known for his design of memorial monuments in New Zealand, Australia, and Japan. In early 2007 he completed a residency at the Flanders Field Museum in Belgium, where he developed an installation in response to extensive research into the lives of New Zealand soldiers in The First World War. The second artist that will be discussed is Italian theatre director and designer Romeo Castellucci: whose recent work *Tragedia Endogondia* was developed in eleven episodes between 2002-2004 in eleven European cities. Both artists have in their respective media developed methods through which the public can both live again a moment of sadness, and begin to speculate upon the tragedy that is being represented; as well as speculate on the nature of tragedy itself. This allows these contemporary works to perform a function that the stage tragedies have fulfilled for thousands of years: helping the 'polis' (the civilian public) to identify with and come to terms with its grief through a shared experience.

I

Increasingly, Americans participate in the witnessing of history through camera images; "where we were" when it happened was in front of the television screen.

(Sturken, 1997:25)

Media coverage of recent tragedies in world history has taken on the role of transmitting and channelling the grief of the populace. Through the media it is now possible to have the feeling of participating in events such as Princess Diana's funeral, or to bear witness to tragedies such as President Kennedy's assassination or the Challenger space shuttle disaster in 1986 through video recordings and audio tape of the event. However unbiased the mediated 'experience' seems to be, it is nonetheless as structured a framework as the architectures of monument and

theatre are, and is a very prescriptive way of transmitting grief to contemporary audiences. A particularly telling example of this featured on the cover of the British tabloid paper *The News of the World* on November 12, 2001. A toddler was pictured, holding an urn containing the ashes of his father – killed in the attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001. For such a child this must have been a tragedy as inconceivable as the concept of mortality would have been to the first man and woman, depicted in Piero Della Francesca's fresco *The Death of Adam* (1452-1466). Yet, however naive his incomprehension seems, it is nonetheless used by the periodical to legitimise the then current invasion of Afghanistan in the headline for this poignant cover image: 'William Larkey is 2. The urn he's cuddling contains ash from Ground Zero. It's all he has to remember his British dad, killed on September 11. His bewildered face should remind us all...WHY WE'RE AT WAR'. This example illustrates just how easily tragedy can be exploited by the media to promote a particular agenda, manipulating the fear and grief of a terrorised populace to validate the actions that follow. Thus in the wake of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Centre, invasions were mounted, and rigid unethical security laws were passed whilst the populace remained traumatised by the catastrophe. Now seven years since, popular sentiment has assumed a more speculative, reflective outlook on the events, as populations 'awaken' to the changes that have been engineered under the cover of their shock and all-consuming grief. It is now possible to see the severe effects that these changes in law have had upon human rights and freedom in the illegal detention of terrorist 'suspects' in Guantanamo Bay, or the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan: wars that are products of Western grief over September 11, that now terrorise populations every day of the year with the same trauma that was experienced on one day in America seven years ago. Thus the victim becomes an aggressor, turning bloodshed and atrocity upon its perceived assailants in order to assuage the consuming sentiments of grief, shock, and rage: transforming the lament into hysterical terrorism, and a terrifying grief.

The expression of grief has often incorporated acts of violence. It is not unusual for mourners in many cultures to strike their own bodies or mutilate themselves in order to memorialise the loss, and provide catharsis for the community that gathers around

the tragic event or the dying body. But as the example of the tabloid article indicates, there is also a violence that is expressed outwards with this action: one that helps define an 'other' and unite the community around the notion of an external, alien threat. This makes the body of the victim an important political device. In his 1960 book *Crowds and Power* Elias Canetti describes how such a community (the lamenting Warramunga of Central Australia) mobs the dying body, piling themselves on top of it to smother it with their mass. Thus 'the heap of bodies absorbs the dying man into itself' (123), ensuring 'the continuance of the heap to which he belongs' (124). This may be perceived by some as a savage ritual, but it is not so remote from the political subsumption of William Larkey's dead father, the consumption of Christ's own body for the sacrament, and the adoption of the remains of unknown soldiers for the centrepieces of countless war memorials. These 'consumed' bodies help define and galvanise a community and its grief. For this reason the 'unknown' soldier is hardly an unknown at all, but is rather 'one of us': an everyman who has died for the nation in order to keep it intact. It is very unlikely that people think of these interred bodies of 'unknown soldiers' as the bodies of old enemies: so that the bones in Wellington's Tomb to the Unknown soldier would not be expected to belong to a German, Turk, or Japanese soldier. Instead the body belonged to someone who spoke the same language, came from the same soil, and knew all the same songs as we do. Thus while defining a community, these military, religious, media, and architectural structures of grieving also begin to define an alien 'other': thereby propagating tribalistic sentiments around the idea of a dead and suffering body. This is a sentiment clearly expressed in Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating's eulogy delivered at the service for The Unknown Australian Soldier on November 11, 1993. His speech began with the words: 'We do not know this Australian's name, and we never will'. The soldier he refers to was nonetheless Australian, and this is all that was needed for him to become a device of nationalism: 'We have gained a legend: a story of bravery and sacrifice and, with it, a deeper faith in ourselves and our democracy, and a deeper understanding of what it means to be Australian' (Australian War Memorial website).

Images of suffering have a powerful appeal, and have often been used to attract the unbereaved, ungrieving masses to a political, spiritual, or philosophical cause. Canetti describes this effect in reference to the popularisation of Christianity around the story of Jesus Christ: 'the story of a man who perishes unjustly' (1960: 168). He talks of the community that consumes this idea, and how this community, as 'the hunting or baiting pack expiates its guilt by becoming a lamenting pack [...] thus they attach themselves to one who will die for them, and in lamenting him, they feel *themselves* persecuted' (170). It is then no surprise that tragedies like the terrorist attack on New York's World Trade Centre have become iconised through citation of the religious in the many images we see of the tragedy: firemen bearing injured bodies out of the buildings, pieta-like, or the cross of twisted metal left standing in the wreckage. This event has been followed by an re-affirmation of religious values in the American Right and by the use of fundamentalist religious rhetoric in the US president's speeches. Similarly the memorial spectacle at Ground Zero has become a yearly event like Christmas or Easter, and is often used as an occasion to re-affirm the invasion of countries like Iraq or Afghanistan and to remind citizens that the war on terror is not yet complete. Notwithstanding the fact that Saddam Hussein's Iraq had nothing to do with September 11, this horrified, almost religious grief expressed in response to the tragic event has also been used to eclipse the equally lamentable loss of civilian lives in Iraq and Afghanistan. These injured bodies are often omitted from the media representation of the 'war on terror', that has so chillingly become a 'war of terror'. American casualties are obsessively documented, while the number of Iraqi civilian deaths remains unmeasured, despite being much greater in number. This is the performance of grief that Canetti describes, which feeds the 'psychic economy' of the killing pack, to whom the lament becomes an indispensable justification for the violence and terrorism that must follow.

When Canetti talks of 'the pack' of mourners he refers to a community that doesn't ask questions. This community is full of individuals disabled (as we all are) by the movement, by a sense of belonging, and the emotion of the crowd. However, the architects of spaces and events that attract crowds of mourners are individuals that have an ability to shape the mass and its relationship with tragedy in a similar way to

the classical Greek dramatists and architects. The crowds at the Lincoln Memorial, Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC, or Daniel Liebeskind's Holocaust Museum in Berlin interact with their respective tragedies in ways specified by the architecture and the programmes that inhabit them. In horror we produce such artefacts of our grief, hoping to make sense of our suffering or mark it in some way. It is a horror that seeks to comprehend, by constructing rhetorical dialogues or architectural statements. This response has the opportunity to alleviate and redeem the situation. However it is too often expressed through contrary acts of violence, aggression, or vengeance directed at those perceived to be the threat: those thought to be the embodiment of the community's suffering. Thus allied forces have invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, and prison orderlies in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo have been instructed to humiliate, torture, and destroy the psyche of suspects in order to extract information. It is at this point that the expression of grief becomes denatured and perverted, and begins to produce new traumas: the tragedy reproducing itself infinitely, endogonidically.

This study suggests that an opportunity exists in the live encounter between body and architecture to memorialise and examine grief in positive ways that no longer appeal to aggression or hysteria for resolution. There is an opportunity to reassociate the monument and the theatre with the very objectives of the Greek Attic Tragedy – to question and examine the enigma of mortality, fatality, and moments of intense grief or terror. Events such as September 11 will continue to be memorialised, but these memorials cannot maintain the same qualities indefinitely, as Marita Sturkens indicates in her book *Tangled Memories*: 'memories do not remain static through time – they are reshaped and reconfigured, they fade, and a rescripted' (1997: 21). Culture and history are not fixed things, rather they evolve with the living bodies and societies that produce it. Thus is it natural that the grief will change too, and can in time mutate, out of a need for its own survival. This has already occurred in the alienation of 'terrorist' foreign cultures on the 'axis of evil', or in the aggression that has made the victim into an aggressor, turning grief into an act of violence or terrorism. The alternative is a program that can change within these structures, so

that the spaces for grieving can become unfixed, transient spaces wherein grief must eventually pass, and where the rigour of tragic 'speculation' can take place.

II

I have concluded that monumental art as we know it has reached the end of its life; it is no longer alive, only vestigial. We are entering a new period in which art will demand that we live within it and we, in turn, will require that art live within us.

(Appia, 1922: 136)

When the body has gone, the need for an object to replace it produces spaces of grief: places in which we may site tragedy within the populace and locate it with an artefact: a tangible memory that will speak across generations with the profundity of the words of Sophocles, Aristotle, Marlowe, and Shakespeare. In the period following the two World Wars, when the suffering body was too potent an image for survivors, playwrighting generally avoided the tragic form; instead opting for plays of absurdity and domesticity. However, memorials and monuments proliferated in this time, and occupied many civic centres, town squares, parks, and fields as bodiless spaces to remember the bodies that were gone. The monument is by definition 'an enduring thing, *especially* a thing that by its survival commemorates a person, action, period, or event' (Trumble & Stevenson, 2002: 1826), whilst the memorial specifically addresses a particular death, tragedy, or a number of deaths. By name and form the 'memorial monument' (as a conflation of these two qualities) has long provided an unambiguous, dogmatic attitude about the tragedy that it memorialises. In his 1922 essay *Monumentality*, the Swiss set designer Adolphe Appia defines 'the monumental' as any work 'that which relies on its duration rather than upon its immediate usefulness' (137). With this rationale, one may consider monumentality the very apotheosis of the performative, which is by comparison a living-in-the-moment, a state of flux, and reciprocal exchange with the subject. As an example of the monumental, The Washington Monument in Washington DC is a rather archetypal extrusion of its state's need to express a timeless power: a single stone

obelisk set into an organised terrain of fountains and white marble landscaping. Through its architecture and the buildings nearby, it identifies America with the ancient Egyptian and Roman empires that it aspires to emulate. Similarly the nearby Lincoln Memorial (within its colonnade of Greek columns) features a paternal figure of the nation's favourite president: seated in a chair surveying the territory spread before him. So whilst it is by name a memorial, it nonetheless assumes many of the features of the monumental in its inscrutable surfaces and elevated architecture. These memorable forms leave little to be challenged or questioned, but rather instruct the viewer on how to feel about them through their awe-inspiring scale and impenetrable rigidity. However, in recent times, the artists creating new memorials have begun to rethink these paradigms, often rejecting the monumental in a variety of ways. In these circumstances the conventions of the memorial have begun to shift away from those imposed by the state, and have begun to express the concerns of individual artist/designers. Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial, in the same park as the Lincoln Memorial and The Washington Monument, is an example of such a design, wherein the artist was given freedom without the imposition of a political agenda. The result is a work that continues to memorialise the event, but does so in a provocative, performative, and ambiguous way. Consisting of a cut through a mound in the earth, Lin creates a space to be entered, rather than a shape to be circumnavigated. Within this enclosure, the body of the visitor seems to move into the landscape: almost interring themselves along with the lists of names carved onto black marble. Famous images of the memorial, such as one of a Vietnam veteran pressing a flag against this wall, do little to express how the space encloses the public. Nor do they completely capture the reflective qualities of the wall that contains one's own image upon and within its surfaces. Such aspects (distinct from the monumental form and opaque unreflective surfaces of the obelisk and the Lincoln Memorial) help to include the public and make an image of their own presence in the space. Thus a subtle kind of performance unsettles the monumental: delimiting its boundaries and allowing the living their own place within the picture.

New Zealand designer and sculptor Kingsley Baird is an artist whose work also responds to the problematic nature of the memorial monument. Working on New

Zealand and ANZAC orientated memorials his sculptures contain multicultural themes that allow the body of the visitor/spectator to interact with the architecture in a performative way. This often gives an ambiguity to the work's 'message' by offering a personal connection with the architecture and the tragic content of the space. It is a process that presents dilemmas rather than dogmatic conclusions: allowing the public, as Appia's text proposes, to 'receive the strong, unforgettable impression that they, their living bodies, are creating and defining the space' (1922: 142). Baird's works in Ypres' Flanders Fields Museum, the ANZAC Memorial in Canberra, The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Wellington, and the NZ contribution to Nagasaki's Peace Park are all such designs where the body interacts with cultural memory, and seeks its own answers in a performative way: often by disrupting the codified structures of the memorial monument. In The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Baird constructed a low slab of granite that invites visitors to touch it with its patterns and materials embedded into the shiny black surface. In Nagasaki he created an enclosure of laser-cut steel in the form of a Maori cloak, or 'korowai'. Sunlight shines through the cut patterns of this surface, falling onto the body of the visitor that stands inside. This 'double enclosure' expresses themes of protection and shelter, whilst also resonating with the images of women burnt by the atomic blast where the patterns of their kimonos were scorched onto the skin. Beyond its aesthetic effects, an important feature of this memorial is that it leaves an empty space where the monumental statement should be. At this core the visitor stands, and the structure casts various impressions upon their body. It sites the visitor at its centre, where we are used to seeing statues and obelisks, and by doing so makes the visitor its most crucial feature. This allows the potential for a relationship to be formed with the memorial, and by virtue of this, a relationship with the tragedy itself. Thus it is completely reliant on the ephemeral, fleeting nature of the performative act that it contains, rather than its robust materiality. Direct sunlight comes and goes with the movements of the clouds, and visitors can pass by nonchalant to the performative potential in this space; yet the work contains an experience that may unfold and reveal much more for the visitor that is prepared to investigate the work. This is a memorial that does not offer the same experience and interpretation for the same

person, but rather it responds and transforms itself to the specifics of body, place, and time.

There is an ambivalence surrounding the event of Japan's holocaust that Baird's memorial alludes to in its ambiguous, multivalent features and the visitor's performative experience. Many years on, the tragedies of the nuclear bombs are problematic in light of news of Japan's own crimes in Korea, China, and South East Asia during World War II that still go largely unacknowledged by the Japanese government and its people. The Rape of Nanjing between December 1937 and March 1938 is widely accepted as a horrific massacre, perpetrated by Japan, and regarded as 'the other' Asian holocaust of the Second World War. However it is still referred to in Japanese school textbooks as the liberation or 'the entrance into' China, rather than one of the most horrific crimes against humanity. Cabinet politicians and prime ministers even continue to pay respects at Yasukuni Shrine, where Japanese war criminals (generals and colonels) from the invasion of China and South East Asia are idolised. In light of Japan's continued denial, and dogmatic memorialisation of its war criminals, it is difficult to completely resolve the paradoxes of the country's own victimisation, where the aggrieved can also be seen as the aggressor. With such a difficult precedent, how do we begin to deal with other such events, or the new tragedies of our 21st Century? Those tragedies that preceded or followed Hiroshima are no less ambivalent, despite the overwhelming loss of lives that mark such events. This is the value of Baird's sculpture in Nagasaki Peace Park, where one is given the responsibility of completing the work with one's own body, consequently bringing to the sculpture one's own individual viewpoints, questions, and dilemmas. Standing within this fragile enclosure, one is not delivered an empirical solution. Rather one must speculate upon what the work offers, where ideas are presented as questions: non-didactic, ambivalent, and subjectively interpreted.

But what of those tragedies that are not memorialised? What of the tragedies that are not legitimised by any nation-state: where the victim lies outside the borders of what is considered 'proper' or distinct citizenry? Such victims are easily forgotten, or

obscured by the tragedies of the nation-state that chooses who is worthy of grief. Thus the Iraqi inmate killed whilst detained at the US operated 'Abu Ghraib' prison in Iraq will never be memorialised or enshrined like the bones of The Unknown Soldier, or the spirits of Japan's generals of war. Similarly, there is very little memorialisation of the thousands of women tortured and killed by medieval witch-hunts, the Kurds of Eastern Turkey, or the Gypsy, Negro, Handicapped, and Communist prisoners of Nazi concentration camps. In Amsterdam and Jerusalem, memorials have been dedicated to the homosexual victims of Nazi Germany, but only in recent years: 1987 and 2005 respectively. It was only in January of this year that Germany finally announced that construction would begin in Berlin on two monuments: one to the murdered gypsies of the holocaust, and the other to the murdered gays and lesbians. Memorials are constructed as the official story of a nation or event, so when bodies are excluded from the memorial, they are also excluded from the idea of acceptability and nationhood.

III

For a long time I thought my texts would only inhabit those rare and desert places where only poems grow. Until I arrived at the Theatre. There was the stage, the earth, where the self remains imperceptible, the country of others. There do their words, their silences, their cries, their song, makes themselves heard, each one according to a particular world and in a particular foreign language.

(Cixous: 1986-1987, 341).

A memorial is not enough, since it will only ever stand for those events and bodies deemed acceptable and noteworthy by a grieving majority. This majority continues to memorialise itself, and to commit in stone evidence of itself and evidence of its own suffering over the suffering of others. The Israeli occupation of Palestine has proved that a people made victim once will not stay victims forever. Now Palestinians are the persecuted people: illegitimate and unwelcome. By contrast with their suffering the Memorial monuments of the Holocaust remain, and last over the decades as

expressions of a grief that never dies: 'lest we forget', so that the moment of pain remains, and continues to identify one community as a victim throughout whatever events may follow. Thus the memorial is not enough: rather than being a statement 'built to endure', the expression of grief needs to be as organic and transient as the bodies and communities that it represents. For this reason the theatre is significant, as a space and a discipline in which the public has historically sought to come to terms with its crises and identify with Cixous' 'country of others'. This theatrical encounter does not occur in an enduring monumental way, but through the very nature of theatre and the performative: which is transient and ambivalent, an empty space where the architectural 'fact' should be. The memorial is an expression of the community's collective grief, while in contrast the theatre space is an architectural question mark: built to receive the bodies of audience and performer for a moment of provocation and speculation. The Tragedy is perhaps the most questioning of all theatrical genres that occupy this space, and is as old as theatre itself: having originated from the Dionysian rituals of ancient Greece as the earliest forms of Western theatre. Concurrently Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle constructed the ideals of democracy and humanism in politics and philosophy, often by employing stage tragedy and written rhetorical dialogues. Thus analogies to contemporary events were explored on the tragic stage operating as a public forum to reflect the ideals of this emerging philosophy. We see the tragic hero go before us like a sacrificial offering, suffering for us so that we may in some way be spared the pain, or be spared from inflicting it upon someone else. It is through our experience of this suffering tragic body that we may collectively grieve for the transience of life and confront unanswerable questions about fate, mortality, and suffering.

At this stage in the enquiry it is necessary to acknowledge the continuum that links the memorial monument with the theatrical performance through sculptural works like Kingsley Baird's, and other modes of sculpture or performance art that embrace the social and temporal. The theatre is by no means an exclusive venue for performative acts and the live experience of tragedy. A good example of one work that disrupts the monumental with the performative in this way is Tatsuro Bashi's *Villa Victoria* for the 2002 Liverpool Biennale. Bashi constructed a hotel room around

a monument to Queen Victoria in the centre of the city, so that visitors could spend £100 a night to sleep next to the statue of the queen. This genre of 'social sculpture' has been explored by other artists like Slovakian Roman Ondak, or Chinese Zhang Huan, demonstrating a way that the live body can be reassociated with the monumental via transient, ephemeral experiences that last for a specific period and then disappear. Such works require the viewer's presence, and in doing so begin to affirm and validate the existence of its audience/public in the same way that theatre can. These 'social sculptures' that interact with the living body thus become monuments to the present, or as NZ artist Amy Howden-Chapman suggested at the recent forum *From Moments to Monuments* (NZ International Arts Festival, March 8, 2008) can even become monuments to invisible tragedies or tragedies that haven't yet occurred: 'future monuments'. With this objective in mind the Italian company Societas Raffaello Sanzio embarked in 2002 on a project to explore tragedy, and its relevance to the immediate and living present. Presented as eleven works in eleven different European cities, this *Tragedia Endogonia* became a series of excursions into the genre of tragedy that were deliberately inconclusive: both as individual works and as a whole series. In the printed programme for the first show, *C.#01 Cesena*, director/designer Romeo Castellucci proposes the project as a work in constant motion and constant reproduction, 'an organism on the run': thus avoiding an empirical monumental statement or interpretation that might limit the scope of their experiment. Speaking on tragedy, Castellucci says: 'It is not a reflection on the world or the expression of a world view, but a vital question on the possibility of action, on the nature itself of acting' (Astrié, Céline; Kelleher, Joe; and Ridout, Nicholas, 2004: 1, 8).

Castellucci's description of 'action' seems to describe the function and form of the Greek Attic Tragedy, wherein the tragic hero seems to go before us and suffer for us so that we may reflect upon their actions. This is the cathartic purpose of the tragedy, where the body of the protagonist can be compared with a sacrificial offering, an effigy, that helps us come to terms with the cruel forces of fate. The eternal enigma of suffering: that question of 'why?', 'why me?' is played out on stage, and explored in the body of one individual: so that the community can

understand its collective and individual crises better. Castellucci's work offers much to any discussion on the relationship between the contemporary city/public and its tragedies. Through its eleven expositions in eleven different cities, one can begin to see submerged in the potent imagery of the performances an exploration of the modern crises that are currently shaping global culture. In the cathartic moments of *C.#01 Cesena*, the performers recreate the death scene of Carlo Giuliani: an activist who had recently been run over by Italian police whilst demonstrating in Genoa against the 'Group of Eight' globalisation summit on July 20, 2001. One of those bodies unlikely to ever be heroised in monumental form, Giuliani is a figure on the fringes of acceptability. On stage, Castellucci adds to the scene of his death several small folded placards with letters on them. Arranged on the floor around him, they speak of some kind of forensic or archaeological attempt to come to terms with and understand the event. There is no way of knowing how these cards or their lettering operate, but nevertheless they communicate a desire and a need to make sense of a scene that was for that moment etched into the conscience of the European populace: in particular the Italian populace, and the audience for this first instalment of *Tragedia Endogonidia* in Cesena.

The episodes continue: often with more veiled references to crises specific to the new geographic and chronological contexts presented by each new venue. In *BR.#04 Brussels*, the performance occupies a marble foyer, devoid of any doors or windows. It is in many ways a monumental space, with no obvious function or exit: an architectural 'cul de sac' that may as easily be a bank's foyer as that of a UN building, governmental office, or war memorial space. Some of these references are not inappropriate in Belgium, where the show was developed, since it is a country known for its number of cemeteries, war memorials, and UN foyers. A sense of bureaucracy prevails in the useless nature of this enclosure, and the figures that inhabit it are equally powerless and uniformed: a black woman mops the floor, an old policeman looks on as another policeman is stripped and beaten by his colleagues. Castellucci's sets and characters for *Tragedia Endogonidia* are often constructed in this way: surrounding the stage space with blank, impenetrable wall-floor-ceiling arrangements, and filling them with uniformed, impotent figures. The 'escape' from

this space (and thereby the escape from the tragedy that we bear witness to) often lies forward: towards the audience, and into the auditorium. This highlights the significance of the theatre as a viewing space, and the responsibility that Castellucci attributes to the speculative and interpretative faculties of his audience. Without words to define them, the images in *Tragedia Endogonia* are left for the audience to complete with their own imaginings. Continuing this discourse with the audience, the use of animals, infants, and machines in Castellucci's works turn the gaze upon the viewer. In this instance their role as onlooker and witness is framed and made complicit by the frankness of an 'innocent's' gaze, or by the spectacle of a mechanical catastrophe, such as three cars falling in quick succession from the ceiling of *P.#06 Paris*. In *Stage Fright, Animals, and Other Theatrical Problems* (2006) Nicholas Ridout writes about this 'pre-tragic' innocence that the bodies of apes, animals, and babies bring to the stage. These startling and startled occupants of the proscenium stare back, and turn speculation upon itself: without the consciousness of what it is to be on stage, or to perform. There is also a 'pre-tragic' quality to incidents like the falling car, which puts the viewer in the moment of the disaster, a tragedy that subsequently disrupts all innocence. An event such as this exceeds the suspension of belief and helps to locate the audience's experience within a realm of material and physical reality. Thus the witness-audience begins to speculate further, interrogating such irreversible moments of catastrophe and confrontation in order to establish a conceptual relationship with the moment. It provokes in the audience rigorous speculation, that attempts to resolve these events that they been implicated into by virtue of the baby's gaze or the horrendous crash of metal and glass, as the car hits the concrete floor of the Odéon Theatre on Boulevard Berthier.

Moving on from the phenomenological acts of Castellucci's theatre, one can recognise a multivalence in the images that we are confronted with that is comparable to the ambivalence present in Baird's Nagasaki memorial. As Joe Kelleher writes of the experience of viewing *Tragedia Endogonia*:

'This is not theatre as mirror to the world, but theatre as oven, where scraps and traces of human imagining (call these language, or legend, or idea) are cooked up until they discover themselves altered, right down to their molecular structure' (Astrié, Kelleher, and Ridout, 2004: I, 11).

In *B.#03 Berlin*, we follow a female protagonist through the images and events of the performance. She is sometimes the mother whose child has died, yet at the same time seems to represent the figure of a persecuted womanhood: at first miserably sexualised (masturbating with her child's toy), then abject (covered in blood), and finally defaced (clad in robes and a peaked hood). Whilst documentation of the production describes this as a story about a mother's grief, the imagery also speaks of the fear and disgust that expels aspects of the feminine from society. At one point a large black circle is suspended above the stage while three masked and leather-clad women (The Soldiers of Conception) fire pistols at it – small white bullet holes in the surface. There is often the implication of an eldritch and earthy femininity, of moons and eggs. She is soon sprayed with blood, wrapped in a sheet, and made to stand at the back of the stage, shrouded, for the remainder of the performance. It is in many ways a lament for a figure of femininity that would not be commemorated in the stone of a memorial monument of any kind. But there is an addition to the experience of this performance that makes this image even more lamentable, making our relationship with the tragedy even more urgent. Here in Berlin's Hebbel Theatre, Castellucci fills the stalls seating with mute life-sized rabbits while we, the 'real' audience sit above, in the dress circle. Kelleher describes this 'audience' of rabbits as:

'here "for" this performance, they are here for this and for this only, but they do not acknowledge the performance, and they certainly do not acknowledge it as "theirs" [...] They are like subjects of a corrupt, and corrupting, historicism, supine before the power of "whatever happens", unwilling or incapable of conceiving it otherwise' (ibid: III, 1).

It is the unreceptive muteness of this 'false audience' that makes the audience's gaze more significant: these stuffed figures cannot bear witness to the tragedy, so we must instead. We must look harder, remember more, and take responsibility for what we see, lest the event be lost forever. Looking upon the performance with this crowd of rabbits below, one cannot help but feel like a minority: an exception to the monumental inaction that is filling the auditorium space.

Just how often does the theatre audience really look on with responsibility and awareness? On describing monumentality Appia indicates how the theatre has also become monumental: stating that 'theatre, as it has been understood, has schooled the spectator in passivity; therefore it can no longer serve a modern audience' (1922: 138). Castellucci's auditorium of bunnies is a confrontation with this passive audience: disregarding conventional seating for a statement on the current impotence of the theatre in making a lasting effect upon its public. It confronts the audience with themselves, so that the real tragedy being explored here seems to be that of inaction. The grieving of the mother on stage becomes a lament of her own alone-ness under an uncaring, passive gaze that will not, or cannot respond. By memorialising his stage action in this way Castellucci once again addresses the living audience and their complicity as interpreters of the stage image, and as physical participants in the spatial arrangement of this theatre experience. This is not a theatre of passive mute bodies but a complicit evolving relationship that must change and embrace the new outlooks, opinions, and experiences that are brought to each performance. It addresses a contemporary problem that Nicholas Ridout describes in his own essay on the production, where 'the distance between yourself and the event has become perhaps one of the key anxieties of the modern historical imagination' (Astrié, Kelleher, and Ridout, 2004: III, 6). He talks of the need to 'be there' that is implicit in the action of laying flowers, messages and toys at Ground Zero, or the value of chunks of the Berlin wall, and the placing of bouquets at Pont d'Léna in Paris. Such ritualised actions and artefacts of the tragedy are important to the living, allowing them to feel closer to the tragic event and the suffering body. Thus it is possible that the installation of *B.#03 Berlin* confronts more than just the inaction of the theatre audience, but also becomes a lament upon the distancing of

tragedy itself, or the lack of identification that modern communities have with the tragic experience, as Castellucci himself makes manifest in the programme for *C.#01 Cesena*: 'Our time and our lives are completely detached from any tragic concept'. Perhaps this loss itself is one of the significant tragedies that Castellucci's series of productions is memorialising.

Considering this contemporary detachment from the tragedy it is possible to perceive the monument as a place of distance. Here the dead have an indifference towards the living public, who continue irreconcilably to identify themselves with the suffering and absent bodies. As Canetti writes: 'The man in the grave knows nothing of the man who stands beside it, reflecting on the span of the completed life. For him time ended with the year of his death; for the other it has continued right up to the present' (1960: 321). This indifference pertains not only to the masses of bodies memorialised in the architecture of war monuments, but is also (as Appia has indicated) a condition often attributed to the passive spectator of the proscenium theatre; such as those that the Hebbel Theatre in Berlin was built for. In theatre the 'suspension of disbelief' that helps audiences to escape into an imaginary world is often replicated with a suspension of all physical activity, responsibility, and complicity with the performance. This distances events on stage and reduces their significance in the 'living experience' of theatre. Thus it could be said that both the monument and the theatre are spaces that conventionally have little to do with live bodies: privileging the corpse of the soldier, or the prone forms of the passive audience. These are bodies that have moved on, corpses that have abdicated themselves from the performance of everyday life. Thus the monument and the theatre continue to try and sustain the image of these dead bodies and those 'dead' ideologies that died with them. This monumental rigidity, this 'death', disregards the living bodies that come to memorialise the tragedy, disregarding the living, evolving ideas that come with them.

IV

Our time and our lives are detached from any tragic concept. Redemption, pathos, and ethos are words that cannot be reached, having fallen down to the coldest of abstractions.

(Romeo Castellucci, programme notes for *Tragedia Endogonia C. #01 Cesena*, 2002)

As Castellucci has claimed, we live in a 'post-tragic' world, where we have lost our sense of tragedy. The distance and indifference of the monumental has made it impossible to identify with the tragic event. In the theatre this is the product of an empty space full of dead bodies, whilst in the media real death and suffering is often indiscernible from the images of violence that are presented to us in entertainment and popular culture. Tragedy has lost its redemptive and speculative value. In his 1993 book *The Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America* Robert Hughes describes the American obsession with playing the victim in its many television programmes like *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *The Ricky Lake Show*, or *Sally Jessy Raphael*. Today this tradition is continued in programmes like *The Jerry Springer Show* or *Judge Judy*, where the role-playing of domestic tragedy has saturated the media with trivial expressions of victimisation, so that a broader perspective on the tragic experience is lost. The tragedies that are chosen for these shows also reinforce the status quo, and continue to marginalise the real suffering of those masses that exist beyond American borders, or those that exist within America as unwelcome citizens. Nonetheless in this post-tragic world we need only look a little harder to discover the real tragedies beyond the superficial, monumental suffering that media and politics presents us with. Beyond the facades of state engineered memories there are the hosts of dead that lie unmemorialised, because they exist outside the boundaries of a recognised national identity or the idea of acceptable citizenship. However the memorial monument and the theatre auditorium exist as environments that can interact directly with our living, evolving communities in a way that can invite the populace to identify with the suffering of 'the other'. Treated as such these spaces can have great significance in re-shaping the way that we respond to the tragedy, by helping us to lament the vanquished as much as the victor, the foe as much as the ally, the outsider as much as the familiar; so that the

indifference or hatred that perpetuates further tragedy will not be preserved.

The muteness of the dead and our grief for them is deafening. However, as events recede from us into history, it is possible to remember the dead and perform our grief in ways that acknowledge that we live on still, and are not dead yet ourselves. We have an opportunity to go further than those for whom we mourn. Thus the paradigms of grief can change, where an ambiguity and an ambivalence can unsettle the rigidity of a single outlook or dogma, and allow the complex nature of the tragedy to shift and be challenged by the generations that follow. Our spaces for grieving can become unfixed, transient spaces wherein grief must eventually pass and become something new. We can do something with the crisis that our helpless dead cannot. By surviving the tragedy we have the responsibility to lament their passing, but to do so with a rigorous speculation, rather than a hysteric and terrifying grief. After all, the purpose of confronting the tragedy is to look forward as much as it is to look back. Thus the tragic spaces of our memorials and theatres can play speculative roles in confronting the tragedy: the living bodies that enter these spaces can begin to question and understand the death about them in order to move forward and surpass the collective grief and horror.

Side by side at his feet lie the unknown dead, and they are many. How many is not known, but the number is very great and there will be more and more of them. They cannot move, but must remain there, crowded together. He alone comes and goes as he wishes; he alone stands upright.

(Canetti, 1960: 321)

IMAGE



A detail of Kingsley Baird's *The Cloak of Peace / Te Korowai Rangimarie* for the Nagasaki Peace Park, Nagasaki, Japan, completed in 2006. Photo credit: Catherine O'Connell.

REFERENCES

Appia, Adolphe. 'Monumentality' (1922) in *Texts on Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1993): 135-143.

Astrié, Céline; Kelleher, Joe; and Ridout, Nicholas. *Idioma Clima Crono* (Societas Raffaello Sanzio, 2004).

Bevan, Robert. *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).

Canetti, Elias. *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962).

Castellucci, Romeo. *Tragedia Endogonia* (DVD) (Rarovideo, 2007).

Cixous, Hélène. 'The Place of Crime and the Place of Pardon' (1986-1987) in Drain, Richard. *Twentieth Century Theatre: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1995): 341-344).

Hughes, Robert. *Culture of Complaint, the fraying of America* (London, Oxford University Press, 1993).

Keating, Paul. 'Remembrance Day Speech' Australian War Memorial Website (1993).

<http://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/keating.htm>

Phelan, Peggy. *Mourning Sex* (London: Routledge, 1997)

Ridout, Nicholas. *Stage Fright, Animals, and Other Theatrical Problems* (Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Sturken, Marita. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (London, University of California Press, 1997)

Trumble, William R. and Stevenson, Angus. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2002).

Wiles, David. *Tragedy in Athens: Performance Space and Theatrical Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Williams, Raymond. *Modern Tragedy* (Toronto: Broadview, 2006).

Young, James E. *At Memory's Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (Newhaven and London, Yale University Press, 2000).

Sam Trubridge was born in the UK and raised on a boat sailing the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. He lectures at Massey University in Performance Design, and

directs and designs performances with The Playground NZ Ltd. His work with The Playground includes The Restaurant of Many Orders; an international work in progress that has been shown in London, Wellington, Florence, Prato, Rome, Auckland, and Prague (2004-2007). Most recently in 2008 he has created Sleep/Wake, in collaboration with Massey University's Sleep/Wake Research Centre.