Fiona Wilkie

Kinds of Place at Bore Place: Site-Specific Performance and the Rules of Spatial Behaviour

Following her survey of site-specific performance companies and their understanding of their work and its circumscriptions in NTQ70, Fiona Wilkie here proposes that places as such can be characterized in terms of differing sets of rules in dialogue with one another. She examines one place in particular in order to suggest some principles for approaching site-specific performance. Various spatial experiences – visual, physical, and mythical – are read through a range of attempts to theorize our relationships with space (including Foucault's heterotopia and de Certeau's pedestrian tactics). Moving away from more mundane examples of site 'dos' and 'don'ts', Fiona Wilkie expands the notion of spatial rules to develop two related concepts – the repertoire and the inner rule – that offer complex ways of imagining and articulating the rule-bound site. Finally, she suggests that site-specific performance meanings emerge out of a process of negotiation between three sets of rules: those of the site, the performance, and the spectators. Fiona Wilkie is currently completing a PhD thesis (provisionally entitled *Constructing Meaning/ Performing Place: Site-Specific Performance in Contemporary Britain*) at the University of Surrey, from which article is drawn

IN EXPLORING some of the aspects of site that are brought to the site-specific process I want to consider a place rather than a performance, but a place that might be said already to be being performed in a number of significant ways.

A leaflet about Bore Place produced by the Commonwork Group informs us that it is 'a 500-acre dairy farm in Kent'. A statement such as this appears to form a neat summary that provides us with geographic location (we can 'place' Bore Place in Kent, and then link this with our 'knowledge base' that, perhaps, tells us that Kent is a county in south-east England), size (500 acres), and purpose (it operates within the market economy as a dairy farm). But this is just one representation.

Circling and cutting through the space that is categorized for us in these terms by the Commonwork leaflet is a 'field trail': a country walk described in a set of written instructions and delineated by a series of coloured marker-posts. This is the legitimate, public route through Bore Place, the site itself acting only as start and end point for a walk that literally revolves around it.

Within the circle of the field trail, Bore Place is more than one place at once: it is a working farm, former family home, performance site, education centre, focus of ghost stories, and a set of ecologically-motivated businesses and creative laboratories. It is made up of a number of spaces (examples are the walled garden, the manor house, the dairy shed, the green man glade), each designed with a different purpose and invoking a different set of cultural and historical connotations. Any attempt to document and analyze the site must therefore negotiate a path through the set of dichotomies which operates at Bore Place: public/private; agriculture/culture; past/present; work/play; nature/art(ifice).

Following Michel de Certeau's theory of 'making do' (1984), I want to concentrate on users: how they might negotiate such a path and what tactics[1] they might bring to this enterprise. So what I'm asking in this article is, 'How is Bore Place performed for and by

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us?' While my analysis intersects with a number of similar place studies in other disciplines,[2] the lens of performance studies is invaluable here for focusing on this and other questions that I want to ask of the site. Performance itself moves under the lens of enquiry when I ask how the strategies developed through the study of Bore Place might be used as tools in the analysis of site-specific performance.

Approaching Place: Three Theories . . .

> The heterotopia has the power of juxtaposing in a single real place different spaces and locations that are incompatible with each other.
>
> (Foucault, 1997, p. 354)

> Our approach is founded on the principle that movement and communication are essential to the social and economic success of public and private space and that it is the design of space, above all, which determines the movement and interaction of people in the built environment. . . . The space syntax method deals directly with the layout of buildings and street patterns and forecasts the way in which these will be used by people moving around them.
>
> (www.spacesyntax.com)[3]

> The long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations. . . . It creates shadows and ambiguities within them. It inserts its multitudinous references and citations into them (social models, cultural *mores*, personal factors).
>
> (de Certeau, 1984, p. 101)

. . . and a Meditation

> 'From the number of imaginable cities we must exclude those whose elements are assembled without a connecting thread, *an inner rule*, a perspective, a discourse. . . . Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.
>
> 'I have neither desires nor fears', the Khan declared, 'and my dreams are composed either by my mind or by chance.
>
> 'Cities also believe they are the work of the mind or of chance, but neither the one nor the other suffices to hold up their walls. You take delight not in a city's seven or seventy wonders, but in the answer it gives to a question of yours.
>
> 'Or the question it asks you, forcing you to answer, like Thebes through the mouth of the Sphinx.'
>
> (Calvino, 1997, p. 43–4)

My argument will focus on what I want to call 'rules': expectations and conventions of behaviour, of what can be done and seen in a place, and how one might move about it. Reading Bore Place as a heterotopia, I am concerned with the types of movement and activity that the site invites and the ways in which it might be said to limit and channel these. I ask how the rules are created, and what options are available to different sets of users when interacting with these rules. By exploring and expanding the notion of spatial rules and, crucially, negotiation between sets of rules, I shall begin to develop a model that suggests possibilities for approaching site-specific performance.

Six Experiences of Bore Place

Experience 1: Signs

See below . . .

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Experience 2: Field Trail

Commonwork is a group of rural enterprises and charitable trusts, set up in 1977 by Neil and Jennifer Wates at Bore Place, a 500-acre dairy farm in Kent. Its long-term aim is to change hearts and minds towards the recognition that we and all life are interrelated.

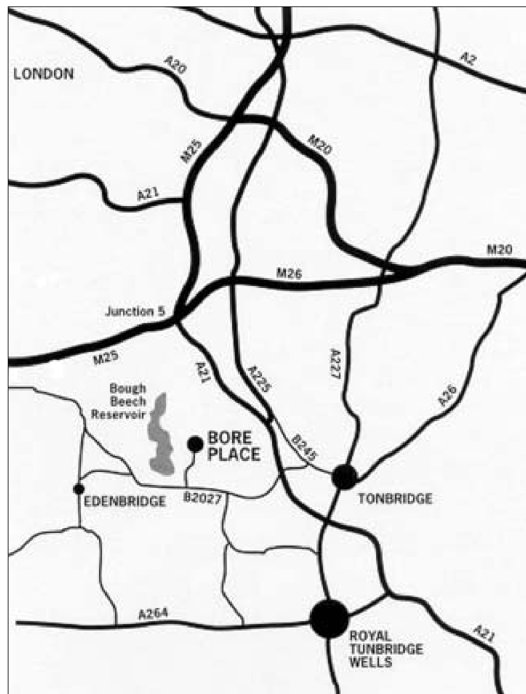
(Bore Place Field Trail leaflet, Commonwork)

Experience 3: Susan Benn

It's a 500-acre farm in the Weald of Kent. Miraculously, 35 minutes from London, which you don't feel at all. You're in the middle of nowhere. It's a house which has Jacobean origins and it's been evolving over centuries because we've discovered that actually before the Jacobeans came there were people over there on the ridge since the Bronze Age. So it's kind of evolving architecturally: bits missing, bits added from Queen Anne and 'thirties extensions to a kind of wonderful hybrid mixture of friendly spaces.

(Susan Benn)[4]

Experience 4: Mappings



Experience 5: Story-Telling

There was a long history to the 'Place', as an old script and map showed, where it hung in one of the large rooms. There was also the legend of a 'Headless Horseman' who rode through the farm on a certain night of the year. A supposed tunnel ran from the 'Place' to Sharp Farm, but it was never uncovered. Also, a treasure lay buried inside the ancient garden walls, and another story that a monastery existed; to pique my curiosity and a probing interest.

(J. Brown, article *from Kent Life*, November 1973)

Experience 6: Green Man

Rules for Performing Place

Just as contemporary performance critics acknowledge that the position of the spectator (both literally within the performance space and metaphorically in terms of the historical and cultural 'baggage' that each carries) must be taken into account when offering an analysis of a theatrical work (Melrose, 1994;[5] Bennett, 1997), so the experience of a particular place will depend to a certain extent on the role and position of the

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individual within that place. At any given moment, then, Bore Place is 'performing' parallel, overlapping, or contradictory functions for different people.

But this does not mean that an analysis of the ways in which it performs is not possible. In his work on architecture, Stewart Brand argues that buildings adjust and 'learn' through time, adapting in relation to the human activities for which they're used.[6] Following Brand, let us work with the notion that Bore Place has collected (and had imposed upon it) meanings and associations across history/ies, and suggest that, though these will resonate differently for each new inhabitant (however temporary) of the space depending on his/her position, the sets of rules operating within the site guide users towards particular modes of experience.

Each of the types of place that we might identify 'within' Bore Place has its own 'rules' and its own ways of performing the site. The signposts displayed throughout the site (see Experience 1, above) are not only a format for presenting information, but also a means of guiding movement and initiating the visitor into the rules of Bore Place. Similarly, the map (Experience 4), often a user's first experience of a site, invites us to view Bore Place from the perspective of the map-maker and to locate the site within a particular wider context. Taking as further examples three of the six 'experiences' outlined above, I have indicated opposite some of the ways in which these invoke rules and perform a version of Bore Place.

Public *versus* private
Agriculture *versus* culture
Past *versus* present
Work *versus* play
Nature *versus* art(ifice)

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Field Trail

Users of the Bore Place Field Trail are guided by a map, set of directions, and coloured marker-posts *en route* that dictate which paths will be followed and which disregarded, which fields will be traversed and which avoided, and generally which aspects of the site should be included on a field trail. Significantly, the field trail route also dictates the physical positions from which Bore Place itself will be viewed.

Like de Certeau's walker who actualizes part of the 'ensemble of possibilities' (de Certeau, 1984, p. 98) made available by the spatial order, the walker on the field trail is invited to exercise choice within the constructed order: the eastern section of the trail can be covered on its own or in combination with the western section. ('Cross the lane, up some steps and enter Kilnhouse Wood – or you can take the lane back to the Car Park.')

There are other, 'borrowed' codes at work here. The Commonwork field trail leaflet asks visitors to 'keep to the Country Code', and in doing so draws on a set of rules external to Bore Place itself but that are made to apply to the site only in its manifestation as field trail. The Country Code is not brought into play in all other usages of the site and therefore is not a rule of Bore Place *per se*.

Rules that might fit into the latter category are those that de Certeau refers to as a site's 'interdictions', exemplified in the 'wall that prevents one from going further' (1984, p. 98). Physical barriers such as buildings (the cowshed, oast-house, brickworks, etc.), the pond, and the walled garden[7] are man-made features of the site that govern movement around them and control the available points of entry and exit.

Susan Benn

Bore Place was formerly Susan Benn's family home and her position is therefore unusual in relation to other users of the site. As Bachelard has shown, one's memories are 'housed' in a house one has inhabited, and it is 'physically inscribed in us' (1994, p. 14), affecting the rules of movement around it. Susan Benn's position also means that her narrative is framed through the terms of authority, ownership and familiarity. This narrative invites particular 'ways of seeing' Bore Place. Firstly, it employs a 'best of both worlds' version of the city/country dichotomy by emphasizing the proximity of Bore Place to London while at the same time (through the use of the word 'miraculously') positioning the site firmly in the country.

Secondly, Susan Benn's narrative asks us to view the manor house as a patchwork, a monument to a number of different histories. As an example of Stewart Brand's architectural model cited above, it is significant that not only has Bore Place house been added to over the centuries but that parts of it have also been taken away.[8] This image of the manor house brings two conflicting 'rules' into dialogue: on the one hand, the notion that the house is fluid and open to change takes its place as part of an ethos of recycling that can be attributed to Bore Place: the Commonwork rule of 'waste as a misplaced resource'. A cycle of processes acts across the farm, giving a curious sense of the site feeding into itself: for example, the dairy is built from Bore Place elms lost to Dutch Elm Disease.[9]

On the other hand, the manor house (together with the walled garden) is now Grade II listed, and thereby subject to a system of authority conferring historical and cultural status but also bringing with it a set of strict rules about what can and cannot be done to it in future.

Green Man

The figure of the Green Man (a face surrounded by or growing into branches and foliage) is predominantly, although not exclusively, a European phenomenon found mostly in churches and cathedrals. Despite its religious context, the Green Man mythology has been traced to a number of pagan origins, including English May Day celebrations, the Jack-in-the Green,[10] and early incarnations of Robin Hood.

Although its presence necessarily invokes such traditions, the decision to create a Green Man Glade (featuring a Green Man sculpture fixed to a tree) as part of the Bore Place gardens speaks particularly to the ecological aims of Commonwork and its associated set of businesses. While 'the search for a meaning behind the symbol'[11] has yielded no definitive answer (images of fertility, masculinity, the death/re-birth cycle, and misrule have all been suggested), Commonwork emphasizes the image of the Green Man as 'archetype of our oneness with the earth'.[12] The Commonwork website tells us that 'the Green Man symbolizes our connection with nature'.

The use of the Green Man as ecological symbol at Bore Place therefore reinforces one underlying rule of the site, but its presence – as a sculpture placed within a natural environment – also hints at the nature/art dichotomy operating at Bore Place. It is in one sense 'out of place', unexpected, a surprise to the user who happens upon it while walking in the gardens.

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By drawing links (both supportive and antagonistic) between different sets of rules we begin to explore how the various parts of Bore Place speak to one another and what effect their juxtaposition has. It becomes clear that, although I speak of different sets of rules, the spatial rules *as experienced* by a user of the site are created out of the dialogue *between* rules. Certainly some 'rules' gain in prominence depending on what function Bore Place is performing for you at any given moment, while others remain constant – 'built in' to the place itself, no matter what it is used for.

But these types do not operate in isolation; they are always interwoven, coming together and pulling apart to guide and invite behaviour and to present the user with choices to be made. A recent development in architectural design, the space syntax method (introduced above; see also Note 3) is useful here because it enables us to think in terms of patterns created by users in response to the built environment; it also introduces the possibility that the way in which people move in places will affect how future environments are built.

One of the questions asked by the space syntax method is, 'How does the pattern of streets in a city influence patterns of movement and social interaction?'[13] The method might be developed as a means of approaching the concept of theatre – and particularly site-specific performance – enabling us to explore and analyze the movements of audience and performers within the performance space.

It might be useful here to summarize some of the categories of rules which affect movement in and around places, in descending order of rigidity. For each I have given examples both from Bore Place and from the traditional theatre building (the rules of the latter are, of course, inscribed through a particular historical and cultural moment).

	Categories of Rules	*Bore Place*	*Traditional Theatre Building*
1	Physical barriers/constraints (both man-made and natural) that restrict and channel movement	The walled garden; the pond; field trail paths	The 'fourth wall' containing the proscenium arch; rows of seats; doors (main entrance; auditorium doors; stage door)
2	Explicit rules stated by controllers of the site	'Do not drive on verges'	'No drinks to be taken into the auditorium'
3	Borrowed codes that are brought to bear on particular types of place	The Country Code; the historic buildings grading system	Fire safety regulations[14]
4	Implicit conventions that work to affect and organize behaviour through communal agreement	Keeping to the paths	Applauding at the end of a performance; not talking during the performance

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I have begun to hint at what might be the rules of the traditional theatre as a precursor to my discussion of the rules at work in site-specific performance. It is significant that there is a tendency among practitioners to treat site-specific work as a means of moving away from the strict codes of the traditional theatre and encouraging creative freedom. In my discussion of negotiation processes at the end of this article I will return to this notion, enquiring into the extent to which these codes can be escaped.

Each of these four types I have listed could be understood in the more usual sense of 'rules' – lists of dos and don'ts – an understanding that takes me only part way to articulating those notions of rules suggested through the three experiences discussed above. If I can read Bore Place as an example of Foucault's heterotopia – a juxtaposition of incompatible spaces in dialogue with one another – I must recognize that the factors at work in influencing my movement and behaviour in and experience of this site are multiple and intricately related. In order to begin to make sense of this, and to suggest ways forward for performance analysis, I shall expand the notion of spatial rules in two important directions. The first of these I shall call 'the repertoire'.

The Repertoire

I walk into the bookshop at the bottom of the High Street; I prefer this to the one on the next street – the sections I like to pause in are inviting, tucked away in corners, there are more curves and right-angles than straight lines. I feel at home here. Reaching to the top of the E's in the fiction section, I take down The Name of the Rose*. My movement to the carpeted floor occurs in stages: first, finding it easier to browse without holding on to my bag, I place the rucksack on the floor in front of me and then, getting engrossed in a passage, I crouch down before finally moving my legs under me, I am sitting cross-legged on the floor. On page twenty-six I read that 'architecture, among all the arts, is the one that most boldly tries to reproduce in its rhythm the order of the universe'. I like this idea – that the built environment responds to the natural environment – it reminds me of Italo Calvino. I am now at eye-level with a woman in the F's. She's crouching by Forster* (*E. M., that is, not Margaret, although she may move on to her*)*. I smile; she smiles back. It is a smile of complicity, of recognition.*

Why do I feel that I can sit on the floor next to a display in a bookshop but not in, say, a supermarket? Neither place operates a 'no sitting' rule, nor do I feel that I am participating in an implicit agreement with my fellow-customers not to sit in these places (though such an agreement is probably what causes me to wait in a queue to be served). Spatial layout, of course, influences my behaviour, but there is something more than this at work. It has to do, I think, not only with the presence of books and the fact that they require or invite a different kind of perusal to food, but also with the fact that I

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have seen others sit on the floor in bookshops. This type of behaviour has become, for me at least, something that 'can be done' in a bookshop; while not strictly 'against the rules', I would feel awkward sitting on a supermarket floor.

We need, then, to extend the notion of 'rules' of spatial behaviour beyond the categories identified above to encompass this sense of appropriateness. To facilitate such a move I want to draw on the work of Joseph Esherick and Jeffrey Wasserstrom in theorizing the 1989 demonstrations in Tiananmen Square:

> First of all it was street theatre: untitled, improvisational, with constantly changing casts. Though fluid in form, it nevertheless followed what Charles Tily (1978) calls a historically established 'repertoire' of collective action. This means that, even when improvising, protesters worked from familiar 'scripts' which gave a common sense of how to behave during a given action, where and when to march, how to express their demands, and so forth. Some of these scripts originated in the distant past, emerging out of traditions of remonstrance and petition stretching back for millennia. More were derived (consciously or unconsciously) from the steady stream of student-led mass movements that have taken place [in China] since 1919.
>
> (cited in Schechner, 1993, p. 54)

This notion of a 'repertoire' or 'script' of actions or behaviour is rich with possibilities for documenting place and analyzing movement within particular places. The repertoire – a set of choices (culturally, traditionally, personally, or physically defined) available to people in a particular place – is created in part by what has gone before in that place. When an event or series of events has famously occurred in a particular place, it forms part of the repertoire of behaviour available in that place. Besides the political demonstrations in Tiananmen Square, there is a host of other examples, including New Year's Eve celebrations in London's Trafalgar Square and, on a more sombre note, committing suicide from Beachy Head. In each case a particular mode of behaviour is associated with a place and becomes part of 'what can be done' in that place.

Whilst writing this section I cannot avoid the news, and every paper or TV bulletin has something to say about the controversy surrounding the Cuban boy Elian Gonzalez and whether or not he should be returned by the US to Cuba. A friend tells me (*but can't remember where he heard it*) *that Fidel Castro is planning to set up a public square in Havana as a place for the people's protests against the USA. I think again about Tiananmen Square and the way in which it has been adopted over time as a site of public protest and political demonstration, and wonder: what happens to the repertoire of these sites when they are officially sanctioned? Will demonstrative action respond to an invitation in this way? Can another site suddenly be given the associations that would usually accrue through time?*

By extension, if we can talk of a repertoire or script in this way, then we are led to the linked notions of re-writing or amending the script or adding to the repertoire. Richard Schechner (1988, p. 156) suggests that

> the first theatres were not merely 'natural spaces' . . . but were also, and fundamentally, 'cultural places'. The transformation of space into place means to construct a theatre; this transformation is accomplished by 'writing on the space', as the cave art of the Paleolithic period demonstrates so well. This writing need not be visual, it can be oral, as with the Aborigines.

For us, Schechner's concept of 'writing' on a space (imagined, as he points out, not purely in the literal sense) can be aligned with the creation of a repertoire/script of that place. Part of the documentation and analysis process, therefore, involves an investigation into the various people and influences that have written/inscribed themselves on Bore Place; similarly, this process examines the ways in which Bore Place might be said to have been written and explores the possibilities for it to be re-written in the future.

Returning to the six experiences introduced earlier, I will draw on Experience Five, J. Brown's 1973 article in *Kent Life*, in order to tease out the implications of one evocative way in which Bore Place has been written on and, in the process, performed. Brown's own journalistic performance of the site slips

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without pause between the labels 'history', 'legend', and 'story'. The ease of this slippage appears to align the terms as means of writing/telling about/on a 'place' (it is notable that he abbreviates Bore Place in this way).

But it is worth reminding ourselves that each term by implication attaches a different level of authority and reality to the material it precedes. History, legend, and story emerge from this account as layers of meaning that have become attached to Bore Place over time through local oral tradition, and been preserved through manuscripts and maps. The enticing tales of ghosts, underground worlds, and buried treasure create a performative site repertoire constituting what has (been imagined to have) occurred there in the past.

In the same way that, according to de Certeau, stories 'traverse and organize places; . . . select and link them together; . . . make sentences and itineraries out of them' (1984, p. 115), this imaginative repertoire of myth and memory marks playful Xs on the map of Bore Place and forges links – between parts of Bore Place; between Bore Place and its immediate environs; and between Bore Place and the spaces of fantasy and legend. By this latter type of link, I mean to indicate that Bore Place is drawn into a matrix of spaces that 'contain' similar traces of ghosts and legend (an example of such a space might be that created through Tim Burton's 1999 film *Sleepy Hollow*, which tells of another headless horseman).

But what is especially compelling for me about this particular experience of Bore Place is the divide that it seems to create between different sets of users of the site, a divide separating those who are 'in the know' from those who are not. Can Bore Place itself be said to speak of its history, displaying hints of its past like clues in a detective story? Or do these stories and legends lie hidden beneath the surface, only to be revealed through the exploratory processes of certain users of the site?

So where does performance fit into all of this? Drawing on Schechner's work, we might figure performance as one means of 'writing' on a space. Site-specific performance's act of writing on a space might simultaneously be an act of erasing what has previously been written, as in the palimpsestic image here employed by Nick Kaye:

> the palimpsest, a paper 'which has been written upon twice, the original having been rubbed out' (Onions, 1973) or 'prepared for writing on and wiping out again' (Onions, 1973), not only provides a model for the relationship of non-place to place, but, in the context of a transitive definition of site, of site-specificity itself. Thus, *Nights in This City* approaches the real city as palimpsest, by acting out a writing-over of sites already written upon. Furthermore, in this *moving on* from site, this site-specific performance attempts to define itself *in* the very sites it is caught in the process of erasing.
>
> (Kaye 2000, p. 11, original emphasis)

But this is just one approach to working site-specifically, an approach that, as Kaye points

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out, seeks to 'trouble the oppositions between the site and the work' (2000, p. 11). In the potential incompleteness of the erasure, performance might be might be more interested in revealing the layers of 'writing' beneath.

Discussing site-specificity in terms of layers leads to an archeological image of the kind explored by Mike Pearson, who suggests that sites are 'aggregations of narratives' with the archeological excavation or the site-specific performance as 'simply the most recent occupation, usage, of a site' and 'performers as a band, occupying a site for a short period' (1994, p. 135–6). Here the narratives created by past events, stories, and accretions (which I have referred to as a site's repertoire) are apparent in the performance as 'source, framing, subtext' (p. 135) in a reciprocal relationship between performance and site. Referring back to the story-telling experience discussed above, I would argue that Bore Place has accrued a repertoire that offers a rich source of inspiration for future performance 'writing' on the site.

This expansion of spatial rules to include the concept of the repertoire thus makes it clear that, within an environment of rules, the range of choices available to users is wider than simply keeping or breaking these rules. Between these two poles can be found a number of gradated positions that might be better characterized in terms of elasticity: of bending, testing, amending, or re-writing the rules. Within the matrix of rules operating within the performance site, performance makers (as site-users) have the potential to bring their own set of rules to bear upon a place, to subvert or even flout the rules that they find in that place, to explore and test those rules, to reinforce them, to work by 'rule of thumb', or to take up a number of alternative positions with regard to the rules.

Each of these possibilities represents a different position to be taken with regard to the performance site and a different choice to be made as to the nature of the performance/site relationship. In site-specific performance, however, it is not only the performers who might be characterized as site users. Within the matrix of rules operating between the site and the performance, spectators (as site users) also face a series of choices as they negotiate their own position and response.

Testing the Rules 1: The Praxis Group

The work of The Praxis Group in the United States is a prime example of creative practice that actively seeks to undermine spatial rules. This company uses performance to take a particular political stance and works in opposition to 'the rules' of a place in order to mount a direct social challenge to the authorities in that place (sites encountered in this way have included an art gallery and a shopping mall). John Troyer, director of The Praxis Group, argues that 'by entering into these locations for unsanctioned performances, the Praxis Group rearranges the topography of the space by creating previously unknown landmarks, images, and arguments' (1998). In this way he figures the focus of contention as the site itself, and the ways in which it is used and presented, together with the associations it gathers and the meanings it suggests. Performance in this instance becomes a weapon with which to assume 'the role of discursive critique and the potential destabilization of rigidified rules'.

The Inner Rule

The second direction in which I want to expand the notion of spatial rules is towards the 'inner rule' posited by Italo Calvino. In addition to the various stances outlined above, I want to suggest that the identification of an inner rule is an important means by which users can negotiate their own position with regard to a place and create meanings through the process of this negotiation.

The type of work developed by The Praxis Group can only function in a very particular context – that of the rigidly controlled public institution. A different, less antagonistic approach to working creatively and site-specifically involves working *with* the rules of the space – with 'what is already there' – and enhancing this aspect of the site through the work. Giving an interview to Bodil Nygaard for *Art Crash Journal*, Bjørn Nørgaard expresses this concept of working with a site:

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Take Hein Heinsen's suggestion for making this sculpture in Aarhus: he tackles some clear demarcations of the much discussed square in Aarhus (in front of the cathedral), which all of a sudden force you to see the square in a different way and think of it differently when you walk across it.

And initially, that may seem quite disturbing when you are used to walking there and live there. You get a bit worried that it will ruin the square. But what it really does is to strengthen the spatial function that is already there in the square. It adjoins the church, the equestrian statue, and the theatre and it spans the space in a whole new way. . . . No matter what you do to a certain space, the work of art has to relate to the monumental, decorative and ornamental basic principle of the space. (1998, p. 4)

This notion of the 'basic principle of the space' seems to be articulating a view akin to that expressed in Calvino's image of the 'connecting thread' or 'inner rule' (introduced at the beginning of this article). Similarly, a further corresponding idea can be located in the poetic 'spirit of place':

To get into the spirit of a place is to enter into what makes that place such a special spot, into what is concentrated there like a fully saturated colour. But the spirit of a place is also expansive. (Casey, 1993, p. 314)

Each of these connected terms adds its own dimension to our understanding of the inner rule. Working through the 'basic principle of the space' takes us into geometrical and architectural realms, enabling us to consider elements such as spatial layout, patterns, physical connections, and the performative strategies of these. To these elements the notion of the 'spirit of place' adds a dimension of feeling, legitimating the intangible, the irrational, the intuitive response. Both, however, might seem to imply that one truth exists: *the* basic principle, *the* spirit. It will be useful, therefore, to mesh these ideas with the concept of *punctum* that Roland Barthes elucidates in his *Camera Lucida* (1993).

In analyzing photographs, Barthes engages with what he terms the *studium* of the photograph, understood in terms of an extent, the rhetoric of the photographer, the body of cultural and social knowledge that the analysis draws on. But within the photographic space Barthes notes that 'occasionally . . . a "detail" attracts me. I feel that its presence changes my reading, that I am looking at a new photograph, marked in my eyes with a higher value. This "detail" is the *punctum*' (p. 42).

Taken from the Latin for a prick, a 'mark made by a pointed instrument' (p. 26), the *punctum* is that which 'pricks' the beholder of a photograph, that which catches his or her imagination, and is usually unintentional on the part of the photographer. The dimension that Barthes's *punctum* adds to our notion of the inner rule is that of individual response: the *punctum* will be identified differently for each user of the (photographic) space. This response is removed from the intellectual level and is invested with personal resonance: for Barthes, 'to give examples of *punctum* is, in a certain fashion, to *give myself up*' (p. 43, original emphasis).

Applying Barthes's theory to the experience of places rather than photographs, the *punctum* is that which attracts me to a place and which returns to me after I have physically left the space. Because of its origins in photography, it adds a visual dimension to the physical and metaphysical dimensions offered by, respectively, the 'basic principle' and the 'spirit of place'. Together these form the starting point of mapping (and perhaps performatively marking) a route through a place. This route articulates the inner rule.

For me, the inner rule of Bore Place emerges through its juxtaposition of backstage and front-stage spaces – legitimate public routes *versus* the 'do not enter' signs on doors; the hidden working spaces *versus* the display of product. This backstage/frontstage image has to do with modes of seeing, with what is on show *versus* what is hidden, and might be creatively articulated through theatrical exploration.

To work creatively with an inner rule is one of a number of tactics available to performance makers. For the performance analyst, also, the concept of the inner rule can be used as a way into discussing the work in terms of its relationship to place. Performance itself becomes a method of

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Testing the Rules 2: Forced Entertainment

The devising processes for *Dreams' Winter* and *Nights in This City*, two site-specific performances, involved Forced Entertainment in different ways of 'testing the rules' of their chosen spaces.

The library is a place of explicit rules, of precise order, and yet (as with the bookshop) a place that invites different types of movement, different modes of viewing, than other apparently similar public institutions. As described by Tim Etchells (1999, p. 217–8), Manchester Central Library – for which *Dreams' Winter* (1994) was commissioned – is also a place of circular movement and reverberating, travelling sound by virtue of its physical characteristics, its 'dome-ceilinged space', which gives 'extraordinary acoustics'. Explorations of this site tested the explicit rules ('Our first on-site research visit there saw us running . . . shouting . . . dropping books . . . ') and the physical rules (edges, circles, height, stillness: 'What kinds of actions does the space engender?') to arrive at a performative mix of elements that 'belong in the library and others which (perhaps) do not'.

In approaching the space of a city (Rotterdam) for the 1997 reworking of *Nights in This City* (originally performed in Sheffield in 1995), a different tactic was used. The move from home-town to unfamiliar city was marked by a series of questions, as company members prepared for their 'mischievous guided coach tour' of Rotterdam by interviewing 'people who live and work there'.

We start by asking them questions like: 'Where is the tourist centre of the city?' 'Where is a rich neighbourhood?' 'Where is a poor neighbourhood?' 'Where is an industrial area?'

But these boring questions get the boring answers they probably deserve. We do not find what we are looking for. We switch to another tactic. Richard and Claire are talking to one of our helpers. They ask her:

'If you had killed someone and had to dump the body where would you take it?'

'If you had to say goodbye to a lover where in this city would you most like to do it?'

'Where in this city might be the best place for a spaceship of aliens to land?'

(Etchells, 1999, p. 61)

The route created out of responses to these questions becomes an alternative mapping of Rotterdam, or what Etchells refers to as '*our* geography'; it suggests another way of moving through the city's space as well as (framed literally through the coach window and metaphorically through the performance text/s) another way of viewing it. More than discovering and testing Rotterdam's 'rules', Forced Entertainment's questions become a means of determining how users have variously negotiated and interacted with these rules.

Let us return to Italo Calvino: 'You take delight not in a city's seven or seventy wonders, but in the answer it gives to a question of yours.'

exploring the thread or discourse found in a place, though a range of interpretations of what a site's inner rule actually *is* might exist simultaneously. Does the creation of a site-specific performance involve identifying an inner rule that works *for you* (and thereby offering it to your spectators to suggest that it might work *for them*)?

Negotiation

So the inner rule and the repertoire enable us to consider the complexities of spatial rules and, especially, the ways in which users might engage with these rules. They exist at different stages of the meeting between performance and site: the repertoire belongs to the site and hints at performative 'ways in' to that site, while the inner rule only emerges as the result of a complex meshing of site and performance. Together they allow us to develop a deeper understanding of how places 'work' and how we might work with them.

By discussing Bore Place through an expanded sense of rules I have sought to suggest that its rules are multi-layered and in dialogue, that its spaces contradict and reinforce one another, and that it guides the user not only through maps and signposts, paths and walls, but also through narratives: rhetoric, stories, legends, memories. At points within this discussion I have begun to hint at the tools that we might assemble from the place analysis to use in the field of performance. Finally I want to take this further, by

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outlining a model that offers possibilities for the analysis of site-specific performance. This will be a model of negotiation.

One performance dynamic that can make site-specific work fascinating from an analysis point of view is precisely that the codes of the place seem not to 'allow for' its use as performance site. So in one sense what is interesting about site-specific performance, and what it is that forces us to develop new models with which to deal with it, is precisely that it breaks the rules. It is 'out of place' – that place being the traditional theatre building. But this image of breaking the rules prompts me to ask two questions.

Firstly, how far can site-specific performance really remove itself from such theatrical codes and conventions? The performance event itself carries codes that will operate for a spectator (and, indeed, for a performer) whether at Bore Place or the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. Applauding at the end of a performance is often one such code. The very fact that a performance is taking place recalls the rules that have been taught through past experiences of the theatre. The rules of each particular performance are always to a greater or lesser extent also the rules of a general notion of what 'performance' is.

> Special rules exist, are formulated, and persist because these activities [games, sports, theatre, and ritual] are something apart from everyday life. A special world is created where people can make the rules, rearrange time, assign value to things, and work for pleasure.
>
> (Schechner, 1988, p. 11)

'No Entry': backstage space at Bore Place.

Perhaps because of this feeling that theatre is somehow set apart from everyday life, performance events both within and outside of the traditional theatre often attempt to delineate themselves, sometimes literally, from their surroundings in order to establish their own rules and to be able to adopt and explore a particular stance with regard to the 'rules' of the performance site. While Sue Fox of Welfare State International asserts that 'street theatre is NOT taking the walls and roof off your regular theatre show', referring to it as 'a different beast altogether, with its own terms and conditions' (Coult and Kershaw, 1983, p. 31), she also advocates marking out the performance area – for example with painted traffic cones – and having some space at the back for costume changes hidden by a van or a line of banners. What is suggested is an area whose shape is inherited from the traditional theatre.

Secondly, acknowledging that some codes of the theatre building no longer apply when performance moves out of that building, I would want to ask what replaces them. How are the 'new' rules of site-specific performance created and, significantly, how are they

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taught to the spectators? In terms of rules of place it is important to note the difference between explicitly marking out your performance area and deliberately not doing so. The act of marking out a performance area is simultaneously the act of declaring that area subject to a different set of rules, even though these rules will not be entirely those of the conventional theatre. If the performance area is not delineated, what other factors combine to inform spectators where and how they are expected to move? Does the spatial layout of the site guide the spectators to a particular viewing position or route through the performance? Is the performance creating some of its effects through the ambiguity of deciding what is part of the performance and what is part of the site?

It seems that the 'rules' at play in site-specific theatre might best be represented as part of a matrix which links with both the rules of conventional theatre and those (many layered) of the site itself. The meeting of performance with place, and the meeting of the spectator with both performance and place, involves a process of negotiation between the complexities of overlapping sets of rules.

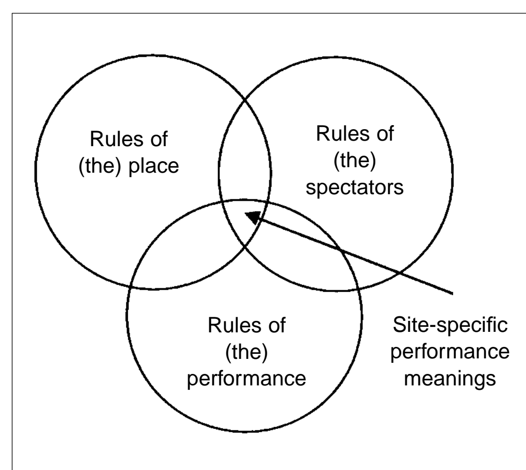
In interview with Baz Kershaw and Tony Coult, John Fox, the artistic director of Welfare State International, describes the factors which feed into his site-specific work:

> So you've got your own traditions, you've got the country's traditions, you've got the specific preoccupations of the place; . . . you've also got the pattern of the season and the specific geography of the place you're in. They all start to go together in a sort of cauldron – a cauldron in my head, and hopefully in company members' heads, and then it starts to simmer and distil, and you start to conjure a few key images in the stream.
>
> (1983, p. 22)

This serves to remind us that performance itself is already a negotiation, in this instance between factors such as the 'inner rule' of a place and the 'rules' of the wider geographical setting, a particular company, and the climate. Similarly we have seen that the rules of a place are created through the tension between a number of different elements, and that spectators, as users of the site, bring their own rules as they negotiate a position in relation to the site and to the performance.

It is always a matter of negotiation – the performance itself brings conventions that add to, reinforce, affect, or alter those of the place – but some spatial rules abide despite the performative conditions. An example of this can be taken from a 1997 exhibition at the National Gallery, London, which included a work influenced by Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors*. This piece[15] involved a large distorted picture of a skull painted along the floor of the entrance to the exhibition, together with a display card giving details about the artist along with instructions ('rules') for where and how to stand to view the skull without the distortion. On the days that I visited the exhibition my feeling was that most people seemed uncomfortable with going back to the doorway and crouching down in order to see this – perhaps because of the conventions of the space itself, the National Gallery, or indeed because of their own 'rules' of appropriate behaviour.

The model that I am suggesting here might then be represented diagrammatically:



This model locates the meanings (multiple and layered) of site-specific performance at the intersection between three different sets of rules: those of the performance, the place, and the spectators. A parallel for such a model can be found in Brith Gof's approach to its site-specific work, outlined by artistic

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director Clifford McLucas in his documentation of the 1995 performance, *Tri Bywyd*:

> The Host site is haunted for a brief time by a Ghost that the theatre makers create. Like all ghosts, it is transparent and Host can be seen through Ghost. Add into this a third term – the Witness – i.e., the audience, and we have a kind of a Trinity that constitutes The Work. It is the mobilization of this Trinity that is important – not simply the creation of the Ghost. All three are active components in the bid to make site-specific work. The Host, the Ghost, and the Witness.
>
> (McLucas, in Kaye, 2000, p. 128)

Work proceeding from the basis of this model might begin by asking such questions as:

- *How far does a performance work within the rules of a place and how far is its presence necessarily changing them?*

- *To what extent are the spectators familiar with the site, initiated into its rules and having already negotiated their own place or position with regard to that system, and to what extent are they, rather, unfamiliar, uninitiated?*

- *How does the performance communicate its rules of engagement to the spectators?*

- *Whose 'inner rules' emerge through the performance and how do these interact with other sets of inner rules?*

- *In what ways do multiple inner logics converge to create performative effects?*

The anthropologist and archeologist Barbara Bender suggests that the word 'negotiation' 'rather neutralizes potential confrontation, resistance, or subversion' (1998, p. 63). This objection serves to remind us that the negotiation process is rarely constituted of equal elements with an equal stake in the outcome; rather, the dialogue takes place between elements that are, in Bender's words, 'differentially empowered'. Place, performance, and spectators will each have more or less effect on the meanings produced in different situations. Attempting to understand the nature of this balance and the factors that have influenced the balance in any given instance is an important part of the analysis process. My claim is that the exploration of spatial rules is a useful tool in reaching such an understanding.

Politics and Practicalities of the Rule

As a postscript to this discussion I want to point to some of the immediate practical implications that the notion of spatial rules has for performance, reminding us again of those 'differentially empowered' elements combining in the site-specific performance experience. Outside the theatre building, the new spaces that performance seeks are encountered through a web of rules concerning issues of ownership and control, of who governs the territory and who is allowed access to it. The Exeter-based site-specific company Wrights & Sites were made acutely aware of such issues when they chose to work on the city's (council-run) quayside for their 1998 project *The Quay Thing*. Reflecting on the experience, company member Simon Persighetti found that

> when we enter the public space or the field or the abandoned building new constraints quickly reveal themselves. We find that the 'land of the free' is not free; we discover that the horizon belongs to somebody. Every centimetre that surrounds you has been measured, allotted, bought, entered into the records upon written deeds. What this suggests is that artists who escape the gallery or the auditorium find themselves in other kinds of contract with landlords and legislators. I speak of this not to deter the site-specific artist but to underline the need to see through the romantic image of the great outdoors or the rusty factory and to realize that it presents another kind of frame with its own peculiar sub-text and subsoil.
>
> (Persighetti, 2000, p. 12)

So performance might find itself in the position of trespasser, even in an ostensibly 'public' space. The political implications of the rule, however, impact not only upon access to a site but also upon a performance's actions within and representation of a site.

Malcolm Miles (1997) sets up a useful distinction between the strategies of integration and intervention, both of which, he

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argues, can be adopted by public (specifically urban) art to 'contribute to new models of urban dwelling, to new approaches to participation and community'. I would suggest that a third category, linked to and overlapping both of these two, also exists – one that effects a kind of 'smoothing over' or 'un-troubling' of a site.

Though this might be considered an intervention of sorts, it actually works (albeit often unconsciously) to de-politicize a space and is therefore in opposition to the interventionist art that 'is a form of continuing social criticism which resists the institutionalization of conventional public sculpture' (Miles, 1997, p. 205). Neither can this third strategy be considered wholly 'integration', because it needs to make (perhaps only subtle) changes to the site and its context before it can work to its own agenda. In the terms in which I have here laid out the discussion, it is a strategy that hides or seeks to ignore some of the rules of a site.

In a response to the survey of site-specific performance practices described in NTQ 70, Mark Evans of Coventry-based Storm Theatre engages with the possibility of inadvertently adopting this strategy:

> We are always aware of our work as potentially 'sanitizing' – bringing art in to 'civilize' a space and 'reveal' its hidden aesthetic qualities. This was very much brought home whilst 'cleaning up' drug-takers' 'gear' before rehearsing on one site. As I swept up the needles and broken glass, I wondered to what extent this was sweeping other issues up too. Issues we were not able to address in that particular show.

Site-specific performance might, then, in some instances be figured as colonization, and we need to recognize what this might imply. This is not to argue that performance must respond to every rule of its site or articulate a position with regard to every possible interpretation of the space. In attempting to deal with so much, the performance would be able to explore very little. It is merely to point to an area of potential criticism that site-specific performance faces from those for whom the ignored aspects are important, and to suggest that there is often a fine line between choosing to focus on particular aspects of a site and glossing over important social issues.

A review of London Bubble's 2000 promenade production *Gilgamesh* illustrates this problem:

> After leaving the performance, I stumbled across the results of a petrol bomb attack. One minute we were watching make-believe fire, the next minute we were witnessing a real one. It made me realize how far Bubble's show had failed to engage with the dark realities of urban life.[16]

The performance that locates itself in an everyday setting is inviting others to experience its effects through a large and complex frame. For Mike Pearson, site-specific performances

> are extremely generative of signs: the multiple meanings and readings of activity and site intermingle, amending and compromising one another. They reveal, celebrate, confound, criticize, and make manifest the specifics of the site which begins to resemble a kind of saturated space or 'scene-of-crime', where, to use forensic jargon, 'everything is potentially important'.
>
> (Pearson, 1997, p. 96)

If, in the crime-scene imagery used here, 'everything is potentially important', it is perhaps the job of the performance (like that of the skilled detective) to find a means of indicating what is important in this instance, for this performance.

Una Chaudhuri (1995) aligns environmental theatre, an important predecessor of the site-specific mode, with a political ideology of resourcism, in which space becomes 'raw material' for use by the artist. The model of negotiation that I have outlined here advocates a principle that attempts to work against such an ideology.

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Notes

1. De Certeau contrasts the 'strategies' exercised by the controllers of spaces with the 'tactics' through which a user operates within those spaces, producing sites of surprise and playfulness, plurality and creativity.

2. See Edward Soja (1989) on Los Angeles; Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (1995) on London; and Barbara Bender (1998) on Stonehenge. These studies arise from social theory/urban planning, cultural geography, and archeology/anthropology respectively.

3. Space Syntax is a limited company using an 'evidence-based approach to the evaluation and strategic design of buildings and urban areas'. It is allied to a long-term research project at the Bartlett School, University College London, working closely with the Virtual Reality Centre for the Built Environment. The principles it uses have been developed primarily out of the research of Bill Hillier: see particularly *The Social Logic of Space* (1984) and *Space is the Machine* (Hillier and Hanson, 1996).

4. This comment by Susan Benn (for whom Bore Place was her family home) is taken from an interview that I had with her at Bore Place in October 1999. The interview was recorded on video, which leads me to consider the implications of using film and video as a means of recording interview material. In the present instance, I had conducted a more informal, unfilmed interview with Susan Benn earlier the same day (in which we chatted about Bore Place and I scribbled a few notes on a pad) and my feeling was that the shift in recording mode was marked by a shift in agenda, perhaps for both of us. Probably particularly because of the context in which the interview was conducted (within a multi-media Performing Arts Lab), the interview material was framed by an awareness that we were, to an extent, performing the roles of interviewer and interviewee. The Lab was part of the Media Plus-funded, European Commission-supported project in media arts directed in 1999–2000 by Frank Boyd, Lizbeth Goodman, and Susan Benn.

5. Susan Melrose (1994) writes of the Warner/Shaw/Sophocles *Electra* of 1988–89: 'The production was schematic from one spectator position I chose (above the doors leading into and out of the spectator space), so that the *mise en scène* dominated and "spoke" the name of the *metteur en scène* as primary agent (or "actor") in every proposition I produced about it. From a second spectator position however – lower and to the side – no bird's eye view was possible. In this second experience of the production, the flow of blending bodies with which I was almost level – I looked past and through, rather than down on them – avoided the clear, schematic articulation of what remained, indisputably, "the same" effective global control. The production was strangely "everyday human" from the second position, but the means to this transformation are wholly spatial' (p. 153). This raises the issue of the plurality of spectatorial positions and of the need to name what this position actually was in any one instance. It also serves to introduce for us the notion of choices available as part of the role traditionally defined as 'passive receiver', by emphasizing the choice that is exercised by each spectator in deciding where to sit. The different interpretations that Susan Melrose offers based on her 'shift in perception' illustrate the enormous role that relationships between spectator and performance across and within the place of performance have in forming experiences of that performance. From a documentation point of view, this is only problematic if we are searching for neat summations of each performance bound by the definite article: 'the' meaning, 'the' spectatorial experience, etc.

6. For Brand (1994), the image of buildings as permanent, solid structures is an illusion, and he draws upon the double use of the word 'building' as both noun and action of a verb to suggest that: 'whereas "architecture" may strive to be permanent, a "building" is always building and rebuilding. The idea is crystalline, the fact fluid' (p. 2). Brand advocates an 'adaptive architecture' (p. 190), which recognizes a building as a temporal as well as a spatial whole and which plans and designs accordingly. If we accept the suggestion of his metaphor that buildings do indeed 'learn' and evolve, any examination of what a building 'is' must necessarily be carried out through temporal as well as spatial dimensions.

7. It is worth noting that the walled garden is a culturally specific spatial construction linked, in Britain, to the English stately home. In their study of *Body, Memory, and Architecture* (1977), the Americans Bloomer and Moore discuss the spatial significance of the garden, writing that: 'Outside lies the strangely ubiquitous phenomenon of the American open lawn. Not walled as the gardens of Europe or the Near East. . . . The lawn in some ways recalls the personal envelope of space that we usually try to maintain around our bodies' (p. 3).

8. The north section of Bore Place house was removed by a Mr Aymer Vallance at the beginning of the last century and used to become part of Stoneacre House at Otham, Kent. Martin Conway (1930) traces the various parts of the hybrid Stoneacre House to more than one Kent building, noting that the timber framing, the woodwork on the west front, the 'large oriel window, with the overhanging gable above it', the library door, and the stone fireplace in the south-west bedroom are all taken from Bore Place, 're-erected just as . . . in the original'.

9. Other examples of this cycle of processes include the fact that compost produced by the on-site Super Natural Ltd is used in the gardens, as is 'liquid feed produced on site using slurry from the farm's dairy herd', and the permaculture garden includes 'brick paths from Bore Place clay; a timber-framed and cladded shed using oak from Bore Place woodlands' (Commonwork website at www.commonwork.org). The hand-made brick business uses clay from the site, thereby transforming this site and moving it to other places.

10. See, for example, *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*.

11. Ruth Wylie, 'The Green Man: Variations on a Theme', *At the Edge*, No. 4 (1996).

12. William Anderson and Clive Hicks, *Green Man: the Archetype of our Oneness with the Earth* (Compassbooks, 1998).

13. At www.spacesyntax.com.

14. For a fascinating analysis of the historical and cultural positioning of these conventions and the effect they have on what can and cannot be done in the theatre, see Alan Read's chapter, 'Combustion: Fire and Safety', in *Theatre and Everyday Life* (1993, p. 228–36).

15. Created by Adam Dawe of Wimbledon School of Art.

16. Lyn Gardner, 'Urban Myth', *The Guardian*, 2 August 2000.

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