Practice as Research:

Scriptwriting for Puppet Theatre.

Towards The Mosaic Scale: Literary Dramaturgy for

Anglo-American Contemporary Puppetry.

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
Practice as research: Scriptwriting for PuppetTheatre. Towards The Mosaic Scale: Literary Dramaturgy for Anglo-American Contemporary Puppetry.

Mosaic Scale.

The Uncanny for The Blue Lady   10/01/20

Key:

- Sense of eeriness? LFX/SFX -
- Gothic, horror, suspense or surreality -
- Cursed thinking switch -
- Frame shift -
- Deus ex machina -
- Things seen out of the corner of an eye -
- Odd scale, perspective or spatial reality -
- Claustrophobia -
- Odd temporal reality -

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The Mosaic Scale exercise focussing on uncanny elements within The Blue Lady.

Abstract:

This thesis seeks to position itself as an expansion and development of discourse on puppet theatre, dramaturgy and playwriting. The following is an exploration of my writing for puppetry through practice as research. There are three elements to this research:

1) The two original puppet theatre scripts – *The Blue Lady* and *MONSTER.*

2) The literature review and reflection on the practice as research journey.

3) The Mosaic Scale - original dramaturgical guidelines, created as a result of practice as research.

It is my intention that this research will make an original contribution to the scholarly study of writing and dramaturgy for puppet theatre by creating two full-length puppet theatre scripts and analysing the process of writing those scripts;contributing to knowledge about process and expanding thinking on the notion of the uncanny and the visceral in scriptwriting by including the process and perspective of a creative practitioner, and my dramaturgical system The Mosaic Scale.

The Mosaic Scale for dramaturging puppet theatre scripts provides a series of questions for the writer to ask of themselves and their script throughout the process, in order to refine and edit their script in progress.Some of the considerations are to be kept at the back of the mind throughout the process of writing and checked regularly, other questions or topics are specific to particular milestones in the process and yet more good to ask of the final drafts. Within the five step system is an exercise also named the mosaic scale, see diagram above. The mosaic scale exercise can be used to look at the number of times a character, theme, puppet type, effect, scale or motif appears in a scene or show. It allows for the exploration of balance, rhythm, and style, and indicates if the thing being examined is missing, occurring too soon or too often. It can be utilised during all of the five steps. There is an intrinsic uncanniness to a puppet play which comes from the anthropomorphism of an inanimate object. This prompts the question: does the consideration of trying to create any further elements of uncanniness into the script become unnecessary? The Mosaic Scale is specifically developed to explore the visceral and the uncanny

within writing puppetry and the patterns of occurrence and repetition of elements specific to these two categories on the page. The writer does not have to try to make strange the puppet theatre but can enhance its reception from an audience, through the application of certain tropes and motifs that encourage a visceral or uncanny response.

Within contemporary Anglo-American puppet theatre, the canon is limited in terms of published scripts. Most puppeteers create shows through a number of different methods of devising. Historically, those puppetry scripts that have been written by individual playwrights are readerly rather than performative and usually consist only of dialogue and entrances/exits. Other scripts are dialogue heavy and include specific puppet manipulation direction within the dialogue. This latter tendency makes the scripts untidy to read as dramatic literature but perhaps more useful as performative texts because the stage directions can help to impart the action that shows the narrative in performance.This discovery led me to question:what does a creative team need from a performative puppet theatre script?

Puppet theatre is not a one-size-fits-all process – it is a polysemic system dependent on the type of puppetry utilised, the target audience, and the place and time in which these signs are being decoded. Any script written from scratch needs to reflect these elements to be a useful performative text.

This contextual component of my thesis is aimed at puppetry directors, puppeteers, performance writers who are new to puppetry and those coming from another medium with an interest in puppet theatre. I have included a glossary for those new to certain terms.

Table of Contents.

The Blue Lady.

A Puppet Theatre Victorian Ghost Story.

<u>CHARACTERS.</u>

Mary (human) –	The maid in her 40's.
Mary -	26" Table top puppet. As above.
Musgrove (human) –	Male solicitor early-20s.
Cassandra –	30" Table top puppet,20 years old, new mistress of the house.
	Plus 8" Rod marionette version.
The Doctor –	34" Table top puppet – in his 50s.
Sir Henry –	30" table top puppet -in his early 60s.
	Plus 8" Rod marionette version.
Tabitha Mason –	23" Table top puppet, séance medium – in her teens.
The Blue Lady –	Full size 'floating' puppet represented only by clothing - a blue crinoline dress, the ghost of Lydia Ferguson in her mid-20s.
	Plus China doll like marionette version.
Master Ferguson: -	2-year-old boy child sized 'floating' puppet, represented by clothing.
Mama –	2D paper rod puppet.
Charlotte –	2D paper rod puppet. - 8 years old.
Robert -	Pop-up book style head and shoulders – in early 20's.
	Plus 8" Rod marionette version.

Doll's house versions of Mary, Cassandra, Robert and Sir Henry.

Unless otherwise stated all dialogue is written for the puppet characters.

It is 1890 – The height of spiritualism, séance, psychical research, gas light & a time before telephones.

Life can seem cut off from the rest of the world.

Taking up one half of a Victorian parlour is a large table, big enough for eight chairs but with only two chairs around it. On the table is a blue chenille cloth and a heavy ornate candlestick. The blue chenille mirrors a blue rug on the floor. On the table is writing paper and pen and a wooden box full letters. Next to the table in the centre of the room is a grandmother clock.

The other side of the room appears to be a child's nursery, there is a child's bed and a child sized table and chairs. There is a dolls house elevated on a small table.

On the table with the doll's house, is a chalk board.

On it is written: Sunday Twelfth February 1889. Tomorrow you will decide.

To the right of the bed is a wardrobe and a chest of drawers. On the top of the chest of drawers there are dominoes, books and ornaments.

Everything is lit as if by candle light and gas lamps.

There is the sound of almost imperceptible sobbing and periodically a small children running.

A low drone like hum can be almost heard, this continues throughout and rises in pitch and speed at moments of fear.

Musgrove in a top hat and outside coat arrives with Mary, a maid, she is trailing slightly behind him. Musgrove carries a brief case. His clothing is very neat and tidy. There is no dust nor a hair out of place.

Mary is in a housemaids uniform, she wears an old but clean coat and outside hat. She carries a lit candle in a candle stick.

Musgrove:	Now then Mary, take a seat. I'd like you to tell me the details of the night of the 16th of February last.
Human Mary:	'Tis not for me to say, Sir.
Musgrove:	As you are the only witness, I need to hear from you, exactly what happened.

Mary doesn't respond to him, she can't keep still.

Musgrove:	Mary, please. Do keep still.
Human Mary:	I'll leave you here then, sir.
Musgrove:	Leave me? (*beat*) You've come all this way to show me and now you are to leave?

Mary is agitated.

Musgrove:	Sir Henry has tasked me with proving that he is the true heir to his brother's estate and I certainly do not have time to be searching for things alone. Sir Henry is expecting my conclusions by tomorrow morning.

Mary goes to the door and peers out into the corridor.

Musgrove:	Mary, please! Try to concentrate.

Mary returns to the room.

Human Mary:	'Tis dark and cold like the grave it is.
Musgrove;	Are you going to keep this up all evening?
Human Mary:	I'll be off home.
Musgrove:	You may not.
Human Mary:	She's still here.
Musgrove:	No, she isn't.
Human Mary:	She's watching.

Musgrove:	Have you been reading those sensation tales? Novel reading is not …. particularly for lay…
Human Mary:	It ain't no story Mr Musgrove. It's real. I don't want any part of it Mr Musgrove.
Musgrove:	Has it occurred to you I wonder, that Sir Henry will not be forthcoming with a reference of work for you if he deems you to have been unhelpful.
	Pause
Human Mary:	I know exactly when it started. February 12th.
Musgrove: *(scoffing)*	That seems exceedingly precise. More to the point, Miss Cassandra's papers? Perhaps her diary? Any letters she was about to send, I must see them all.
Human Mary:	It went wrong. Here. For Miss Cassandra. Never should've come.
Musgrove:	What do you mean went wrong for Miss Cassandra? The doctor said her hysteric tendencies were such that laudanum was the only available medicine and she took too much and died.
Human Mary:	If that's what you think Mr. Musgrove.
Musgrove:	Oh, I see, well what do you think?

Mary takes off her coat and hat and reaches for the large wooden box on the table. It has a double door style lid. She places it on the table, opening it she removes large pile of letters,many still with their envelopes, a large ornate photo album and leather-bound book with the word DIARY on the cover.

Human Mary:	'Tis all there I expect.

Musgrove reaches over to get the diary and sits down to read it.

A second maid enters.(Puppeteer).The wooden box and other desk items are placed to resemble the same room that Musgrove and mary are in.

> *Puppet Cassandra: a table top puppet of approximately 30 inches in height, a young woman with porcelain head and hands wearing a Victorian dress in a dark purple quality fabric. Her dress sweeps the floor, giving the illusion of floating when she moves. She has an expression of melancholy.*
>
> *Puppet Mary: a table top puppet of approximately 26 inches height. She looks like the human playing her and wears the same as the human – a housemaid's uniform. Her head and hands are made from carved wood, painted well but in a less perfect way. Her hands are rough to look at, she has a friendly and stoic expression on her face.*
>
> *Cassandra enters and sits at the desk writing very intensely in a notebook.*

Mary: Post miss. There's a telegram too.

> *Cassandra opens the envelope and the letter folds out to reveal a paper doll.*
>
> *A tall elegant lady (Mama)a 2D rod figurine made from hand written letters appears from the pile on the table.*

Letter (Mama voice over): Dearest Cassandra, I understand that you arrived in good time to undertake the duties I have assigned you. I hope that the house is not too cold. I must say I am confused as to what you say about the untouched nursery. Charlotte and I set sail for England tomorrow. You must honour Papa's decision about cousin Robert. You must be married Cassandra, I'm sure Robert won't mind if you write in your spare time. Perhaps you will be

able to write story books for your own children. Adieu my little

one. Mama.

Cassandra folds the letter down.

Mama puppet retreats into the books.

Cassandra: I wish I were a boy.

              (*warily*) This one was hand delivered.

Cassandra *gasps and drops the letter onto the table.*

Puppet Mary picks up the envelope.

The envelope is black edged and opens out with the appearance of a grave stone.

Mary: Leave now. You are in danger.

Cassandra takes out a pile of envelopes. One by one, she hands them to Mary.

Each envelope opens to become a paper effigy of a crucifix or gravestone and as

Mary reads each one she places them on the mantelpiece to resemble a grave

yard.

Mary: Get out of my house.

              You do not belong here.

              You are not welcome in my house.

Cassandra *starts pacing and becoming increasingly agitated as she replaces the*

letters in the box.

Mary: The telegram miss.

Cassandra folds open the telegram.

There is the sound of tapping at the window, but nobody is there.

> *Cassandra spins to face the noise.*
>
> *As she opens the telegram, a sailing ship that appears to be made from books, pages of books and loose papers, sails from the shelf and very slowly makes its way across the table.*
>
> *A tall elegant lady (Mama) and a small girl (both 2D rod figurines made as if from hand written letters,) walk across the deck of the boat.*
>
> *The child steps up onto the railings to look over.*
>
> *The blue chenille table cloth starts to pucker and roll as if the sea is becoming rougher and rougher.*

> *Cassandra collapses in grief.*

Cassandra: Charlotte? Mama? Little Charlotte! NO! And after Papa! This can't be so. I received a letter from Mama this very day.

Mary: Oh Miss, I'm so very sorry.

> *The child falls overboard and is lost under the table and is closely followed by her mother.*
>
> *The boat sails on and is finally no longer visible in the darkened room.*

Again, the sound of tapping at the window, but nobody is there.

Cassandra: Mary! Who was that?

Mary: 'Tis just the wind slamming the door I expect. Do you wish me to cancel tomorrow evening's guests?

Cassandra: No Mary, I do not wish you to cancel. I wish to write.

> *The table is arranged as if it is the nursery: The wooden box with double doors is*

set on its end to resemble the wardrobe. A smaller scale version of the doll's house is taken from within the doll's house. The bed is made from books and Mary's small shoulder shawl is placed over it like a cover. A desk and chairs are created from small candle sticks and more books.

Cassandra sits to watch the doll's house. She cries. She administers herself a tincture of laudanum.

The sound of a small child crying can be heard.

The lights go out.

Human Mary relights the lamp.

A miniature Cassandra enters the doll's house nursery and a miniature Mary enters the library.

Cassandra sits at the desk and reads another letter.

The sound of low and constant breathing interspersed with the occasional sob can be heard.

Human Mary hands Musgrove a folded letter. Musgrove opens it, and the face of Robert appears as if it is a pop-up book.

Robert *(Voice over):*   Dear Cousin Cassandra: when we are married, you shall be happy at last. When we are married, I shall make Ferguson house the envy of the county. You must give me your answer soon, as cousins, there has never been a better match. Robert.

Cassandra places the letter on a small table next to the wardrobe.

Cassandra takes paper and a pen from the mantelpiece and writes intently for a few minutes.

The real wardrobe door opens, Cassandra is oblivious to the decaying but beautiful hand reaching through a blue sleeve inside the wardrobe and taking the letter from the table before withdrawing.

There is tapping on the window, it comes at irregular intervals.

Cassandra stands and investigates, there is no one there.

The sound of a child snivelling and running footsteps comes right up to the door.

The door handle rattles and turns.

Human Mary approaches the table and picks up books and papers. A telegram falls from one of the books. Mary hands it to Musgrove to read.

Telegram (Sir Henry voice over): Cassandra. Stop. Will join this evening to discuss inheritance. Stop. As not of age nor married I will attend to all as legal guardian. Stop. Your uncle Henry Ferguson.

The writing on the chalk board, has changed. Letters have been obviously rubbed out, so it now says:

S ay n o   or   you will d i e.

Human Mary reads a letter/pop-up book from Robert. This time the letter/pop-up pages have become less beautiful, aged, grubby and torn around the edges.

Robert (as voice over): Dear Cousin, alone in that sprawling and empty house, you must allow my father to take all responsibility from you. Still a girl as you are, you must be out of your depth. When I return to England, on Friday, you will be of age and you will give me your answer. Robert.

> *Cassandra self -administers more laudanum. Eventually, she nods off.*
>
> *On the top of the life size chest of drawers there are dominoes, books and ornaments. These are now a church and a cemetery of grave stones where before they had merely been discarded toys.*
>
> *A small rod marionette puppet of Cassandra, dressed as a bride stands outside the church. She stands next to a rod marionette bride groom (Robert) and Sir Henry. They are all smaller scale than the main puppets.*
>
> *A hospital carriage approaches the church and Cassandra the bride is bundled unceremoniously into the back.*
>
> *The carriage drives off.*
>
> *Uncle Henry walks away from the church with his arm around Robert.*

The sound of two men laughing with satisfaction can be heard.

A furiously tinkling bell can be heard.

> *Cassandra awakens. She stands and leaves.*
>
> *A china doll style marionette of the blue lady walks between the headstones.*
>
> *The blue lady comes to one that is represented by a china teddy bear.*
>
> *The blue lady kneels before it and prays.*
>
> *After a while she rises, walks to the edge of the wardrobe and wrapping one of her strings around her neck she jumps, hanging her- self.*

The sound of a heavy weight at the end of a rope falling abruptly is heard.

The sound of a low and occasional sob can be heard.

Sir Henry and Lydia Ferguson can be heard talking.

Lydia: He is gravely ill, summon the doctor.

Sir Henry: Try not to be hysterical Lydia. All children get illness.

Soft weeping.

The sound of a heavy weight at the end of a rope falling abruptly is heard.

Human Mary is adjusting the bed clothes of the life size bed, she pulls back the sheets to reveal a small child.

Pulling back the cover completely, it is revealed that the child is dead. He has no face.

The door opens, and slams shut.

The lights go out.

The child has gone.

Human Mary is terrified and relights the lamp. She picks up Cassandra's diary. She fights to avoid reading and places it on the shelf as she leaves.

Musgrove reaches for the diary and opens it towards the end.

Musgrove: February 12th 1889:

Cassandra is writing in her diary and speaking at the same time.

Cassandra (V/O):   Today I feel strong, I slept very well but I have received another anonymous letter. That's two now. I suppose I should report them to the police, but I have decided I will not leave the house. Eventually we will catch them out, whoever it is. I had the strangest dream, at least I think it was a dream, I'm experiencing lucid dreams and dark nightmares. I see everyone I have ever known in my sleep. Last night, I think it was last night, do I sleep at all since I returned to England? It Is so cold, and I miss Papa so very much. It is a wonder I do not die in my sleep. Perhaps I have, and I haunt myself! I wonder if I could include that in my novel? I digress.

I decided to work in the nursery and took my papers there, I must have dropped off in the chair, but I dreamt the doll's house was alive. There were funeral mourners: a man and a woman and the man looked so much like Papa. My sadness is too much to bare.

> *Cassandra begins to quietly cry.*
>
> *The doll's house is alive.*
>
> *In front of the doll's house comes, a tiny doll's house funeral.*
>
> *There are 2 mourners: a man and the blue lady.*
>
> *The coffin upon the cart is very small, as if it is for a child.*

Mary opens a draw of the chest of drawers and takes out three photographs.

She hands them to Musgrove.

There are photos of Master Jeremy Fergusson (a boy of 3), Lydia Ferguson and Sir Henry.

Musgrove: Her father's first wife and their young son?

Human Mary: Mrs Lydia Ferguson.

Musgrove: I understand she took her own life? The day before she was to be committed, is that not so Mary? (beat) Oh, this one of Sir Henry seems to have writing on it.

The photo of Sir Henry has writing all over it.

Musgrove (reads the graffiti):   MURDERER. What do you know of this Mary?

Human Mary: First time I've seen it, I wasn't here the day Master Jeremy died. We was all given the day off, by Sir Henry. On account of it being the queens birthday.

Musgrove: Where was the boy's father? Why was Sir Henry in charge?

Human Mary: Sir Jeremy was away on business.

Mary says nothing and stares at Musgrove.

A black cloth is draped over the photo of the child.

Musgrove: (*reads*) February 13th 1889: I think Papa is trying to tell me

                   something. I will invite the psychical medium Tabitha Mason,

                   who is visiting the area, to attend us for an evening séance later

                   this week.

Human Mary: Oh, my poor Miss Cassandra.

Musgrove: They actually allowed her to host a séance? I'm beginning to

                   think she was indeed in need of a spell in the asylum.

Human Mary: It's this house.

The nursery is rearranged to create the library. Four chairs are placed around the

small table and covered in blue chenille. There is an upright cabinet big enough for

one of the table top puppets to fit inside.

> *Mary creates a doorway from a pile of books.*
>
> *Tabitha Mason, a 23" table top puppet, is already in the puppet library. She is a*
>
> *very young cockney woman, almost a child no more than 14 years old. She wears*
>
> *a white gown, almost like a flowing bridal gown, complete with a full face veil. She*
>
> *sits at the table as if in meditation.*

Human Mary plays out the following between the pen and the candle stick.

Cassandra is the pen and Sir Henry the candlestick.

It is as if the voices of Cassandra and Sir Henry come from outside the room we are

in.

Human Mary: The whole thing was horrible, right from the start.

Cassandra: 'I am quite capable uncle'

Sir Henry: 'We'll see. Have you an answer for Robert? The sooner you are

                 married the better for everyone.'

Cassandra: 'for everyone?'

Sir Henry: 'Don't be clever Missy, and none of your women's suffrage

                 nonsense'.

The Doctor, Sir Henry and Cassandra enter the room, they are all table top

puppets.

The doctor comes in, he appears to be pouring a drink and adding something to

the glass.

Sir Henry and Cassandra both try to get into the room at the same time.

The doctor hands Cassandra a drink.

Mary enters and waits to sit.

Sir Henry*:*   Good health.

Sir Henry laughs, a strange under his breath laugh.

He turns and pinches Mary's bottom and roars with nasty laughter.

Tabitha is seated in the middle and in the seat which best affords control over the

situation.

Cassandra is seated opposite her.

Sir Henry sits opposite the doctor.

Tabitha: You will gather together in a circle, man, woman, man, woman.

The   room must be in dim light.

                 Now, clasp hands with the persons next to you.

I must tell you that we are alone in this room at present. You

may check the wardrobe to be sure.

> *All four puppets join hands around the table.*
>
> *Mary opens the wardrobe door and it is empty.*

Now listen...........The voices of the day are moving away. The

veil is rending and the voices of the day are heard across the

voices of the dark.

Is there anybody there? Show yourself spirits. Come to our

circle. Prove yourself. Is there anybody there?

Tapping starts

They are here! Spirits are present! Who is there? *(more tapping)*

Show yourself! Prove that you come from the other side!

More tapping. A book falls from the shelf

Spirit of the deceased show yourself.

The table is moving.

The table lifts and tilts.

Doctor: Well, well.

Sir Henry (laughing): Indeed doctor. Most amusing.

Tabitha: Rest, rest perturbed spirit! I see a tragic death …

The table lowers to the floor, the sound of a woman sobbing can be heard.

We believe, spirit. Show yourself.

Hands appear to be trying to get through the wall of the room.

A woman is present! (*beat)* It is your dear departed mother. Do

you   have a message for Cassandra? She is here.

> *A puppet resembling Mama appears from the wardrobe – although the face is*

> *obscured by floaty muslin scarf around the head.*

*V/O Ly*dia: The nursery. *(she starts to sob)* My boy. The nursery.

Cassandra: Who is that?

Sir Henry: Your mother, girl.

Cassandra: That is not Mama.

Sir Henry: Certainly is. Let me check.

> *He touches the wardrobe spirit and laughs lasciviously.*

Tabitha: Do you have a message for Cassandra? (beat) She says, she

                   says she

Fake Mama: You will be happy when you marry cousin Robert.

Smoke starts to appear. Books start to fall from the shelves.There are eyes where

there should be books.

> *Fake mama retreats back into the wardrobe.*

Sir Henry: Miss Mason?

> *Tabitha starts to writhe and groan.*

V/O Lydia: Do not say yes. It is yours. Danger.

Sir Henry: Are you quite in control, Miss Mason?

Books and papers are flying everywhere.

Tabitha*:*   I, I don't… Who are you spirit?

V/O Lydia: GET THE MEN OUT.

Tabitha*:*   What is your name, spirit?

V/O Lydia: I am LYDIA FERGUSON.

Sir Henry: I'm sure I can't fathom how this is done!

V/O Lydia: Your will is that which will save you.

Tabitha eventually collapses onto the table.

The smoke and flying books have subsided.

Cassandra is lolling in her chair.

The doctor and Sir Henry are quite composed.

Sir Henry lights a cigar and stands.

Tabitha comes to.

Sir Henry: Bravo! Bravo Miss Mason, quite the theatricals.

Cassandra: Lydia?

Tabitha: I'm not sure what just happened.

Cassandra: Danger, will, die. *(becoming increasingly intense)*

Sir Henry: Just as mad as that Lydia creature.

Cassandra: Danger, will, die.

Sir Henry;   They cannot be trusted with responsibility or even reason.

 Doctor: Miss Cassandra is indeed hysterical.

Cassandra: Lydia. Your will is that which will save you.

Sir Henry: Lydia's will? Ha! Long dead my girl.

Doctor: I suspect, Miss Cassandra is suffering from uteromania, she

                     must rest.

Sir Henry: A diagnosis at last.Leaving now, discuss treatment in the

                     morning doctor. Suggest you sleep child.

Sir Henry leaves.

Cassandra brings out a document.

Cassandra: I am not ill doctor. I have a document I would like you and Mary

to witness.

> *Mary signs the will without looking at it and leaves.*
>
> *The Doctor meanwhile is scrutinising the will. It is just a paragraph long.*

Doctor: Your will? You are not of age and are soon to be married. You

do not need a will.

Cassandra: There can be no harm in you signing it then, I can always tell

my uncle why your stable boy ran away.

Doctor: Take your medicine foolish child.

> *The doctor reluctantly signs the document.*

Cassandra: Tomorrow is my birthday. I shall be of age.

Doctor: You seem to be reacting with what can only be described as the

rapture of an unbalanced mind and frankly you need hospital

attention.

Cassandra: I am not mad.

Doctor: As you are obviously not a doctor, how could you possibly

know? Good evening Miss Ferguson.

> *The doctor leaves.*
>
> *Cassandra places the will on the table.*
>
> *She takes the box of poison pen letters from the shelf and places it on the table.*
>
> *Taking them one by one, she opens them on the table top. They are all blank.*

Cassandra: No!

> *Cassandra opens her diary and starts to write, furiously.*

> *Tapping begins at the window one end of the room.*
>
> *She glances up.*

Cassandra: (*resolutely*)   No. I must record what is happening.

> *Cassandra prepares herself a tincture of laudanum and drinks it.*
>
> *She settles back to writing.*

As the evening draws on and the laudanum starts to work a cacophony of fear builds around Cassandra.

The lights flicker.

The sound of tapping comes from the other window.

A heavy weight falling on the end of a rope can be heard.

A door slamming.

Library books fall from shelves.

Cassandra becomes frozen in terror.

A door slamming.

Breathing and sobbing.

> *Gradually the ghostly, skeleton outline of the blue lady appears in the room. She is a human sized puppet represented by just the blue dress, not full like a healthy living woman but rather somehow deflated, operated by pulleys and invisible wires.*
>
> *She has a grotesque physicality and moves like a spider. She scampers up the wall and across the ceiling above the bed.*
>
> *BLACK OUT.*
>
> *A child is crying throughout.*
>
> *The lights come up.*

Cassandra watches, trance like.

Cassandra scrambles for the laudanum and takes another large dose.

The blue lady is hovering above the bed and starts to undulate violently as if she is being taken over by some outside force.

The cacophony continues around Cassandra as she slips into a deep sleep.

The Blue Lady scrabbles about the bed.

BLACK OUT.

The lights come up and the blue lady has gone.

The library settles and becomes calm.

Cassandra is in a still and deep, deep sleep.

Mary enters the library and finds her.

Mary: Miss Cassandra? Perhaps you should sleep in your room?

               Miss? Miss?

Tapping at the window.

Mary tidies the will and the blank sheets away.

Mary looks up as the tapping starts again and gets increasingly louder and faster.

Mary goes to the window to look.

The face of Sir Henry is at the window. He then abruptly disappears.

Gasping, Mary steps back towards Cassandra.

Mary attends to Cassandra and realises there is a problem.

Mary: Miss? Miss Cassandra. Wake up now miss.

Mary tries to wake her but there is no response. Cassandra is slumped on the table. Mary starts to panic.

Sir Henry appears.

Mary:	Oh, Sir Henry, thank goodness. I can't seem to wake Miss Cassandra.
Sir Henry:	Forgot my hat.
Mary:	I can't wake her.
Sir Henry:	A closer look, sure it'll be fine.

Sir Henry attends Cassandra. It becomes clear that she is without any animation.

Sir Henry:	Need to arrange a coffin. Believe there is one in the chapel.
Mary:	Oh, Oh, my dear sweet girl. But, but, don't we need the doctor to say that she has gone?
Sir Henry:	No Mary. Need to get her body into that coffin and seal the lid.
Mary:	But sir, she's not two minutes' dead. How can you be so cruel?
Sir Henry:	Merely protecting everyone that comes to the house. May have died from something highly contagious.
Mary:	Yes sir. Or she might have died of fright, sir.
Sir Henry:	People don't die of fright Mary. Or half my battalion would have been goners in the first week.

Mary pauses.

Sir Henry:	Come now, help me move her body to the chapel.

Mary is anxious.

Mary:	But… I, is, there a….. a bell? On the lid… of the coffin sir?

Sir Henry laughs derisively.

Sir Henry and Mary manage to move Cassandra's body from the library.

They place her inside the clock which when tipped onto its side resembles a coffin.

> *There is a bell on top of the coffin.*
>
> *They leave.*

Musgrove: It is surely a coincidence that Henry Ferguson was there just at that moment?

Human Mary: I s'pose so sir.

Musgrove: And what of these letters? Who do you think was responsible Mary?

Mary: Wouldn't like to say sir. But they went.

Musgrove: Went?

Mary: Nowt but blank sheets on the table and nothing in the box.

Musgrove: Come now. Don't be shy, I won't be angry if you wrote them.

Mary: Mr Musgrove! I would never…I don't reckon Sir Henry had forgotten his hat at all, sir. I remember I left it by the front door for him.

Musgrove: I see. Tell me, what time was Cassandra pronounced dead?

Mary: There's two times sir.

Musgrove: Two? What do you mean?

Mary: Sir Henry said she were dead first time at about 11 pm.

Musgrove: And the other?

Mary: The chapel. I waited with her, all night. Her coffin was in the chapel.

The table is rearranged to resemble a chapel with the writing box placed and ornamented as if it is the alter. The coffin stands in front.

The lid is closed. There is a bell mounted on a wooden frame about a foot above the lid of the coffin: the pendulum from the clock is repurposed as the bell.

> *Mary sits next to the coffin and prays.*

Chapel bell chimes 1.

> *Mary stands and paces around the chapel. She kneels at the alter and then comes*
>
> *back to her seat.*

Chapel bell chimes 2.

Mary: Miss Cassandra, I promise to honour your passing and that of

                    your dear family. I shall hold my vigil here with you all night.

> *Mary prays and then returns to her seat.*
>
> *She nods off.*

Chapel bell chimes 4.

A very low tinkling bell can be heard. Mary wakes.

Mary: Dreaming of bells, I was.

The bell sound gets louder and louder.

Mary: Miss? Miss? Are you there? Oh Miss, you 're alive. Praise be.

> *Mary tries to lift the lid of the coffin but cannot.*

Mary: It is too heavy and it is nailed down.

Muffled sounds are coming from inside the coffin.

The bell on the coffin is now ringing constantly.

Low level almost imperceptible drone music.

A door slamming.

Heavy weight falling on the end of a rope sound.

Doctor/ Sir Henry's uteromania conversation (repeats):

Doctor:	I fear Miss Cassandra is hysterical and suffering from uteromania.
Sir Henry:	A diagnosis at last! We shall discuss treatment and hospitalisation in the morning doctor, I am willing to pay for long term treatment. I understand the asylum at Crowsworth welcomes emergency patients, but for now, I shall take my leave of this mad house.

Séance voices can be heard.

V/O Lydia:	The nursery. *(she starts to sob)* My boy. The nursery.

(A child is crying throughout.)

V/O Lydia:	Do not say yes. It is yours. Danger. GET THE MEN OUT. Your will is that which will save you.

Mary is running around the chapel looking frantically for something.

Mary:	Stop it! Where is that hammer? (*shouts*) It's alright Miss, I shall open the lid in a moment. One more moment. I'll be back in a minute.

Mary rushes hither and thither muttering.

Mary:	Anything to open it with. Please stop!

Mary leaves the chapel still muttering.

She returns with a candle stick and tries to prize the lid to no avail.

Chapel bell chimes 5

Mary:	Oh Miss, I don't know what to do. I can't open it. I shall go for help.

Mary leaves.

Mary: Are we too late? The bell has stopped.

Doctor: Please desist from behaving like a delirious female. Her uncle

               informed me of her passing last night at 11.15.

Mary: No doctor. I heard the bell. You have to believe me, open the

               coffin, she's still alive.

Doctor: This really is absurd.

Mary: You must open it. You must have a knife or a hoof pick?

Mary lunges towards the doctor and tries to get into his inside pockets.

Doctor: Get your hands off me, now! Hysterical woman!

Mary manages to grab a horse hoof pick from his pocket and with all her might

prises open the coffin.

Cassandra lies dead, twisted and grimacing as if caught in a scream.

Mary collapses into a pew.

The doctor checks the temperature of the body.

Doctor: I would say she's been dead a maximum of two hours.

Mary: She was alive then. Why didn't you believe me? If we'd come

               back sooner, she might still be alive.

The doctor leaves.

Mary heartbroken follows after him.

Musgrove: This is good news Mary.

Human Mary: Good news? How can it be good? I couldn't save her.

Musgrove is writing things in his notebook.

Musgrove: If Miss Fergusson died in the early hours of Friday morning, then

she was officially of age and we can take her will seriously. It

also means of course, that she was effectively murdered by

Henry Ferguson and therefore you inherit under the terms of

Miss Ferguson's will.

Human Mary: Me? What? I don't know… I can't.. Me inherit all this?

Musgrove: Yes, Of course, Mary. Come now, let us leave these sad

memories behind.

Mary: What am I going to do with all this?

There is a cart with a coffin on top standing outside the front door of the doll's house.

Musgrove: Come now Mary, no looking back. Your future is bright.

As Mary and Musgrove leave the room:

Mary: She's still watching.

The door to the room we are in opens abruptly and slams shut. It opens again, the blue lady is there. It slams shut. It opens again, there is nobody there, it stays open.

THE END.

Chapter one

Preface

This research is an ongoing thought process that I have chosen to model as practice-as-research accompanied by an exploratory development system. Within this research process I aimed to write a script that will bring to life on stage the poetic imagery of an art form whilst at the same time tell a story through puppet and object as character. I have written a compelling narrative with interesting characters as a puppet theatre piece that allows some of the material possibilities inherent in puppetry to be utilised.

Through this process and my contextualising research I have created a system; the Mosaic Scale, which can be used by others as a toolkit for puppet theatre literary dramaturgy. To dramaturg is to ask questions: about a devising process,script, the ideas, imagery, narrative, decisions taken and possible considerations for future users of the text.

My motivations for this research include: the desire to write a script for puppetry that can be read as a literary experience in itself as well as a performative script.There is a difference between a readerly text and a performative text. A readerly script can be read as literature, as a narrative and does not require the stage directions to clarify the logistics or design stipulations of the author.A performative text, may also be read as narrative literature, but will contain more detailed movement, emotional direction, choreography, set, costume and prop stipulations and as such can be overwrought in it's detail and therefore not as immediately engaging as a readerly text.

I also wanted to create a toolkit for writers to help create intelligible puppetry texts that can lend themselves to multiple productions by diverse companies over time. This research advances my knowledge of both puppetry and writing for puppet theatre, while opening it up to others. I hope that this can facilitate work with longevity, and will begin to generate the possibility of a more extensive canon in this field. The question central to this research is: what makes a useful performative puppet script?

The possibilities within puppetry are far more wide ranging than human theatre and this makes it dynamic to work with. Puppets are not confined to what the human body is capable of doing.The tone, atmosphere, focus and meaning of a show can change depending on the type of puppet used. They can induce feelings of the uncanny, and can be both sublime and grotesque. A multi character puppet show can be created without the need for anyone else.

Puppetry is visceral. This may seem an obvious statement as it is predominantly visual theatre but it is visceral in the sense of how an audience responds to it. This potential for a visceral response is the core of puppetry and why it is not just for kids. Visceral performance is best shown and experienced through action, puppetry itself is best shown through action and a useful and usable script should help to facilitate this.

Puppets are liminal. They are not alive nor are they dead and as such there is a distance between them and the human writer or theatre maker of puppetry. This is a greater distance than that between the writer of human theatre and the actor who may play their characters. The detachment the writer can find when writing for puppets rather than humans is such that it can become easier and clearer to work out exactly what they want and need from the characters and narrative but also from the object that is the performer: the puppet.

This,in turn, not only helps to simplify and focus the narrative and character but encourages theatricality, symbolism, motif and metaphor in the mind of the writer and, subsequently, the script. This same detachment is akin to Brechtian style alienation. When the audience sees the world in miniature before them, the visualisation of that world has the potential to foster a greater understanding of metaphor and any themes present in the script.

I wanted to research and explore whether I could write a puppet script that shows the viscerality inherent in the puppetry action and also whether the experience of the detachment and distance between the puppeteer and the puppet could be transferred to the pages of a script. Throughout this exploration, I made three attempts to get to the crux of the research. As a result, three discoveries and insights appeared.

The first attempt I made was to write a puppetry script combining methods from human theatre writing (narrative for characters) with storyboarding and devising

techniques used in puppetry. I discovered that although this created a useful approach for writing narrative it did not forefront puppetry or even feel like I was writing for puppets.My insight from this discovery was not only of the importance of puppetry as central to the script but particularly the type of puppet. The type of puppet for which one is writing can influence the story, atmosphere, context, logistics, practicalities and style.

In the second attempt, I wrote for different puppet types but again the script did not seem to be giving me what I wanted. I discovered that this was because the visceral was absent. I had to ask myself: what is the visceral within puppetry and what do I need the puppets to do to access a visceral effect? I realised that in order to discover what I needed the puppet(s) to do I would need to apply dramaturgical thinking. A process of dramaturgical exercises could help me to work it out methodically.

By the third attempt, I discovered that perfecting a way to write a puppetry script alone was not enough. I had then started to create a system of exercises and questions with which to dramaturg my puppet theatre script. The Mosaic Scale for dramaturging puppet theatre scripts includes a series of questions for the writer to ask of themselves and their script throughout the process. These questions and exercises can be followed step by step or dipped into, as and when the script needs. The insight finally came when I introduced the Mosaic Scale exercise to external readers and realised that I had the answer all along in the form of this exercise.

The Mosaic Scale exercise can be used to explore the use of scale, size, framing, viscerality, uncanny, effects, design choices, narrative events and puppet type. It can be used during the devising process, once a draft script is written, or in a non-devising rehearsal. For example, it can be used to explore use of scale—whether changing the sizes or types of puppets in a particular scene works. Does that affect the overall look of the show positively or might it feel out of place and confusing to an audience?

Using the mosaic scale exercise to see the data from every occurrence of a chosen topic within a script can highlight whether there is an imbalance. It can help the writer to discover more about their writing, to write more visually and viscerally and to edit a script to dance off the page.

This thesis contributes to the sphere of practice-informed research, and can be situated alongside other practitioner-scholars of puppetry and puppet theatre: such

as Penny Francis, John Bell and Steve Tillis. All have carved out successful and interesting niches for themselves as historians, essayists and theorists of puppetry, and their work is enhanced by the added dimension of their practical experience in the field.

My research builds on Penny Francis' brief exploration of writing for puppetry and dramaturgy by exploring as a 'dedicated wordsmith'[1] and a puppet theatre maker how I can write for puppetry and also create a dramaturgical system that can help others.

John Bell's wide-ranging knowledge of the history of and theoretical writings on puppetry were fundamental to my wider understanding of what puppetry can be and why puppetry is so important culturally. His chapter 'Playing with the Eternal Uncanny'[2] was particularly influential to this research, instigating my expanded exploration of the uncanny in puppetry. He writes of the ascendancy of rationalism and the rejection of ancient beliefs, the problematicising of the uncanny by Jentsch and Freud and how these influences belittle and diminish puppetry, yet people's interest in puppetry has never gone away. I have built on his essay by exploring ways to consciously incorporate the uncanny into a puppetry script and performance, over and above the uncanniness of the puppet itself and have dedicated step four of The Mosaic Scale to this.

Steve Tillis' seminal book *Towards an aesthetic of the puppet: puppetry as theatrical art*[3], has informed my thinking on semiotics and phenomenology in puppetry. I have built upon his theories by incorporating considerations and questions about semiotic reception of puppetry and phenomenological perception into each of the five steps of the Mosaic Scale process.

My research proposes a literary dramaturgy for puppet theatre created throughout the research and practice of writing a script for puppetry. It is my intention that this research will make an original contribution to the scholarly study of writing and dramaturgy for puppet theatre by creating a full length puppet theatre script and analysing the process of writing that script; contributing to knowledge about process and expanding thinking on the notion of the uncanny and the visceral in scriptwriting

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1 Penny Francis, *Puppetry, a reader in theatre practice.* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 99.

2 John Bell,"Playing with the eternal uncanny. The persistent life of lifeless objects". in Posner, Orenstein, Bell, (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Puppetry and Material Performance.* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014) 42 – 5

3 Steve Tillis, *Towards an aesthetic of the puppet: Puppetry as a theatrical art*.(Westport CT: Greenwood press.1992.)

by including the process and perspective of a creative practitioner. Although it is still often associated somewhat derisively with children's entertainment, puppet theatre is a widely recognised and well respected form of visual theatre.

My process of questioning each attempt to write a puppetry script and looking for any insights led to the creation of the Mosaic scale system and in particular the Mosaic Scale exercise. The exercise highlights occurrence, imbalance and specific areas in need of focus in puppet theatre scripts, but would be a useful tool for any writer as many of the categories explored in a puppetry script would also be present in a human script.

The mosaic scale dramaturgy system is intended as a tool kit for writers and theatre makers of puppetry to help refine and define their puppetry scripts. By incorporating and questioning puppet type, occurrence, the uncanny, the visceral and phenomenological response to puppetry the writer can create a script that can be read as dramatic literature as well as being a usable performative script.

Aims of the research.

Until very recently, when people asked me what I do, I would say I am a puppet theatre maker and a script writer. I often separated the two even though they are obviously linked. I separated them because making puppet theatre is usually a collaborative devising process and if my puppet company has a script at all it is an aide memoire or rehearsal text for us alone, whereas my script writing until recently was only for human theatre[4].

I am co-founder of Croon productions, a puppet theatre company specializing in creating and performing puppet shows made for adults.With two permanent members, we use a devising method to create our shows. I am responsible for adapting the consequent narratives into puppet scripts while my partner designs and makes the puppets and sets. We both also perform and puppeteer.

Croon productions began in 1999 as a festival and cabaret company, creating comedy walkabout shows and trick-based burlesque cabaret acts. Our acts were always highly visual and based in the use of absurd or grotesque props and costumes. In *Where are the sheep?, a* biochemist/farmer looks for a flock of lost 'sheep', with three people wearing life-size sheep costumes, as if they are spliced

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4 Term coined by Sergei, Obraztsov, *My Profession*. (Fredonia Books. Amsterdam.2001), 57.

with the animal. *Portmanteau Picnic* sees a small group of Victorians out for a picnic. All the items needed for their picnic are housed in cupboards within the bustles of the women's dresses and have to be opened by someone else to access the picnic and croquet. They play croquet on astroturf with mallets that they attach to the ends of their parasols, all of which have been carried in their bustles. As all our shows were prop-heavy and props like the sheep took the form of puppets, the natural progression was to create venue-based puppet shows and so I began to train as a puppeteer, including undertaking a course in Prague in marionette manipulation.

This led to us specializing in creating and performing rod marionette[5] performances, including puppet re-imaginings of classic and cult movies: *Spaghetti*, a Western, utilising rod marionettes, toys and objects; *Noir: A Dick Privet mystery, a* film noir detective thriller pastiche utilising rod marionettes and 2D cut-outs; *Attack of the 50-foot woman, a v*ersion of the cult 1950's science-fiction film, utilising rod marionettes, shadow puppets and life-size mannequin body puppets.

The process Croon productions have taken in the past when creating a script for a genre-based show starts with submersion in the particular genre and/or story, so as to understand the motifs, tropes and style as much as possible. Once we have notes about style, ideas for images we want to see on stage and any extra information such as style of music, language and story arcs, the devising process begins. When we have discussed and agreed on ideas for play-board/storage, we will devise a story using the research and a stand-in version of the play-board.The area that the puppets stand and perform on is called the play-board. Once we have the skeleton of a narrative and the main characters I will write a script, while the puppets and play-board are being designed and made.

Puppet theatre like human theatre holds up a mirror to human existence. Why is the experience of live puppet theatre so different to human theatre performance? What, then, does that mirror show?

The desire to anthropomorphise puppets, is perhaps one of the main reasons people engage with puppetry, along with the experience of pareidolia, the occurrence of seeing faces within inanimate objects. As artist and puppeteer Racheal Guy observes the puppet '[…] as a mimetic artefact, stimulating and harnessing the

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5 Glossary contains definitions of puppet type.

human propensities of imagination and anthropomorphisation.'[6] The imagination can be stimulated to anthropomorphize even the most abstract of puppets. When that abstract artefact is brought to life on stage our innate desire to see ourselves and our stories represented takes over in our imaginations.

On the other hand, I have heard numerous puppeteers say with authority: 'if a human could do it, a human should'. Founder of Sandglass theatre, puppeteer and director Eric Bass writes, 'Why is this character played by a puppet not an actor? If we cannot answer this question it is probably because the character is too much like a human and should remain in that domain.'[7] The question of why a puppet is playing a character rather than a human is about more than whether the puppet chosen looks like a human. Bass also says of puppets that,

> [...]there are theatrical conventions in which the puppet does try to imitate the human world, I believe they go against the puppet's nature. This does not mean that a puppet cannot play a human character; it means[…] the puppet will not be imitating life, but reflecting it, as if from another dimension.[8]

A puppet that mimics a human and thereby suggests to some that a human actor should perform the piece, is not a replica of a human but rather a symbolic and poetic idea of that human character and therefore something different.A puppet is a theatrical device within a theatrical world, whereas a human actor is just that – an actor pretending to be something they are not, whilst a puppet can only be its theatrical self.A puppet is made for a specific character, it exists in the theatrical world of that show.Even if the same puppet is used in different stories and as different characters, it will never be acting. Its 'materiality' is, as puppetry theorist and authour Henryk Jurkowski states, 'the special feature of the puppet'[9].

6Rachael Guy, "Enlivening the Uncanny: On existential mirrors and the anthropomorphic impulse in adult puppet

theatre".https://www.academia.edu/9948540/Enlivening_the_Uncanny_On_existential_mirrors_and_the_anthropomorphic_impulse_in_adult_puppet_theatre, 56. (Accessed 20/02/20)

7 Eric Bass in Posner et al.*Routledge companion to puppetry and material performance*. (Abingdon: Routledge 2014), 55.

8 Ibid., 37

9 Henryk Jurkowski "The mode of existence of characters of the puppet stage" in *The Language of the Puppet* ed.Kominz and Levenson,(UNIMA-USA1998),24.

Even if, in theory, a show should be performed by human actors, as it is very wordy or it does not utilise puppets for their materiality, I believe that devising or writing for puppets and staging with puppets for reasons of aesthetics, for the spectacle of theatre, rather than solely an exploration of the materiality of puppetry, are valid reasons enough but there are other reasons also.

Of the more obvious reasons may be the need for an animal character – animals cannot be trained to act, to repeat long and involved sequences relating to verbal cues, night after night. Therefore, a puppet version of the animal character can be relied on. The same could be said for young children – not only can they be unreliable on stage but they bring the added cost and difficulty of chaperones and tutors.

Puppeteers go out of their way to play with the suspension of disbelief and this performative toying with the meta-theatricality is an expected element of a puppet show for most spectators. Why indeed, would we want to watch a puppet show that was so realistic and so imitative of human theatre as to be indecipherable from it? Why would a puppeteer use a puppet in that context? This is a subject that is explored by Masahiro Mori in his theory of the uncanny valley[10] which focuses on robots or human-like models and the notion of affinity, and at what point our affinity and interest drops into the valley of eeriness as it turns to fear or disgust, but this is not specifically what I am focussing on in this thesis. My focus includes the phenomenological response to puppetry, the uncanny, and the visceral in a puppetry script and how the writer might purposefully encourage these responses in their writing.

The nature of the puppet is that it is something read as not human, as somehow more than human, super human, or not quite human. It will always be so and this will always drive its performance and characteristics, it can never be human – but isn't this very thing, this phenomenological response to puppetry, the uncanny, a reason people may enjoy watching? The special features of puppets are the things that can not be reproduced by humans. The sheer theatricality of puppetry. The puppet can only ever be itself.

The dichotomy between human theatre and puppet theatre manifests in the puppet as an existential metaphor that bypasses the complexities of our response to a

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10 https://spectrum.ieee.org/automaton/robotics/humanoids/the-uncanny-valley (Accessed 14/01/20)

human actor. We do not lose the plot or characterisation of a puppet through drifting off into a reverie about the real life of the actor before us. A puppet may resemble someone we know but we don't question whether it is the same actor we saw in that film last night.

Although human-style puppets appear to be a human character, they are in fact a sign only. The meaning and interpretation of those signs can subsume the argument for a human actor.Puppetry scholar Steve Tillis quotes Bill Baird as stating, 'A puppet must always be more than his live counterpart – simpler, sadder, more wicked, more supple. The puppet is an essence and an emphasis.'[11] Vsevelod Meyerhold offers an argument in favour of humanoid puppetry, 'The puppet did not want to become an exact replica of man, because the world of the puppet is a wonderland of make believe, and the man which it impersonates is a make- believe man.'[12]

The playing out of stories, themes and ideas can be seen as a psychological exploration of what it is to be human. Childhood play often involves the manipulation of dolls and objects in order for the child to explore and process experience.Puppets can perform violence, sex and taboo subjects to a more explicit level than many human actors would be prepared to do (certainly on a live stage with no stunt doubles, camera tricks or retakes).

Puppets perform and inhabit the rebellious, in an honest and open way that human performers may struggle to perform convincingly. As Tina Bicat points out, 'Puppets have been used to tell the politically dissident stories that might have caused a real actor or writer to be thrown into prison...and they have always been able to speak for the underdog.'[13] Whether political dissent, social rebellion or violent rebellion against a tyrannical antagonist and whether as theatrical narrative performance or as political protest.

The human can only go so far before their own character or the circumstances they or the character are in, stop them. Of course the ultimate stoppage is death, and many fictional rebellious characters' journey concludes with the death of themselves or others. A puppet can push things further and any ensuing violence can be produced quite literally on stage, unlike violence between human actors. This rebellion and any violence as a result of it can be extreme, real, intense and graphic

11Tillis, *Towards an Aesthetic of the Puppet,*114.

12 Ibid., 6.

13 Tina Bicat, *Puppets and Performing Objects. A Practical Guide.*(Marlborough. Crowood Press.2007), 49.

when played out by puppets, and an audience may experience the rebellion, bravery, violence, fear and pain viscerally, where as a human stage performance of the same scenario would have to be less literally and graphically realised.

Much theatre enjoys a juxtaposition; the gender swap cast or Shakespeare in a contemporary setting for example but puppetry can show comedy, irony or pathos through the juxtaposition of it's materials, size, scale, and operation. The willing suspension of disbelief, as coined by Samuel Taylor Coleridge[14], is multi-layered when confronted by puppetry. This understanding of the belief in the life of the non-living object before us is what Jurkowski termed opalisation and what Tillis calls double vision,

> It remains to be suggested that every puppet, in every age, in every theatre and tradition,invites its audience to acknowledge, at once, its two aspects: and it remains to be suggested that through the tension inherent in this dual acknowledgement,the puppet pleasurably challenges its audience's understanding of what it means to be an 'object' and what it means to have 'life'.[15]

Puppetry in performance can elicit a haptic response from spectators, similar, perhaps, to dance. Watching puppetry can elicit a desire in the spectator to touch and play with the object themselves, as if to have a go somehow enables us to play God and be in control of outcomes, thereby authoring our own version.

Among puppeteers the phrase, 'the puppet made me do it' is ubiquitous and no one is quite sure who said it first.This is the concept that as puppeteers we are never entirely in charge of the puppet, that each puppet has its own life. It is what Dassia Posner calls, 'disobedient obedience'.[16] Posner refers to early twentieth century Russian puppeteer Nina Simonovich-Efimova's theory that puppetry is 'a collaborative discovery rather than an imposition of the puppeteer's will upon her puppet'.[17] As a writer or as a collaborative devisor, one can enter the process with character designs, ideas for how and what the puppet would say and do in a given situation, but only in production do we discover if the puppet wishes to cooperate. However, this statement is a cliché of puppetry for good reason. As a practical art,

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14 Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, 1817, Chapter XIV

15 Tillis, *Towards an aesthetic of the puppet,.*64

16 Posner et al.,*The Routledge Companion to Puppetry* ,131

17 Ibid.

the size, weight, shape and look of a puppet (their materiality) will each contribute to how their personality manifests on stage.

Puppets surprise. The sheer magical liminality of the doll or object brought to life is surprising. Puppets can be physically abstract, abstruse and arcane, to a far greater extent than any human performer can. The dynamism inherent in a puppet is different from the dynamism of a human when performing. Puppets can be at once both sublime and grotesque. They are visceral, chaotic and they break the rules; they can fly although they are an elephant, appear through floors, breathe underwater, survive extreme violence, exist in an entirely different scale to everything around them, come apart and reassemble. Puppetry can be mimetic, anthropomorphic, surreal or symbolic.Puppets are potentially inexpensive. Depending on the type and the aesthetic, a puppet can be constructed from waste or natural detritus.

Puppet theatre may be postdramatic or have a narrative that follows a linear, climactic, epic or episodic format, amongst many others. Like many art forms, the debate continues as to which way is the true way to create and perform puppet theatre.

Process and methodology.

For puppet writers or puppet theatre makers, the opportunity to create a script as an auteur rather than a solo writer who hands their script over to a director is exciting.

Exploring writing for puppetry has the possibility of opening up phenomenological responses in the writer, puppeteer and spectator not previously noticed, by allowing the writer to focus on the inclusion of elements in the script that encourage a visceral or uncanny response, over and above the inherent viscerality or uncanniness that manifest in the animation of objects, dolls and puppets.

Puppetry is a good example of Brecht's alienation technique, what Stuart Spencer terms: '[…]deliberately alienating the audience from the emotional experience of the drama so that it can attain a better grasp of it's intellectual(or social, or political)meaning.'[18]

The type of puppet stipulated in a script influences the tone, story, atmosphere, context and style of the script. Animated puppets elicit responses of viscerality and

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18 Stuart Spencer, *The Playwright's Guidebook* (London. Faber & Faber.2002),17.

the uncanny. Visceral performance is best shown through action and puppetry is best shown through action.

My research is practice as research: the process and exploration of the practice of writing a full-length puppet theatre script, with an accompanying written exploration of the theoretical elements of the research.[19] I have followed a practice-led process of creating a full-length adult puppet theatre script: *The Blue Lady, a s*horter script and produced performance: *MONSTER* included in the appendices, and this contextualizing component exploring puppet literary dramaturgy. As practice as research, the process of writing full-length scripts for puppet theatre has helped me to understand differences in structure, style and format from a human theatre script and to explore literary dramaturgical considerations.

The Blue Lady is a puppet theatre Victorian ghost story that includes human and puppet characters. The narrative structure of *The Blue Lady* is inspired by ghost stories set in the Victorian period and is climactic in structure. The story follows Mary, previously a maid at Ferguson House, she is not glad to be back, certain the house is haunted, she wants nothing more to do with it. Mary takes the local solicitor Musgrove through events that led up-to the death of heir to the fortune, Cassandra Ferguson. Musgrove is tasked with proving that Cassandra's uncle Sir Henry is the true heir to the Ferguson fortune.

As part of my research process, I also wrote and produced a shorter puppet script. *MONSTER* is a pastiche of mid-20th century Horror films. This element of my research considered the relationship between the theory of writing for puppetry and the practice of scripting. It was an exploration of the performance of a puppetry script as central and not marginalised in terms of theories of dramatic literature.
Should we write for performance with what Umberto Eco calls a 'model reader'[20] in mind?

19This is a synchronic approach. By this I mean specific to contemporary puppetry created in the Anglo-American world rather than across all time and all places. However, I would also like to acknowledge the debt I owe to diachronic studies of puppetry (across time and place) and to point out that a specific and focussed area of research such as mine, owes a debt of recognition to the multifaceted styles, types and approaches to puppetry the World over.

20 Umberto Eco, *The role of the reader. Explorations in the semiotics of text*. (London. Hutchinson & co.1981),17.

> Every type of text explicitly selects a very general model of a possible reader through the choice (I) of a specific linguistic code (ii) of a certain literary style & (iii) of specific specialization indices[21]

The model reader of this thesis may be assumed to be a puppet theatre director or puppeteer who reads English, recognises the structure of a stage script and has a specialised knowledge of puppetry. It would also be of value to human theatre script writers with some experience or knowledge of puppetry and to dramaturgs.

Is a puppeteer an actor? Is the puppeteer acting if there is no dialogue or if the performance is post dramatic in structure? What then are the differences between acting a character and acting for/as/with a puppet? I prefer to refer to the person operating the puppet and performing the character through that puppet as a puppeteer. An actor is a human performing a character. The puppeteer is throwing their performance in the sense that a ventriloquist throws their voice to inhabit the doll. That is not to say that the puppeteer is not acting; it is a deliberate, contrasting and different way of acting, and, as such, I call these roles by different names. This contrast is one of the defining characteristics of puppetry and why a spectator of puppet theatre can experience it intellectually as well as aesthetically, viscerally and phenomenally.

All of these questions and considerations led me to wonder how a puppetry script might be written, from scratch with no pre-existing puppets or designs and with no devising as a lone writer. My exploration of puppet theatre from a wider perspective than solely as a puppeteer, led me to ask if there is a place for literary dramaturgy specifically for puppet theatre. Is it possible for me to create a guidebook or toolkit for other writers to use when writing for puppet theatre? I am not trying to impose what Pavis calls 'textual imperialism' onto the practical art of puppetry, but rather to explore how puppet theatre can become a dramatic literary art form as well. What does the first time reader need to see on the page, for a puppetry script to be readable as compelling dramatic literature and as a useful text for performance?[22] The vast majority of puppet theatre companies create their performances through a devising process rather than using an existing script. Those that do use a pre-

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21 Idem.

22 Patrice Pavis, *Languages of the stage. Essays in the semiology of theatre.* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), 29.

existing script, will usually be adapting a text written for a human cast and using devising techniques to create performance that is suitable for a puppet cast.

Devising for puppetry is a diverse area. Puppet theatre makers create performance in numerous ways, often devising collaboratively to create a performance, there are many different approaches to devising and no one way is 'the best'. Companies and individuals find what works best for them. Broadly, the ways of working to create a puppet theatre performance without a pre-written script form three categories:

Form to Idea[23] – Designing and making puppets and then devising a narrative using those puppets.

Idea to Form – Devising narrative and then designing and making puppets based on the needs of the show.

Choreography – Postdramatic performance. Movement design based on manipulation of existing puppets which, in turn, might suggest a narrative as interpreted by the spectator.

Each company or individual puppeteer will have their own dramaturgical process they follow. There is currently no formal process of dramaturgy specific to puppetry.The process my puppet theatre company, Croon productions takes when creating a show falls into the 'Idea to Form' category. The script will be written, once the skeleton of a narrative and the main characters have been devised.

This is a process that Sarah Sigal terms 'writer as co-creator',

> [...] this model is intended to demonstrate a way of working wherein the writer is an equal co-creator with the company, exploring and developing the project alongside the director, performer and designer from its inception.[24]

It also comes under another of her descriptions,'writer as scribe',

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23 From the title of a theoretical symposium: Form to Idea/Idea to Form at the Puppeteers of America conference 2017.

24 Sarah Sigal, *Writing in collaborative theatre-making*.(Macmillan, London, 2017),45.

> This model is designed to consider a way of working wherein a company has developed a process of writer-company collaboration through the search for a balance between writing and devising.[25]

For Croon productions, the script tends to be a brief scene-by-scene telling of the story including any dialogue. Unless the type of puppet used in a scene is different from the last scene, no real mention of puppets or puppeteering is included and the script could easily be interpreted with human actors. It is an aide memoire for the people who devised it and will also perform it.

As a playwright for human theatre pieces, I began to wonder if I could produce a puppetry script without any collaboration or devising. Although I love the process of collaborative devising, I have many ideas for performance and there simply is not enough time or funding to explore it all through collaborative methods. Could I create a script that would make sense to a director or another performer who had no part in the conception or creation?

My research methodology was created with three overlapping strands. Firstly, the research and practice of actually writing a puppet theatre script; including reading theme specific literature; the practice of writing and editing and the research-in-practice experiment of producing a performance of a short puppet script to be directed by someone else;secondly, research into different possible approaches to take, including screenwriting and comic book approaches, and exploring the uncanny and the visceral and how to write them into a script;thirdly, through literature, and experimentation with dramaturgical exercises both on my own work but also other published puppet theatre scripts; the exploration and production of a literary dramaturgy process specifically for puppet theatre. This last element grew out of a desire to create a system for other practitioners to follow.

Is it possible to create a script for puppetry as a lone writer? How does one write puppetry performance that is narrative and character driven with no pre-existing input and what would a director or puppeteer need to see on the page when reading this script for the first time?

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25 Ibid., 79.

The Blue Lady

The Blue Lady is a puppet theatre Victorian ghost story that includes ghost (puppet) characters as well as human (puppet) characters. In writing *The Blue Lady*, I knew I wanted to write a ghost story and that it was for puppetry, but what type of puppet would be the best for the job? Was this to be a piece of shadow puppetry or a table top story told with dolls?I wanted to write a narrative that was to be a visceral and spooky experience of the Gothic, and I hoped that these things could be uniquely conveyed through puppetry. The uncanny can manifest within the Gothic and so this seemed a perfect genre in which to explore writing the uncanny in puppetry. I also chose the Gothic as it is often female led.

The narrative structure of *The Blue Lady* is inspired by Victorian set ghost stories such as: *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in Black* by Susan Hill and by numerous British ghost stories in short form published since the late 18th century.

Initially I decided upon human-size half-body puppets in an immersive site-specific narrative but I subsequently rejected both the puppet type and the site specific and immersive element.I found that my focus was being split by the notion of immersive and/or site specific theatre and that what I was really researching was genre-driven analogue puppet theatre and that I needed to focus solely on that.

In thinking of the process that I would undertake to write *The Blue Lady*, I began by asking myself, if I were to direct a puppetry script that I had no part in writing or devising, what would I need to see on the page for it to come alive as the writer had intended? My initial dramaturgical approach was informed by not only the puppetry that would be inherent in the script but also that I was writing it as a site specific performance (which could also be performed in a more traditional theatre space).

As I searched for puppetry scripts for inspiration, it became clear that not only is the canon sparse but that most of these scripts will only say 'written for puppets' and that will be all the information provided. Written for puppets? What type of puppets? There are numerous types of puppets, each requiring a different style of manipulation, each with a different aesthetic, and needing a different sort of play-board. Glove puppets require a play-board above the puppeteer and have a simple form of movement. Marionettes require a play-board with the capability for the puppeteer to manipulate from above, the puppeteer themselves should preferably be

raised higher than their normal height for ease of manipulation when taking the length of the strings into consideration. Table top puppets can sometimes need up to three people per puppet, to manipulate.

What is a puppet?

The simple answer might include ideas such as a doll that is manipulated by a human into movement and character. Although this is true, puppetry can be more contradictory than this simplistic explanation. What is not a puppet might be a more straightforward question to ask. If the performance is captivating, does it matter to an audience if the character is 'played' by a marionette, a stick or a light effect?

What determines a puppet? Eileen Blumenthal posits that it could be about the mode of manipulation or that it is a performance for an audience or oneself. Only coming to 'life' through animation unlike a doll that 'continues to keep their imagined life even when they are alone'.[26]

The live animation of figures and objects for performance, whether puppets such as marionettes, glove, rod, and shadow or inanimate objects such as a bunch of sticks, a rock or hat, can be traced back to third century AD Athens. Evidence has also been found of inert figures being employed in ritual, religion and play as long ago as the fifth century BC. Even in prehistoric times, cro-magnon peoples were creating figures from clay and stone. What Blumenthal calls, '[...]*the phenomenal conceptual leap to create miniature replicas of people.*'[27] It seems for as long as humanity has been fashioning figures from raw materials we have been anthropomorphising objects.

Puppetry is often associated derisively with children's entertainment. It is perceived by some as less sophisticated than human theatre and not to be taken seriously. In his thesis: The Puppet, the Cinematic and Contemporary Visual Theatre: Principles, Practices and Logos. Thomas Butler Garrett acknowledges,

> [...]the many writers on puppetry who cite Kleist's On Marionette
> Theatre as the turning point for the shift in the perception of puppets
> from folk art or children's theatre, to modes and devices rich in

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26 Eileen Blumenthal, *Puppetry and puppets: An Illustrated World Survey.(London, Thames and Hudson.2005), 230.*

27 Ibid., 56.

metaphor and suitable for the practice of a new generation of writers,artists and theatre-makers.[28]

Although I agree that Kleist's essay was indeed an inspiration and a turning point for many practitioners in the Modernist period, this statement suggests that puppetry has always been associated derisively with low 'folk art' and children's entertainment. This has not always been the case, Punch and Judy, recorded for the first time in England on 9th May 1662 in Samuel Pepys' diary, was very much an adult entertainment right up until the late 19th century.[29] Throughout history, puppetry has been a culturally non-hegemonic alternative and marginal art form often practised by gypsies and itinerant street entertainers, who, at one time, faced the threat of accusations of heresy.

Historically, puppets have also been used to circumnavigate the Lord Chancellor's censorship of stage plays, examples such as Punch's Theatre in the early 18th century, in James Street, Covent Garden, run by Charlotte Charke.

> [...] she used her marionettes to stage real plays that might be seen at the same time at Drury Lane or Covent Garden. Charlotte was following the letter of the law, issued with traditional puppet theatre in mind, did not restrict the kinds of plays she could perform… and offered the added attractions of novelty, farce and parody...[30]

The Victorian obsession with childhood, and later the advent of cinema and TV did much for the infantilising of puppetry. While references to folk art, although true up to a point, perhaps say more about the social mind set of some early 20th century historians and anthropologists; those who equated 'primitive', 'ancient beliefs' and folk traditions with otherness, naivete and ignorance and things only to be acknowledged in the context of anthropological research.

Puppets are liminal: alive yet not alive. There is an intrinsic uncanniness to puppets which comes from the anthropomorphisation of an inanimate object. Many artists including theatre makers and sculptors are drawn to puppets, the Dada and

28 Thomas Butler Garret, " The Puppet, The Cinematic and Contemporary Visual Theatre: Principles, Practices and Logos. "(Thesis. University of Brighton/University for the Creative Arts. 2009), 1.

29 *"Thence to see an Italian puppet play that is within the rayles there, which is very pretty, the best that ever I saw, and great resort of gallants."* https://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1662/05/09/ *(Accessed 13/08/21)*

30 Katherine Shevelow, *Charlotte.*(Picador. New York. 2006), 263.

Modernist movements included visual artists and performers that utilised puppetry in their work, artists such as Paul Klee and Emmy Hennings, while author George Sands had a puppet theatre at her home in France. Artist and puppeteer Rachel Guy suggests, 'Puppets are emissaries or ambassadors to human beings from the world of things.'[31]

Puppetry has many strengths: wonder, amazement, humour, violence, exploration of the taboo, inhabiting fantasy worlds, whimsy and ultimately the uncanny. The term uncanny was originally explored by Ernst Jentsch[32] and later also pursued by Sigmund Freud to describe the disquieting effect of something at once known and unknown. Puppets are inherently uncanny; disturbing yet familiar, not alive yet animated. I explore this in greater detail in chapter 4.

Puppet types

The unique properties of different types of puppet presuppose and sometimes dictate particular dramaturgies.[33] What does each puppet type do well? What type of puppet would be best for specific scenes? Does a certain type of puppet bring a particular tone to the piece? Is a specific sort of play-board needed for certain puppet types and what might that do to the flow of the narrative or structure of a script?

Glove puppets include puppets such as Punch and Judy.This traditional UK street theatre and seaside performance follows Punch as the Lord of Misrule and his attempts to usurp the rules. Punch and Judy professors (as the puppeteers of this specific style are known) have been performing in the UK for centuries and were first recorded in Britain just over three hundred and fifty years ago, by diarist Samuel Pepys. 'Thence to see an Italian puppet play that is within the rayles there, which is very pretty, the best that ever I saw, and great resort of gallants.'[34] Punch has his roots in the Commedia dell'Arte character Pulcinella and is a cousin of the German/Swiss/Austrian puppet character Kasperle. The puppet booth incorporates a small proscenium arch-style stage space. The area that the puppets 'stand' on is called the play-board. Glove puppets are easily portable, if performed in a booth like Punch and Judy, the hidden puppeteer can encourage more taboo performance.

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31 Guy . 8.

32 Ernst Jentsch, On the Psychology of the Uncanny. Translated by Roy Sellars
http://www.art3idea.psu.edu/locus/Jentsch_uncanny.pdf (Accessed 10/10/17),1.

33 I use dramaturgies in this context in terms of the composition of performance and it refers to the style, mise- en-scene, etc.

34 9th May 1662. . https://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1662/05/09/ (Accessed 13/08/21)

They can have a pantomimic style. If the puppeteer is visible, glove puppets are good for puppeteer/puppet interaction and can be useful for educational performance.

Marionettes: these can be either string or rod. Rod marionettes have a rigid rod, usually metal that stems from the top of the puppets' head, they will have limited strings usually no more than six, but four is more usual. One string for each hand and foot, that are attached to a wooden control above the head of the puppet, rod marionettes are somewhat easier to manipulate than string marionettes. String marionettes have no head rod and can have up to as many as thirty-two strings with which to manipulate them, they are much more difficult to manipulate and 'bring to life' but once mastered are capable of varied and graceful movement. Marionettes originated as mobile sculptures in Egypt and gradually travelled to Europe. The word marionette originates in the French for little Mary. Within the Catholic church in Mainland Europe around the 13th century, religious statues were transformed into marionettes to be utilised in scripture based plays. This was a popular form of religious education and propaganda until the 16th Century, when the church denounced puppetry as Devilry. People were burned as witches and heretics for practising puppet theatre and for using dolls and puppets in a ritualistic manner. Marionettes are perceived as traditional and often elegant. They can mimic humans well and are rarely abstract aesthetically.They are suited well to narratives centred around human or animal characters.

Shadow Puppetry: shadow puppetry has been performed all over the world for centuries, there are many theories on its origin but many forms are similar to the ancient art of Wayang Kulit, the Balinese and Javanese tradition of 2D leather cut-out style figures on a 2D back cloth, lit from behind and manipulated from below. Although a seemingly simple form of puppetry, it takes real skill to manipulate the figures in a way that brings them and the narrative to life. Prague School semiotician and performance theorist Jiri Veltrusky disputed shadow puppets as 'real', thinking of them as 'mobile painting'.[35] Shadow puppetry is puppetry and this 'mobile painting' effect is one of its strengths. The silhouettes of shadow puppetry can create dreamscape possibilities. Shadow puppetry can show distance and a difference in

35 Tillis, *Towards an aesthetic of the puppet,* 13

scale which can change the perspective of time and space within the world of the puppet show.

Table top: manipulated usually by three puppeteers, this is a puppet that performs on a table top play-board and is manipulated with short rods; usually one puppeteer on the lower back, one on the left hand and head and one on the feet. This form is currently very popular in Anglo- American puppetry, with many companies creating work using this style. This form originates from Japanese Bunraku: an art form highly respected by puppeteers,scholars and audiences across the world. Japanese Bunraku puppeteers train for decades to become a master of the craft. Table top puppets share the same positives as marionettes.

Toy theatre: this style originated from the Eastern European tradition of model theatre (based originally on the nativity story) and grew into the British Victorian parlour entertainment aimed mostly at middle-class boys. Toy theatre saw huge popularity in the Victorian era and up-to the 1930s. Today, the 'traditional' paper theatre style of a slot together temporary performance has made way for professional companies using European model theatres complete with six-inch rod marionettes. In the USA, contemporary toy theatre utilises objects and small toys in a table top proscenium arch style play-board. Among some 20th century writers on puppetry, a taxonomy of puppetry seemed hard to define or agree upon. Writers Olive Blackman, Paul McPharlin and Gunter Bohmer all disputed toy theatre as a true form of puppetry. This is perhaps because of the time in which they were writing (1938 – 1958) toy theatre had fallen out of popularity and the reclaiming, repurposing and development of toy theatre for adult audiences, away from the original children's toy of the 19th and early 20th century, was yet to happen, as it has started to since the 1990s in the USA and Europe.

Other forms include humanettes, these are a small scale movable human body operated by one person, whose own head stands in for the head and face of the puppet.

Object theatre: any object not intended for performance can be manipulated. Object theatre is often a more abstract approach to storytelling.

Body puppets are usually a life-size human doll attached to the puppeteer, they can be utilised to create a two-character scene in which the puppeteer and the puppet communicate. They can be used to show two people dancing. The movement that is

possible is more confidently human than in other puppet types. Sometimes the body puppet utilises the legs of the puppeteer as their own legs, and the puppeteer remains 'invisible'.A doll, a glove, a 2D picture, a 3D model, shadows, an object, light, sticks, a piece of paper, water, fabric; anything that has literal real world substance, form and/or visual existence can become a puppet. Many puppeteers utilise just one type of puppet in their performances, but within some stories and if the play-board and set design allows there is no reason why numerous types of puppets can't be used in one show.

To 'breathe' a puppet is one of the fundamental elements in performing with puppets and creating a believable character, one who 'lives'. Puppeteers in training and highly experienced puppeteers alike spend time 'breathing' the puppet to awaken the character and the movement within. No two puppets are the same and their distinct characters shine through to the puppeteer. Breathing and walking them allows the puppeteer to get to know the personality of the puppet.

Writing initial drafts

I began the process of writing *The Blue Lady* by immersing myself in Victorian and Gothic ghost stories to establish the tropes and clichés. My dramaturgical approach was such that after having read many Gothic stories, I had created a library of images of the tropes and decided to join them to create a narrative. This is not dissimilar to the approach I have taken in the past when devising, coming to the rehearsal room with a series of images that I want to see and building a story around those images. Once I had decided I wanted an empty house, a bereavement, a laudanum addiction, a wronged first wife, the contesting of a will, and a spiritualist séance, I needed to create a plot that would join them together. As this script started as a story that could have become a human play script, I took the route I have in the past with scripts and wrote free hand to find the narrative.I needed to discover:who is sending Cassandra poison pen letters? Should she accept cousin Robert's marriage proposal? Who keeps rapping on the window and why must she always do what her uncle wishes?

The working title of the script became *The Blue Lady* in homage to the Gothic stories previously mentioned. I changed the name of my protagonist from Sophie to

Cassandra after the Greek myth of Cassandra, cursed with both great beauty and wide disbelief of her gift of premonition.

The first draft, included scenes with ghostly visitations, that I had written as I imagined I might produce them with puppets, but it was still very much a human play. I decided that as we are being told the story of Cassandra's recent past in the present that it could be told with puppets as a flashback. This would mean that the script could start with human characters contextualising the story and then showing the story with puppetry for the bulk of the narrative. This changed the dynamic of the play and was definitely becoming something that I wanted to write. The human characters of Mary the maid and Musgrove the solicitor would be characters within the narrative and could alternate as puppeteers also. The puppets within the flashback as told by Mary, were to be half body puppets. These types of puppets are a life size torso and head with arms that are manipulated by rods from beneath by the puppeteer. The puppet is attached to the waist of the puppeteer and the puppeteer's legs stand in for the legs of the puppet character.

At this stage I felt I had the outline of a compelling narrative for a puppet theatre script and could start to focus on the dialogue and format. If dialogue is the crucial element of a human play in that it tells the narrative and once that is written the writer's work is done so to speak. What does that mean about the stage directions for the puppetry action? Are the stage directions that show the puppet action the crucial and fundamental elements of a puppetry script and if they are changed or cut then it is an interpretation of a script rather than a faithful production?

Puppet theatre as a form of visual theatre relies on visual action to tell the story. Dialogue can and does exist in puppetry, but the visual action outweighs the oral narrative, thereby suggesting that stage directions in a puppet theatre script are integral to storytelling. Stage directions to impart action seem to be absent from most published puppet scripts.Elaine Aston and George Savona suggest that the study of 'stage directions has in general been either ignored altogether or taken for granted and hence taken no further'.[36]They suggest that the accepted feeling is that as 'Veltrusky observes...critics regard stage directions 'as something external to the play, something that does not really belong to its literary structure'.[37] This suggests that for some, reading a play as dramatic literature is a surface experience. By this I

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36 Elaine Aston and George Savona. *Theatre as a Sign System. A Semiotics of Text and Performance*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 1991), 71.

37 Ibid.

mean the dialogue contains the plot and the stage directions are a wordy contextualisation to be scanned or skipped over. The 'casual and uninformed reader'[38] bring their habits and understanding of reading literary fiction to the reading of dramatic literature and these are two distinct forms requiring different focus when reading.

A readerly script can have minimal or no stage directions, the modernist puppet plays of the early 20th century are for this reason more readerly texts than performative, as they contain little or no explanation around puppet type or any of the puppet action that helps to impart the narrative. As puppet theatre is driven by the visible physical action of the puppets and dialogue is often kept to a minimum or non-existent, the format I have chosen, of placing the puppet stage directions in a demarcated box, can encourage a reader to engage with that element as central to the narrative.

MONSTER.

MONSTER,[39] which was produced as a performance[40], was written as a piece solely for puppets. The target audience I had in mind while writing was an adult audience. This piece was written by me and directed by Thomasin Cuthbert Menes, as an experiment in what a puppetry director might need to see on the page and the response from a director and puppeteers to staging a previously unseen script. I decided that I as the writer would not engage in collaboration with the director, as I wanted to explore how a director would respond to my writing with no author input during rehearsals. However, for reasons of money and time I was one of the puppeteers for the production.

I knew that I wanted to write a piece that would reference many well-known horror films and came up with the idea for a retirement home for Hollywood film monsters from which there is a mass escape. I immersed myself in as many of the classic movies as I could to decide which monsters were right for the story. I had decided before I started to write that I wanted a script that would be simple to produce, easy to transport and cheap and quick to design and make.

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38 Ibid., 72

39 See Appendix 2. *MONSTER* script.

40 Barnstaple Fringe Theatre Festival 2018, Shambala Festival 2018 & The Wardrobe theatre, Bristol 2019.

The draft I gave to the director stipulated the puppet type for the human protagonists as small seven-inch-tall rod marionettes. The director rejected these miniature rod marionette puppet type decisions, in favour of repurposed toys. The four young people that are the protagonists would be Barbie and Ken-type dolls. The monsters would be portrayed as written, by various other toys, such as plastic dinosaurs and toy birds, all manipulated as table top puppets. The first working draft suggested a play-board and set that was based around a spinning bespoke doll's house placed on a long table top. The house would turn to reveal the interior for scenes inside and the tabletop would be the grounds of the house and surrounding countryside; in production, it became a small bureau and a cabinet record player. The house became a 2D stage flat that can be turned around and that slots into the top of the bureau. The director created a show that was human theatre with puppets and clowning, and was much more child-friendly than I had intended in my puppets-only, adult script.

Ultimately I quite liked the decisions taken and think they worked,but I felt that the director seemed to miss the tone of the script. It has shown me that regardless of what I write in the script, a director may change it completely. As Aston and Savona state in *Theatre as a sign system*,

> In 20th century traditions of Western theatre, the responsibility for organising the theatrical sign system has fallen to the director. Whilst the dramatist is the originator of the linguistic sign-system, the director nowadays has control over the theatrical (as opposed to dramatic) shape and is faced with the task of organising the signifying systems of theatre at her disposal (lighting, scenery, props and so on) into a codified process appropriate to the production of a text. If the director fails at this task, then the performance will not make sense to the director.[41]

I felt that the director imbued her ideas of the narrative onto the script to the point where the original narrative and reasons for action were overlooked and/or ignored, leading to an interpretation that missed my original intention.

What happens in the gap between the writer's ideas and expectations and the directors realisations, particularly if the writer is not present to collaborate?

41 Aston and Savona, *Theatre as a Sign System*, 100.

Martin Esslin[42] states that the Nebentext is the version that is read, analysed, dramaturged and responded to by the production company, I explore this further in chapter three. My experience of producing my script *MONSTER*, is that not only did the director reject some of the specified puppet type and set design specification, but she also created an extensive *Nebentext[43]* that I did not write.This is not a problem, as such, as I don't wish to be so thoroughly prescriptive that any performance of the script would look the same as another. Without re-staging under a different director for comparison I will never know.

As a writer, I write stage directions to illustrate elements of the narrative, action, context and characterisation and try to edit my stage directions to be as simple and direct as possible. As Aston and Savona suggest, 'At the very least, it is in the interest of the director and her/his collaborators to regard the directions as adjuncts to the dialogue, and to investigate seriously and systematically their potential usefulness to the production process.'[44]

This experience and the questioning of my expectations that followed: would it have been a performance more in keeping with my expectations had I collaborated with the director?Was my writing not clear enough in terms of tone and aesthetic sensibility? Once I have given the script to someone else,is it my place to be disappointed by their interpretation? How might other people use a script - a faithful reproduction of each word on the page or perhaps as a blueprint for their own experimentation and exploration? These questions led me to consider how I could apply these experiences to *The Blue Lady*. I decided I needed to give considerably more thought to what is crucial in my vision of the script and therefore how I should write these important things, to guarantee their inclusion in any future performances.

The process of collaborating as a puppeteer with a director on *MONSTER* has helped me to realise that stage directions in a puppetry script are extremely important. The format I have chosen, with the stage directions for puppets in a separate box was enthusiastically received by the director, puppeteers and technician and all agreed it was easy to use.[45] As a result of this process, I repeatedly edited *The Blue Lady* to ensure the tone is sufficiently dark enough and

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42 Martin Esslin quoted in Aston & Savona. *Theatre as a Sign System.* ,73.

43 Neben is German for next. This translates as next text, or alternative text.

44 Ibid., 125.

45 See Appendix 3: Research poster that shows the *MONSTER* process & findings.

that the written description of specific design elements (what the puppets look like and sound effects) match my imagined version.

Existing scripts written 'for puppets' with no specifics that make it any different to a human script, can lead to the puppeteers becoming production dramaturgs as well as puppeteers to find a way to perform a readerly text that unlocks the dramaturgy implied by the writer. Is it their responsibility or creative job to expose the meaning, the aesthetic vision of the playwright and also to interpret this wide-ranging art from? This is what Patrice Pavis, in the context of human theatre, has called 'participating in dramaturgic choices and changes'[46], rather than solely focussing on the creative skill of bringing a puppet character and narrative to life.

Introducing the Mosaic Scale.

The considerations and conclusions reached as a result of the first drafts of *The Blue Lady*, and the *MONSTER* process, and my experience of theatre-making exercises used within the devising and rehearsal process, facilitated the creation of a process for editing and developing my script. After numerous drafts, and when I felt The Blue Lady had a reasonable narrative, I started to follow a few formalist processes to dramaturg my script, including character profiles of the main characters, and creating the rules of the world. Over time I created a five-step process I call the Mosaic Scale. Within this overall five step system is an exercise also called the mosaic scale—it is this exercise that gave the system it's umbrella term.

The development of the mosaic scale exercise arose as a result of my misinterpretation of Robert Scanlan's plot bead diagram.[47] The plot bead diagram process works by creating icons to represent units of action in time; beads in the plot, like beads on the necklace of time. These icons are then drawn into a diagram that shows the beads as a continuous chain made up of many different points of action. It can help to illuminate how much focus and time might be afforded to each unit of action. I had slightly misinterpreted it through learning of it for the first time in an article by Shelley Orr in which she says, 'These icons are put in order of the plot events...The plot bead diagram is helpful in identifying patterns'.[48] She was also

46 Cathy Turner, & Synne K Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 93.

47 Shelley Orr *Teaching play analysis: How a key dramaturgical skill can foster critical approaches.* E-chapter. 153 – 157.

48 Idem.

looking for events (or what are termed units in formalism) but I had accidentally expanded the idea through my slight misunderstanding. The mosaic scale exercise was created after the realisation of my previous miss-understanding, as an exercise to ascertain how many times certain themes, motifs, characters or images arose within a scene or script and to check if it is reading as intended.

The Mosaic Scale builds on Scanlan's plot bead diagram and Shelley Orr's interpretation of it because it is designed to be applied to a much wider selection of search criteria and particularly for things that are specific to puppetry.

The Mosaic Scale is a five-step system that can be dipped in and out of, the steps don't have to be read in a linear way. It's akin to a mosaic-building approach, designed to help refine and create the bigger picture of a puppet show and to ask the questions that lead to the decisions, which help to make the puppet show the best it can be.

The steps are:

1. **Initial Analysis:** Analysis of decisions on style, format, and narrative.

2. **Repeat and Revisit:** Considerations that are revisited throughout the process, including design, puppet type, scale, and size.

3. **The Visceral:** Considerations that encourage a visceral response to the puppets and puppetry.

4. **The Uncanny:** Considerations to encourage an uncanny response, over and above the inherent uncanniness of puppets.

5. **Phenomenological Overview:** Considerations of the experience of and the response to the puppetry for both puppeteer and audience.

How to use the Mosaic Scale exercise to explore scale and frame in a scene:

1. Choose icons (or mosaic tiles) that represent each different size or scale of the puppets and each different frame these puppets perform against. The icons only need to make sense to you. For example, a letter can represent a character's name or a simple picture can represent a puppet type.

2. In your script or devising notes, mark the icon on each page where it occurs.

3. Once you have noted the number of occurrences and where the changes happen in the script, record the data. This will allow you to take in the overall effect. Using a table with the key included on the same page for clarity and ease of reference is helpful.
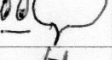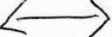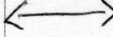
Figure 1: Mosaic Scale including testing of different puppet scales and performance frames.

For example, using the Mosaic Scale on an early draft of *The Blue Lady* (see Figure 1 above), I realized I was introducing between six and nine pages of puppet action to be performed by small-scale puppets, framed by a doll's house or a shelf, at the beginning of a show. However, the show was predominantly to be performed by table top puppets, so I decided this was too much of this scale and far too soon.

More broadly, the mosaic scale exercise can be used to establish themes and the regularity of specific puppet or character appearances. Questions that might come up include: are there specific conflicts that keep appearing? Is the puppet that was supposed to be the sidekick always on stage? If so, how might this change the dynamic of the show or the narrative of the script?

Mosaic Scale of Lonely Bonfires (working title)   12/05/17.

Key:

- Mary as protagonist – M
- Cassandra as protagonist – C
- Reference to sexism -
- Anonymous letters -
- Uncle George as the bad guy -
- Ghost of Mama -
- Tapping at windows -
- The will - [WILL]
- Puppet ghostliness -
- Laudanum -

Page 1	Page 2	Page 3	Page 4	Page 5	Page 6	Page 7	Page 8
M	👍	SFX	✗	///	///	C	M
[WILL]		👻	✉	✗	///	SFX	👻
👤		C		👍		👻	👻
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Figure 2: early mosaic scale exploration of characters.

Figure 2 shows an example of the mosaic scale applied to *The Blue Lady* (previously titled *Lonely Bonfires*) early in the writing process. Reading through the Blue Lady script and marking on a separate piece of paper, I discovered through this process that I had two protagonists, in the form of Mary in the present, and Cassandra in the past and that the feminist subtext seemed to be repeating too much and was rather too didactic. I also discovered that Sir Henry as the antagonist didn't appear until quite late in the narrative and that ghostly apparitions seem to appear very soon and repeat rather too much in the middle section, all elements that needed to be addressed.

After writing a number of drafts, although I was beginning to like the narrative and the characters were gaining depth,but there was something not quite right. I had been imagining an immersive, site-specific performance, perhaps in a large Victorian house in which the audience moved from room to room and experienced the action of the story; however, the picture in my mind's eye of the half-body puppets was not working.The human characters of now would be alongside the life size puppet characters from memory and the puppet ghosts, and I could not feel any atmosphere. Although human style puppets appear to be a human character, they are, in fact, a sign only. The meaning and interpretation of those signs can subsume the argument for a human actor.

When writing for puppetry, awareness of the spectators' potential decoding of the piece is important.Spectators of puppet theatre will often have more codes to decipher than they might watching a piece of human theatre. For instance, the co-creation of character is created through a reading and interpretation of theatrical semiotic signals by the audience. The spectator understands the sign of breath to mean life, specific shapes to denote type of being and gestures similar to human or animal gestures to show intent. Alissa Melo suggests,

> […] the audience participant co-creates and completes the inner life of the puppet through their active participation, interpretation of events, and recognition of gesture, tone and atmosphere on stage. This co-creation shifts a puppet from a mere object to a character with possibility of interaction with others'[49]

49 Alrutz, Listengarten and Van Duyn Wood (Ed.) *Playing with Theory in Theatre Practice.* (London:Palgrave. 2012), 246.

Unfortunately, with the choice of half-body puppets, I had written a piece for puppets that really should be performed by humans. I felt that I had negated the need for puppets altogether and had thereby written something that was not uncanny; if I changed the puppet type and play-board, and therefore the presentation, the potential for the uncanny in performance might return.

Finding the right puppet for the job for reasons of verisimilitude as well as aesthetics and a desire to create an uncanny experience, is very important. Of course, a director and designer might create something different to that which is in my imagination but stipulating the puppet type helps the story and gives a clear indication of the intentions of the writer.

Eventually, I realised that *The Blue Lady* needs to be a piece that is told by human actors as characters in the now, manipulating smaller puppets as the characters from memory, while the ghosts should be represented by life-size puppets and apparitions, which would, hopefully, illicit a visceral response from a spectator. Another consideration is, what Renee Baker terms the visible/invisible puppeteer, 'How different amounts of presence and neutrality can be used for dramatic purpose, how to shift focus between human and puppet.'[50] How visible will the puppeteers be and how will the audience respond to this? Puppeteers in performance can be both seen or hidden on stage. As a seen operator, the puppeteer has to be keenly aware of not 'pulling focus' from the puppet to themselves, this is where the idea of the visible and invisible puppeteer emerges.

Do the puppeteers need to be hidden to create a cleaner illusion or is their visibility part of the narrative and creative decisions and therefore, designed to bring the audience into the puppet world in a visible way. This contrast between the puppeteer as always visible or as hidden away throws up questions for the puppet theatre maker that explore semiotics and the notion of whether the puppet manipulator is also an actor. Who will the audience be taking their semiotic clues from? Only the puppet or the puppet and sometimes the operator? Steve Tillis asks, 'Who is the actor….the puppet or the operator?...we will be identifying the actor as either the site of signification or the producer of signification, but not necessarily as both.'[51]

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50 Renee Baker. The visible and invisible puppeteer workshop. Little Angel Theatre. London. February 2016.

51 Steve Tillis, "The actor occluded: Puppet theatre and acting theory." Theatre topics. Vol. 6.(Johns Hopkins University press. 1996),3.

'Co-presence', defined by Paul Piris, '[...] inherently supposes that the performer creates a character through the puppet but also appears as another character whose presence next to the puppet has dramaturgical meaning.'[52] I think it is possible to identify the puppet as the site of signification whilst simultaneously reading the operator as both the site of and the producer of signification. This simultaneous reading is what States calls binocular vision:

> If we think of semiotics and phenomenology as modes of seeing, we might say they constitute a kind of binocular vision: one eye enables us to see the World phenomenally: the other eye enables us to see it significatively.[53]

What does the writer need the puppets to do? What does each puppet do well? I need the puppets in *The Blue Lady* to represent humans and tell a clearly illustrated story but also to create an atmosphere of spookiness and sadness, as well as encourage a visceral response. By imagining what would give me a feeling of dread and spookiness I could start to write this down, this helped to start answering questions about how to get the visceral onto the page. I also explore this in more detail in chapter 4. As I had discarded the previous idea of half-body puppets, I initially chose rod marionettes and smaller doll's house scale replicas of the marionettes. These marionettes were specified as 20 inches tall, minus the rod and strings. Upon re-reading the script, I decided that 20-inch marionettes wouldn't imbue the story with enough of the uncanny. This is a good example of the question: what do I need the puppet to do? I need the puppets to evoke a sense of empathy, sympathy and simulation, as well as a spooky atmosphere. I felt that puppets of this sort and this size would create a cute atmosphere rather than the visceral, sad, feeling I am trying to write. As a result, I changed the puppet type to be 30-inch tall table top puppets. I chose table top puppets for the main characters' narrative because I wanted the effect of smooth, almost realistically human movement as if we are watching Mary's memories. These can be operated by one or up to three people at a time. They are closer in size to a small child and for the majority of this script would be operated by one puppeteer.

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52 Paul Piris, in Posner et al Routledge *companion to puppetry and material performance*. (Abingdon: Routledge 2014),30

53 Bert O. States*, Great Reckonings in little rooms. On the phenomenology of theatre.* (Berkeley: University of California Press.1985), 8.

The puppets that are the ghosts needed to represent an apparition of a dead human. To float, move quickly and even travel along the ceiling, this would not be possible with marionettes. For the ghosts I chose puppets that would be made from clothes. They would have no body parts and no head, they would appear to be empty but living clothing and could be operated by either rods when suitable or a system of invisible lines and pulleys.

These changes in puppet type prompted a need to reconsider the staging. With the first idea for half-body puppets, the script could have been performed as if it were a human performance and in an immersive way, moving from room to room; but by changing the type to table top puppets, it then needed a specific play-board. A play-board that allows the puppeteer to manipulate easily from a standing position, this would usually be a platform such as a table top, chair, or shelf. With this in mind, I decided that the immersive element of *The Blue Lady* was splitting my focus. I was spending too much time concentrating on the potential logistics of an immersive promenade piece and not enough time on the analogue puppetry element. Along with the new puppet decisions, I changed it to be a venue piece that could also be performed site specifically.

Once I had decided on the type of puppet, the process of writing any essential design elements that help to show the character could begin. The puppet is itself, it is not a simulacrum of another it is only ever itself. We read character in puppetry visually, much more so than we might with human characters on stage, who we read equally from their dialogue as much as their visual impact. Jurkowski comments on the rareness of this in puppet scripts:

> The playwrights – authors of dramatis persona – very seldom considered specific puppet features. They imagined them as human, anthropomorphic or fantastic beings…Some writers tried, however, to signal the special 'theatrical' features of puppet characters.[54]

This is a reason for existing scripts only stating 'for puppets' with no specification or detail.

The type of puppet, the design aesthetic, materials, size and facial features (or not) should give as much information as we need. Although I am not a designer, I have in

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54 Jurkowski in Kominz and Levenson (ed.) *The language of the puppet. (*Pacific Puppetry Center Press, 1990), 29.

mind the type of puppet for Cassandra, the protagonist of *The Blue Lady*: a table top puppet of approximately 30 inches in height, a young woman with a porcelain head and hands wearing a Victorian dress in a dark coloured quality fabric. Her dress sweeps the floor, giving the illusion of floating when she moves. She has a far- away look in her eye and an air of melancholy. These details are intended to inform the designer of the essential elements of the character: a young woman, who although reasonably well off is fragile due to her grief and the expectations of the Victorian world in which she lives.

Visual signs

The reading of the visual signs of puppet theatre is something that perhaps all spectators do, albeit unconsciously, but the writer, director or dramaturg of puppetry can apply some of Steve Tillis' thinking on the semiotics of puppetry,[55] to help with considerations of potential audience interpretation. The design of a puppet can be as imitative or as abstract as possible, the puppet-artist or indeed writer when imagining a character is not confined to human mimicry. For example: what might be implied by a puppet with no eyes? Literal blindness? Emotional blindness? Insularity? When considering the aesthetic signs of the puppet characters, there are a number of issues to consider.:Might the use of materials, shapes and colours in an abstract way denote something specific? What does the material the puppet is made from convey? As with costume, does the character themselves have a strong characteristic that could be conveyed through a particular material? Within *The Blue Lady* the specification of aesthetic signs became more important after my experience with *MONSTER* in production.

> Puppet Mary: a table top puppet of approximately 26 inches height.
> She looks like the human playing her and wears the same as the
> human – a housemaid's uniform. Her head and hands are made from
> carved wood, painted well but in a less than perfect way. Her hands
> are rough to look at, she has an expression of stoic resignation on her
> face.[56]

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55 Tillis, *Towards an Aesthetic.* 7.

56 Emily LeQuesne,"The Blue Lady" (2019), 8.

Space should be left in the script for the creativity of the designers and makers, but materials are a consideration for designers and directors and suggestions can be made in the stage directions or cast list if the author feels it is integral to the characterisation.

What Tillis calls 'feature signs'[57] are a useful way to symbolise character. Does an object or item of clothing represent a character? Can an item of clothing associated with a particular profession be used as the puppet? Transference can be applied here,'…transference may also be used to instil human characteristics into what are, in the real world, obviously objects.'[58]

Also to consider is, synecdoche: a part that stands in for the whole or the real thing. The blue lady herself is a synecdoche. She is a blue dress standing in for a ghost that in turn, stands for the woman.

Another consideration is metonym: something that represents another thing. All puppets are this but use of scale and using objects as puppets intensifies this. In *The Blue Lady*, objects are sometimes used to represent the puppet characters. For example:'Human Mary plays out the following between the pen and the candlestick. Cassandra is the pen and Sir Henry the candlestick.*"[59]*

Can the use of size and scale be utilised to show something specific? How might the audience perceive the scale? Is it in relation to the play-board and the set? Is it in relation to the puppeteer? Is it in relation to the other puppets? The notion of scale is not explored as much in human theatre as in puppet theatre. Changing the scale can represent a different point of view, another time or place or be utilised for similar reasons a film maker might have multiple shot types in a narrative.Panoramic views in which a character is a long way off, can also be shown through the use of scale. In *The Blue Lady*, the table top puppets are in scale with the table and the items placed on the table as their furniture etc. These puppets represent the now within the puppet story. The memories, hallucinations and premonitions are represented by smaller scale puppets (2D paper figurines, toys and doll's house figurines). These are not in scale with the humans or the table top puppets and this is deliberate in order to create a sense of disquiet in the spectator. The ghosts are human scale, a small child and an adult woman and they are again out of scale with the table top

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57 Tillis, *Towards an Aesthetic*, 122.

58 Malkin 1977. Quoted in Tillis.130.

59 LeQuesne, "The Blue Lady",19.

protagonists, this too is deliberate to induce an uncanny and visceral experience in the audience, to hopefully genuinely spook them.

The piece also plays with scale in a cinematic way, from wide vistas with small characters to large close ups. *The Blue Lady* includes a wide vista: when the boat is in trouble and Mama and Charlotte fall overboard; this is shown in a similar way to a wide shot in cinema. Contemporary audiences today will be familiar with the systems of cinema:framing, scale, wide shots, close ups and this knowledge is very easily translated to puppet theatre.

Formalism and other considerations

As the practice of writing the script and refining the Mosaic Scale system progressed, I included in the system some exercises that I have previously used within my work as a Theatre Arts lecturer and with actors in training. Some of these originate from formalist editing or critical analysis.The Russian formalist circle theorised that a piece of linguistic art such as literature or poetry should be critiqued for itself alone, and not take into account any external influences such as who the author is or social or political context or influence. Formalist theories of script analysis follow a similar course, covering a descriptive or analytical approach to the contents of a script for theatre. These approaches are based in principle on many of Aristotle's teachings in Poetics which have been developed and refined over time by subsequent dramatists and theorists.

The formalist theory of making-strange, creating a distance or new perspective on that which is habitually familiar in order to encourage a critical response or learning from the spectator, preceded Brecht's alienation technique. Alienation was designed to bring awareness to the audience of the man-made structure of society and their ability to change it.[60]

> In terms of theatre practitioners, the theory and practice of Bertolt Brecht has most clearly illustrated the formalist notion of 'making strange'. Brecht's notion of the Verfremdungseffekt (strategies for creating an effect of alienation in the actor and spectator) is directly derived from formalist notions of foregrounding or 'making

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60 Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and semiotics* (London,Routledge,2003).47.

strange'….Brecht's techniques of de-familiarisation were ways of making strange the sign systems of theatre.[61]

According to Russian formalist Victor Shkolvsky '...the essential function of poetic art is to counteract the process of habituation encouraged by routine everyday modes of perception'[62] This notion of making-strange is a naturally occurring trope within puppetry and encourages a phenomenological response. This is because of the wider distance between the spectator and their identification with the 'performer', because it is a puppet.

Michael Meschke, a Swedish puppeteer and teacher working in the mid-20th century has said that Brecht answered his request to use his plays: ' …with delight that puppet theatre in itself represented the alienation effect, which was the cornerstone of his theory.'[63]

The viscerality of puppetry and the sheer uncanniness of puppets, alive yet not alive, brings this into sharp focus. The writer does not have to try to make strange the puppet theatre but can enhance its reception through the application of certain tropes and motifs that encourage a visceral or uncanny response. I explore this in further detail in chapter 4.

The very use of puppets in a genre play such as *The Blue Lady*, 'makes strange' and hopefully encourages a re-evaluation of the accepted reception of the fabula that is a Gothic ghost story. Aston and Savona suggest that,

> […] types of theatre which operate in a self-referential mode may 'make strange' the mechanics of a dramatic plot by foregrounding devices of structure as a dominant sign of meta-theatricality.[64]

A play written for puppets does just this. In the case of *The Blue Lady*, a Gothic ghost story, as a genre script, the reader will be engaging with the script in a 'how will this be told' manner to a greater extent than asking what will the story be? The Mosaic Scale system, builds on and dialogues with formalist theories of script analysis, by including existing formalist exercises, exercises from performing arts

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61 Aston and Savona, *Theatre as a sign system,* 7.

62 Hawkes , *Structuralism,* 47.

63 Michael Meschke, *In search of aesthetics for the puppet theatre*. (New Delhi. Indira Gandhi national centre for the arts.1992), 153.

64 Aston and Savona, *Theatre as a sign system,* .20.

training and new ideas, including the mosaic scale exercise itself that explores and tests for the uncanny, and for potential visceral and phenomenological response.

<u>Time:</u>

The formalist analysis of dramatic time in human scripts looks at the passing of time in the world of the play. Dramatic time in puppetry is puppet time. Puppet time as a concept, is understood by puppeteers but is not currently theorised anywhere. Puppet reality has a much slower pace to human reality. Puppets show their character and action in a much slower and more considered way than humans. A human performer will get up from the chair, walk towards the door, open it and leave. Whereas, to help the audience read its intentions and for reasons of smooth manipulation, a puppet will pause, stand, look at the door, walk to the door, look at the handle, reach for the handle, open the door, pause, walk through the door.This concept also manifests when puppets are speaking, to avoid confusion about which puppet is speaking all other puppets are required to stay still or it will pull focus from the talker and might confuse the audience.

Puppet time means that the pace of puppetry can appear to be slow but that an audience is offered the opportunity to sit with the characters in a considered way. Time can be affected by scale and perspective and this is a material way to represent the concept of the past, memory or distance through puppetry.Playing with temporal reality or linearity in puppetry, over and above the concept of puppet time, can elicit an uncanny reaction. This phenomenological response to dramatic time is something that puppets do well.

The Mosaic scale steps 2 (revise & repeat), 3 (the visceral) and 4 (the uncanny) ask questions relating to the use of puppetry and dramatic time.

<u>Plot and exposition:</u>

With regard to both the plot and the back story within the narrative, puppetry has the ability to present the exposition in visual form, rather than relying mostly on dialogue.

The Mosaic Scale dialogues with formalist notions of exposition through asking the writer to consider the type of puppet they might be writing for in scenes of exposition. Does the presentation of the back story offer the opportunity to present information with a different type of puppet to the sort generally used within the script, to illustrate that this is story from another place or time? What does the scene need to show and

what is the best way, materially, visually and through as much puppetry action as possible to present that?

The terms fabula (story) and sjuzet (plot) were first identified by Russian formalists. Fabula is the term used for the story, origin, or the narrative outline. Sjuzet is the plot, the way it is told, the specific focus or point of view. Sjuzet can also be seen as what a director may choose to focus on. Fabula: the story – *what* is about to happen and Sjuzet: the plot – *how* it will happen, can be discussed in reference to the making strange that a puppet script can elicit.

In *The Blue Lady,* plot is prioritised over character, because of the archetypal essence of puppets, they can only be themselves - the archetype that they alone represent. Puppets are important for what they do rather than who they are within the confines of the fabula. Puppets are only as deep as the action they take and the reader response to their actions is a co-authoring of both fabula and sjuzet.

Elam refers to actions in human theatre and defines this as:

> Six constitutive elements of action are thus identifiable: an agent, his intention in action, the act or act-type produced, the modality of the action (manner and means)the setting (temporal, spatial and circumstantial) and the purpose.[65]

He goes on to suggest that this offers a wide selection of actions to choose from but he doesn't include 'unconscious doings'[66] like scratching an itch or turning over in bed. Within puppetry these so-called unconscious actions would be deliberate, specific and choreographed as part of the narrative or character presentation.

In puppetry, the puppet can only ever be itself and actions performed will always be consciously executed by the puppeteer. Actions create the sjuzet that the spectator will see in all theatre, whether human or puppet – the how the drama is told. My script format of placing the puppet stage directions/sjuzet/actions in a demarcated box on the page, is specifically designed to direct the puppeteer, director or reader to the puppet action as narrative.

The Mosaic Scale Steps 1(Analysis), 2 (repeat & revise) and 4 (the uncanny) ask questions about puppetry and plot.

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65 Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London, Methuen, 1980),121.

66 Ibid.

Character:

In puppetry, the puppet character is portrayed through symbolism or visual clues in the type and/or design of the puppets. This builds on formalist ideas that character is shown through dialogue, behaviour, will power, complexity, age specification and possibly costume description. The tacit meaning in objects and materials, often shown through metaphor, for example; 'skin like porcelain', or gold as a symbol of great riches, can be utilised to impart symbolic or character information. Feature signs and synecdoche can be utilised to create a puppet character. Using a part to represent a whole can create not only a symbolic reading but also an uncanny experience for the spectator.

Units and objectives:

In formalist analysis a scene is broken into units or moments of specific reference and each unit contains a particular objective for a character. This can, of course, be the same in a script for puppetry, however, by applying the Mosaic Scale exercise to scenes, or an entire script, a writer or director can look for specific themes, objectives, character traits and action. The Mosaic Scale exercise is capable of application to a much wider selection of search criteria and particularly for things that are specific to puppetry.

The Mosaic Scale system builds on formalist theories of script analysis by directing its focus to the materiality of puppetry, and the adage that puppet action *is* narrative and these elements in turn *become* the sjuzet. These elements elicit a phenomenological experience of the visceral and the uncanny within puppet performance simply because it is not human performance.

Elinor Fuchs', "Visit to a small planet: some questions to ask a play"*,* outlines an approach to script analysis that is much more visual than a formalist approach. By visual I mean that she asks metaphoric and imaginative questions of the play, asking the reader to see it as a world that they can explore from the outside in. For example, she questions the dramatic time on the planet of the play, asking: 'How does time behave on this planet? Does 'time stand still?' Is time frantic and staccato on this planet? Is it leisurely , easy going time?'[67] She asks illustrative questions about tone, mood, space, patterns and sound. Her approach calls on the visual

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67 Elinor Fuchs, "E. F's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play", *Theater*, 42.2 (Summer, 2004), 4-9.

imagery of landscape and weather. She uses shapes and patterns to illustrate questions around the social world of the play and the relationships of the characters therein and asks the analyser to respond in a more phenomenological and holistic way.

The Mosaic Scale builds on some of these ideas in steps 3, 4 and 5. Steps 3 and 4 are specifically asking questions about the visceral and the uncanny and an exploration of these emotional responses in puppetry and step 5 is about a phenomenological response

We all bring our own specific approach to our reception of a text (whether as a reader or a spectator) but what specifically is a director or puppeteer doing in response to reading a script? They will be thinking about the myriad potential considerations based on it becoming a performance text which in turn results in spectator response. These considerations include:

The staging possibilities: what sort of play-board is needed and consequently, what sort of venue or performance space does this piece need? How many scene changes are there? How much set or other forms of prop might be needed? What are the time and financial implications of any of these decisions?

What about the puppet size, type and aesthetics: are there implications for the staging as a result of the size or type of the puppets? How many puppeteers are needed to manipulate the characters? Are the puppets a type that requires more than one puppeteer?

Should you consider co-presence[68]; Paul Piris' term for the presence on stage of puppet characters created by actors who are simultaneously playing a human character?

Or visible or invisible puppeteers? As defined by Rene Baker, these are decisions about whether the puppeteer is seen or unseen and how this might change the dynamic of the performance for the audience.

Editing and development questions include: Does the story make sense? Is the narrative compelling? What is the subtext? What ideas and images does the script give me that are not already in the text?

68 Paul Piris in Posner et al.*Routledge companion to puppetry and material performance*. (Abingdon: Routledge 2014), 30.

What is the imagery, puppet type or suggested aesthetic proposing? Is there a specific message I want to get across about a character that I can apply materiality, design and theatricality to impart?

Who is the target audience? Is this a piece for adults only or is it a children's show aimed at a specific age group? Could it be suitable for all ages? What implications might the target audience have on staging possibilities and design?

All of these questions and considerations will be thought about at some stage in the writing process, but to bring them all together in a cohesive step by step process would make the puppet theatre writing journey and any subsequent dramaturgy of a script or a production much clearer. A step by step guide to help the writer create a useful and usable text as dramatic literature or production script.

Initial considerations include:

- A puppet can only be itself, it is not an actor: As stated by many theorists from Jurkowski, to Tillis and States among others, the puppet as an object that needs manipulation to animate it on stage, can not perform as something or somebody other than itself.

- Puppetry personifies the uncanny, as defined by Jentsch and Freud.

- The visceral: the response a spectator can have to a puppet can be intensified by the sheer puppet-ness of the object, but also through the ability in performance for a puppet to do and experience things that would be impossible to recreate with a human in live performance (actual violence for example).

- The type of performance: is the puppetry performance an exhibition, protest or a procession (what I call puppetry as art performance)? Or is it a narrative or post dramatic performance for an invited audience (what I term puppetry as theatrical performance)?

- Type of puppet: what does this choice of puppet suggest? How is the atmosphere or concept changed if the type of puppet is changed? The atmosphere of *The Blue Lady* changed when I applied this thinking to my writing.

- Aesthetic design – Mimicry or abstract? Does an abstract design tell us things about a character without having to use dialogue? Although the design is the creative remit of the designers, entirely different readings and character presentations can happen if a puppet is either mimetic or abstract.

- Feature signs[69]: Can a part stand in for a whole? Is the material the puppet is made from giving a character clue?

- Size and scale of puppets: Are they all the same size and scale? What does the size and or scale say about status, place or time?

- Stage craft: the practicalities of the craft of puppeteering. Which puppet does what best? What is the manipulation technique needed for this particular type of puppet? Does this puppet type or design need a very specific play-board? How many puppeteers does it require to make the puppet breathe and come to life? Is it a piece of human theatre with puppets or a puppets only piece?

- The visual is action: the physical behaviour of the puppets results in visual action on stage and this is predominantly what tells the story.

- Co-presence[70] How would it look with humans acting characters at the same time as manipulating puppets? Should there be separate actors and puppeteers?

- How might the perception change if the puppeteers are invisible?

- Puppet time: Puppet reality has a much slower pace than human reality.

69 Aston and Savona,. *Theatre as a Sign System*,100.

70 Paul Piris. in Posner et al. *Routledge companion to puppetry and material performance*. (Abingdon: Routledge 2014), 30.

Chapter 2

Literature review.

There are many books about the art of practising puppetry, as there are many books about scriptwriting for human theatre and theories of dramaturgy. In researching the available literature, I have decided to break it down into three categories: puppetry, phenomenology and dramaturgy.

Within puppetry, I wanted to explore and research existing scripts for puppetry, and the ways puppetry is created, directed, performed and responded too.

Within phenomenology, I wanted to research the study of responses to theatre and puppetry in particular and if this would relate to or influence my plan to explore how to write the uncanny and the visceral in puppet theatre.

Within dramaturgy, I wanted to define my own meaning as it is a slippery term with numerous meanings, I also wanted to research it's potential for practical application, and to explore whether anything similar already existed in terms of a 'how to' guide.

Puppetry literature.

Within puppetry I will include theories of puppetry and writing as well as reference to published puppetry scripts.

The first published playwright written puppet script that I am aware of is *Puppet show of marvels* by Cervantes, published in 1615.[71] *Pinocchio's Progeny* by Harold B Segel is an overview of published literary and dramatic works that have puppetry at their heart, spanning the early seventeenth century up to the 1930's. Many of these works are seen by the author as direct influences on the Modernist movement in the early twentieth century. Many modernist artists became fascinated by puppetry and went on to create shows and write scripts themselves.

Historically, those puppetry scripts that have been written by an individual playwright are readerly rather than performative and usually consist only of dialogue and entrances/exits. Rarely is a specific type of puppet suggested by the author or specified in the script itself and there is no exclusive or specific puppetry direction.

As Eileen Blumenthal points out in *Puppets and puppetry: An illustrated world survey*:

71 Harold B. Segel, *Pinocchio's progeny*. (Baltimore. The John Hopkins University Press.1995.), 6.

> […]puppets have often been the choice for plays that cross the life/death divide. In some cases, the playwrights conceive such works with puppets in mind. For example, Maurice Maeterlinck specified that marionettes should perform his 1894 Death of Tintagiles.[72]

The phrase 'with puppets in mind'[73] is key and both Marion Baraitser[74] and Penny Francis list some of the authors of existing play scripts written in this way: Kleist, Gordon-Craig, Kantor and Garcia Lorca.

Maeterlinck's symbolist dramas for marionettes and Alfred Jarry's proto-absurdist Ubu Roi for puppets are slightly more descriptive, although it is noted that apart from Maeterlinck none specify the type of puppet. They could easily be produced by a human cast and have nothing about them to suggest puppetry, neither Baraitser nor Francis comment on this.

Dassia Posner discusses early 20th century explorations in theatre and theories around the puppet as the actor and the actor as puppet from Edward Gordon Craig and Meyerhold; 'It became common for playwrights and directors to term their plays 'marionette shows', meaning that they imitated puppets without using them.'[75] Suggesting perhaps that some of these plays were never intended for puppet casts at all.

Playwriting for the Puppet Theatre by Jean Mattson is a beginners guide to writing puppet scripts. Mattson begins as I do with some of the considerations to bear in mind before starting to write for puppetry. She also mentions the need to know what the puppet can do and discusses the question of using puppets at all. There are chapters on scriptwriting and although this is discussed with puppetry in mind, the information is a basic introduction to playwriting. She also writes about rhyming verse scripts, adaptations and scripts with a message, all of which could easily be for human theatre.

The second half of the book is a collection of scripts for puppetry, written by Mattson or by others under her tutelage. These scripts are all dialogue heavy and include specific puppet manipulation direction within the dialogue. This makes the scripts

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72 Eileen Blumenthal, *Puppets and puppetry: An illustrated world survey* (London: Thames and Hudson,2005),209.

73 Ibid.

74 Marion Barrister, Theatre of animation: Contemporary A*dult Puppet Plays in Context – 2. Contemporary Theatre Review; Volume 10,Part 1, (*Harwood Academic Publishers.1999)

75 Dassia Posner, "Life-Death and Disobedient obedience" in Posner, Orenstein, Bell, (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Puppetry and Material Performance.* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 133.

untidy to read as dramatic literature but perhaps more useful as performative texts, although incredibly prescriptive.

In the two volume collection: *Theatre of animation, Contemporary adult puppet plays in context,* Marion Baraitser collates puppetry scripts written by playwrights or puppetry companies in the late 20th century, including Howard Barker, Doo Cot (Neenagh Watson and Rachel Field),Handspring, Dennis Silk and Johanna Enckell. Baraitser discusses the development of puppetry as performance and that it has its

> […]roots in an oral tradition in which text is seen as secondary, often improvised and spontaneous, worked up by the puppeteer from a scenario, a storyboard or a series of random episodes, in the spirit of the anarchic and the carnivalesque.[76]

Although I agree with this and this approach is some of what makes puppetry so appealing, I think a pre-written puppet script can also inhabit a form of the anarchic, and carnivalesque and be imbued with a desire for spontaneity.

On the other hand, puppet theatre created in a devised, anarchic and spontaneous process could be described as sloppy, unfocussed and leading to 'šmidlat'[77], a slang word I was introduced to in Prague by puppeteers, it is used to describe frenetic, untidy and overly busy puppet performance.

Henryk Jurkowski is considered the twentieth century's seminal scholar of puppetry, having written and edited many books on the subject including 'Ecrivains et marionnettes: quatre siècles de littérature dramatique en Europe' [78](Writers and puppets: four centuries of dramatic literature in Europe) a collection of puppet theatre scripts by playwrights such as Cervantes and Ben Johnson in the seventeenth century, Henry Fielding and Samuel Foot in the eighteenth, Maurice Sand and Lemercier de Neuville in the nineteenth and Garcia Lorca and Ghelderode in the early twentieth.[79] It also includes Jarry, Strindberg, Maeterlinck and Claudel, (it is only available in French). Although, English language versions of Johnson, Fielding, Foote, Jarry, Maeterlinck and Garcia Lorca are certainly available in non-puppetry volumes.

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76 Baraitser, Theatre of animation: 2.

77 This is a slang word and originate s from the Slovak word for smudge; šmidlat .

78 Jurkowski, *Écrivains et marionnettes: quatre siècles de littérature dramatique en Europe. (Charlesville: Institut International de la marionnette,1991)*

79 Penny Francis, *Puppetry, a reader in theatre practice.* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 99.

There are a number of plays for human actors that include a puppet play within a human play: Ben Johnson's *Bartholomew Fair*, Ludwig Tieck's *Prince Zerbino or The Quest for Good Taste*, Arthur Schnitzler's *At the Sign of the Big Buffoon*, and Edmund Rostand's *The Last Night of Don Juan* are historical examples.[80]

In his book *In search of aesthetics for puppet theatre* Michael Meschke suggests that puppetry:

> […]is a dramatic form with many fine artists and a large public but very little theoretical foundation… Development is a continual relay race, in which one generation hands over its achievements to the next one, as material for new creativity. Even if assertions and predictions serve no other purpose than to be questioned and contradicted, they fill the function of stimulating mental activity and new formulations…[81]

He also suggests that,

> [...]there are examples through the ages of great and less great works written directly for puppet theatre. But the authors have frequently had a perception of puppet theatre that was purely symbolic – metaphysical – and have lacked insight into its actual pure requirements.[82]

This is one of the crucial elements to the discussion on puppetry scripts: the type of puppet that is being written for, needs to be shown or the script will be no more than a human play script or a fantasy story.

As Claire Voisard proposes in 'Écrire pour la marionnette'[83]

> Writing for puppets? What puppets? Given the diversity of styles, some traditional, some modern, that this art from offers, this is the principle question that haunts me right through my writing process. What is the ideal type of puppet that will best serve the text, that will best establish

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80 Komaz and Levenson (ed.) *The language of the puppet. (*Pacific Puppetry Center Press, 1990) 30.

81 Meschke, *In search of aesthetics for the puppet theatre*., 13.

82 Ibid.151.

83 Claire Voisard, "Écrire pour la Marionnette".Marionnettes Numéro 51, 1989 https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/jeu/1989-n51-jeu1069035/16361ac.pdf (accessed 07 September 2017)

communication with the public and rouse in them emotions that are worthy of this 'theatrical magic'? [84]

In *My profession,* Sergei Obraztsov asserts '[…]the puppet theatre, like any other theatre, speaks only of man… that the physical inspirer of the puppets is... an actor, a living man.'[85] Many puppet performances and indeed play scripts for puppets including those by Dennis Silk, Gertrude Stein and Howard Barker talk not of humans, but symbology, emotion, memory, none specify the type of puppet to perform.

There are exceptions, particularly with scripts from the mid twentieth century onwards. For example, Van Itallie's *Motel (a Masque for three dolls)* written in 1966, specifies:

> The motel keeper doll is large, much larger than human size but the impression of hugeness can come mainly from the fact that her head is at least three times larger than would be normal in proportion to her body. She is all gray. She has a large full skirt that reaches to the floor. She has squarish breasts. The hair curlers on her head suggest electronic receivers… An actor on platform shoes works the Motel-Keeper doll from inside it. The actor can move only the doll's arms or its entire body. [86]

Contemporary Canadian puppeteer playwright Ronnie Burkett[87], specifies the design and type of puppet in a detailed author's note at the beginning of his scripts. He usually works with one type of puppetry (tall long string marionettes) and his scripts are dense with dialogue. As a puppeteer, I believe that puppets show their narratives best through action. Often, too much dialogue can be difficult to act and puppeteer but also an audience can lose interest if it becomes too wordy.

Dennis Silk is an exception also, a twentieth century puppet theatre maker, some of his scripts do specify particularity about the puppets envisaged. For example in *Billy Doll a* theatre of the absurd narrative the opening states:

84 Ibid.1.

85 Obraztsov, *My Profession.* 57.

86 Jean-Claude Van Itallie, *America Hurrah.* (New York Coward-McCann Inc.1966),138.

87 Ronnie Burkett, *10 Days on Earth.* (Toronto. Playwrights Canada Press.2006)

[..]Billy Doll: Billy begins as a fat ambitious schoolboy-puppet, and ends as a purposeful puppet of affairs.

Mummy and Billy must be played by trick puppets, or by actors whose appearance, assisted by boot, hat and posture, smalls or swells. The changing clothes or headgear would have to be curtailed in a marionette performance(though not with shadow puppets.). [88]

It is not clear whether Burkett and Silk devise and then write their scripts or write from scratch.

UNIMA[89] has an ongoing research project to collect puppet plays: Contemporary Writing in the Puppet Theatre is an index of plays. This trilingual anthology does not publish the plays themselves but a brief description of play and author, the plays have already been performed and are not all the work of solo writers.

The primary goal of this ongoing project is to identify and gather as much information as possible related to texts/scripts written for the puppet theatre with the purpose of circulating these texts among countries through UNIMA for future collaborations, translations, and the like. [90]

In *Puppetry: A Reader in Practice*, Penny Francis talks briefly about writing for puppets, this in part is what inspired the underlying focus of my research – writing for puppets with no pre-existing puppet designs. She suggests, the lack of published scripts may be because the spoken text is only the 'skeleton' of the script and not a record of the performance created by the puppeteers and the other members of the creative team.

She argues that as puppetry is often created by collaborative devising or an auteur who takes on all of the roles (writer/deviser, puppet designer/maker, puppeteer/performer, dramaturge, director and administration/marketing), the concept of the show being re-created by another company or performer is rarely considered.

Francis also gives another reason,

88 Dennis Silk, *William the wonder kid*.(NY; The Sheep Meadow Press.1996),30.

89 https://www.unima.org/en/unima/ (Accessed 31/03/18)

90 https://www.unima.org/en/commission/publication-contemporary-writing/

While the pursuit of a visual theatre certainly enabled puppetry to gain a place at the mainstream table, it may have contributed to the reluctance of playwrights to contribute to the new genre in that it was, and to an extent still is, unchartered territory for the dedicated wordsmith. [91]

Francis goes on to state; 'Puppetry is thought to be as much about fine art, design and movement as about verbal communication.'[92] It could be argued that much theatre is perceived in this way. Most stage plays have a design element to them, even those scripts written to be performed in the proverbial 'empty space'[93] by actors wearing blacks, have a design aesthetic and therefore a semiotic meaning. As for movement, any dynamic stage play for human theatre requires some movement, puppetry commands a certain style of movement specified by the type of puppet. The only difference is that the puppet is responsible for the movement style and therefore, as Barker states, the tone and mood[94] of the performance.

Francis devotes a subchapter to writing, where she focuses on devising through collaborative workshopping and rehearsal processes rather than individual scripting. Francis also comments on scripts specifically for children, for me this is relevant to scripts aimed at any age:

In the middle years of the 20th century, dozens of books of play scripts intended for children were produced, most of them heavy with dialogue. Most lacked any sensibility to puppetry aesthetics, any knowledge of techniques…[95]

Scripting itself is discussed in part by Francis, mentioning that commissioned writers for puppetry in recent decades have included Angela Carter, Howard Barker and Adrian Mitchell. To me, all these authors have created puppetry scripts that are akin to poetry and inhabit a liminal space somewhere between symbolism, magical realism and a minimal script, none of them specifying puppet type.

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91 Francis, *Puppetry,* 99.

92 Ibid.23.

93 '*I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.*" Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space* (Pelican 1976), 9.

94 Howard Barker cited in Baraitser, *Theatre of Animation,* 38.

95 Francis, *Puppetry*, 1.

Francis also suggests that many puppet theatre makers create work that is personal to them as artists and the notion of a script that informs further performances is not relevant. She suggests that these artists make work that is often post dramatic and reflects their own ideas and often their own body and it is inconceivable that anyone else would perform it.

My research aims to build on Penny Francis' brief exploration of writing for puppetry and dramaturgy by exploring as a 'dedicated wordsmith'[96] and a puppet theatre maker.

Marion Baraitser also acknowledges some of the reasons for the 'death of literary dramatic writing of adult puppet theatre as the cost of commissioning a writer, translation issues if a production travels abroad and an underlying assumption that puppeteers are performers first and not writers.I think some puppeteers see the reason as lying with the writers and their inability to write for puppets and that writing for puppetry requires a good knowledge of the genres, type of puppet, logistics and practicalities of puppet performance. Baraitser does touch on this, with what I think is a key point, when she quotes the Swedish puppet theatre leader Michael Meschke: 'to work with puppets requires deep knowledge about the specific laws and aesthetics of puppets.' [97]

In *Handspring Puppet Company*, Basil Jones argues that 'Puppetry in design and performance is a form of authorship, and that puppeteers and puppet designers should therefore have authorial rights.' [98]

Perhaps this can and should be said of puppeteers and puppet designers engaged in collaborative devising but is it so of those interpreting a script? Otherwise, shouldn't all actors following direction and dancers following choreography be given authorial rights?

The process of development and rehearsal of any piece of performance (save for an auteur led one person show) is collaborative. As Basil Jones says:

> Both the puppet and the actor are interpreters of the playwright and the director's vision. The traditional chain of meaning and interpretation

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96 Ibid., 99.

97 Ibid., 5.

98 Jane Taylor, (ed.) *Handspring Puppet Company.* (South Africa: David Krutt publishing, 2009), 253.

starts with the playwright, passing through the director and finally to the actor or puppet.[99]

John Bell's wide ranging knowledge of the history of and theoretical writings on puppetry, were fundamental to my wider understanding of what puppetry can be and why puppetry is so important culturally. His essay *Playing with the Eternal Uncanny*[100] was particularly influential to this research, instigating my expanded exploration of the uncanny in puppetry.

Steve Tillis' seminal book *Towards an aesthetic of the puppet:puppetry as theatrical art,* has informed my thinking on semiotics and phenomenology in puppetry and was a book I returned to repeatedly.

Phenomenology and Puppetry

How does puppetry embody a phenomenological response? The uncanny feeling and visceral reaction many people have to puppetry is a phenomenological response.

Phenomenology is the study of the experience and the perception of something. Phenomenology asks: What is it to experience this phenomena? What is this experience?

The phenomenology of theatre is the study of responses based on individual perception and personal sensibilities, to the immersive experience that theatre can be. In theatre, the phenomenological response is the feeling, the experience, and the perception of the world presented. Mark Fortier describes it thus,

> Phenomenology is not concerned with the world as it exists in itself but with how the world appears (as phenomena) to the humans who encounter it… Phenomenology is concerned with what it is like for human beings to be alive in the world around them and how they perceive the world.[101]

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99 Ibid., 254.

100 Posner, Orenstein, Bell, (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Puppetry and Material Performance.* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014),43-53.

101 Mark Fortier, *Theory/Theatre: An Introduction.* (London: Routledge,1997), 38.

When I refer to phenomenology, I am using the term and theory as Daniel Jonston describes it, as a way to 'approach and interpret different phenomena of theatre making and reception'[102] with a specific focus on puppetry.

Phenomenology in theatre is about the *'sensory effects of theatre'* [103] or the *'lived experience' [104]* and it is the very uncanniness of puppets that can make the experience a visceral and emotional one. Experiencing the uncanny is a phenomenological response to puppetry. A phenomenological response can also be visceral, and a visceral response can be because of a perception of the uncanny. Therefore, a phenomenological response to puppetry can certainly be about the uncanny. Puppets can be inherently uncanny, but perhaps this is a sliding scale, specific to each puppet and each spectator.

There are many modes of thinking and numerous theoretical approaches to phenomenology, it is a philosophical concept that can seem hard to pinpoint and is regularly updated by contemporary thinkers. In *Theatre and Phenomenology: Manual Philosophy,* Daniel Johnston points out that it is partly possible to apprehend the philosophical significance by reading a play text, but this depends on reader response, and the style and format in which the play is written. Just as, in performance, what has been included or highlighted in a production, as much as what hasn't been picked up by a director, can make for very different productions of the same text. Johnston observes,

> Bert States notes that simply placing a piece of furniture on a stage heightens audience awareness of elements of its very being. How much more so is this the case with a person in a scene? [105]

And how much again with a puppet? The human agency that brings the puppet to life heightens the audience awareness from doll or object to living character. An awareness of the potentialities of puppet type and materials, can help the writer to make informed decisions about how a performance could look and work, albeit including space for puppet autonomy and the notion of ' the puppet made me do it'.In

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102 Daniel Johnston, *Theatre and Phenomenology: Manual Philosophy.* (London, Palgrave.2017), 76.

103 Fortier,*Theory/Theatre,* 39.

104 Ibid.38.

105 Johnston,*Theatre and Phenomenology,* 7.

her chapter, "Vibrant Materials; The Agency of Things in the Context of Scenography*"*, within *Theatre and Phenomenology* Joslin McKinney observes,

> A phenomenology of materiality draws attention to how intentions can be thwarted, diverted or transformed from within the performance, through the way the materials themselves behave.[106]

This is another example of how knowing the potentialities of puppet type and materials, allows the writer to make informed decisions about how a performance could look and work. The endless possibilities for design in puppetry, coupled with the uncanny, create a unique theatricality that cannot be achieved in the same way with human performers alone.

In *Great Reckonings in little rooms. On the phenomenology of theatre,[107]* Bert States discusses the phenomenology of puppetry, the human response to the experience of that which makes it puppetry and no other thing. The very thing-ness of it, 'If an image, by definition, is a likeness or a representation of something, how can it be the thing itself?'[108] How can a puppet be both itself and a representation of itself? States talks about the aesthetics/materials in and of puppetry, suggesting that:

> A few sticks can become a character. A fork is an actor. Newspaper creates a scene of beauty.'[109]

All these items are not materials that permanently become the puppet (work of art) but rather temporarily. Similarly, States considers, what child actors in comparison to adult actors, can convince an adult audience of on stage.

> [...] the point is not so much that they are children but that they are conspicuously not identical with their characters, the titillating potential of a medium that by its nature inoculates the audience against belief...all of which reminds us that satire is probably more vicious when it is tucked surreptitiously into the illusion...where its sincerity can become deafening. [110]

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106   Maaike Bleeker, Jon Foley Sherman, And Eirini Nedelkopoulou(Ed)*Performance and Phenomenology* (New York, Routledge. 2015), 137.

107 Daniel Johnston states that this book was the 1st to apply a phenomenological approach from within theatre studies Johnston, Daniel. 67.

108 States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms,* 34.

109 Ibid., 37.

110 States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms*, 32.

This is the same reason that puppets are so good at playing satire and dealing with taboo subjects.All of these elements can be considered within the remit of semiotics. Members of the Prague school explored puppetry in some detail, particularly through a semiotic lens. Many original members of the Prague school had been Russian Formalists, but by the early 1920s,some had left Russia for the Prague linguistic circle, as theories diverged and the Stalin regime started to outlaw the formalists. Articles from Prague circle members in *Semiotica. Puppets, masks and performing Objects from semiotic perspectives* [111] include Veltrusky, Bogatyrev, and Zich, writing in a time before mass communication and the development of 20th century theatrical experimentation. These essays often refer to the hidden puppeteer, which at least since the beginning of the 21st century, has been out of fashion in Anglo-American adult puppet theatre, most puppeteers being perfectly visible to their audience during performance.

Articles such as "An approach to the semiotics of theatre" by Jiri Veltrusky and "The interconnection of two similar semiotic systems: The puppet theatre and the theatre of living actors" by Petr Bogatyrev look at the comparisons between the sign system of human theatre and puppet theatre. These articles were written before the Prague circle had substantially disseminated their ideas and theories around structuralism and signs in performance, so although somewhat dated by contemporary standards it still has much to offer. Not least to jog the memory of a contemporary reader about the wide amount of styles and the extravagant experimentation there has been in puppetry over the last one hundred years.

Otakar Zich is writing from a limited awareness of puppetry outside of early 20th century Czech traditions. He comments on the thankful lack of human-sized puppets, he has some trouble accepting the possibility of successful abstract design in puppetry and negates the importance of the semiotics of costume. Zich talks of the folk tradition and that 'theatre plays for puppets have not yet extricated themselves from the folk circumstances from which they emerged.'[112] He discusses 'two groups of plays that can be performed by puppet theatre'[113]

- Caricature. Comedy: plays that rely on comedic and visual caricature (he suggests working with Ancient Greek comedies)

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[111] *Semiotica. Puppets, mask and Performing objects from semiotic perspectives.* Vol 47 1 of 4 (1983)

[112] Otakar Zich. *Puppet Theatre.* (2015) Theatralia, 508.

[113] Ibid., 509.

- Symbolic: he does give a case for a symbolic aesthetic, but he stresses that it can't be too abstract, or it won't work. He offers the idea that plays coming from traditions such as the classical Greek masked theatre and what he terms 'oriental dramas' [114] are suitable for interpretation by puppets as they are 'great poetic beauties'.[115]

He doesn't mention puppets performing outside the canon of human theatre texts, although he calls for a repertoire to be found in styles of theatre no longer practised. Perhaps Zich was unfamiliar with the Dada movement, which had already produced abstract performance both human and puppet by the time of his writing in 1923.That is to say,puppetry was and remains somewhat marginal and therefore it is not possible to be aware of every movement or performance of this usually devised and script free theatre form.

In her book *Props,* Eleanor Margolies states that 'there is a surprising lack of discussion of materiality from a spectators point of view.'[116] She goes on to suggest, 'a significant consequence of the neglect of materiality has been the side-lining of the sensory experience of performers and spectators.' [117]The materiality of puppetry is one of the main reasons people enjoy it and the sensory experience of this material performance can instigate a visceral or uncanny response in the viewer. *Props* looks at the way in which stage objects are mostly ' 'looked through' to get at something 'deeper'[118] but Margolies also explores puppetry through the lens of materiality, materials and metaphor. The very nature of the materials a puppet may be made from dictates its materiality in terms of the possibilities for performance and spectator response. I spent a week at the Bulgarian academy of dramatic arts, shadowing their puppetry course in 2014. I witnessed a student puppetry rehearsal in which a knitted doll as the protagonist was about to be killed. The knitted doll was shaking with fear as the hand gun as puppet gangster came closer,shooting the doll backwards across the table, who then died a dramatic and drawn out death. The director gave the group feedback about materiality and asked them to explore killing the knitted doll in a way that better served its materials. The next showing resulted in a scene in which,

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114 Ibid., 512.

115 Ibid.

116 Eleanor Margolies, *Props (*London. Palgrave. 2016),18.

117 Ibid.,19.

118 Ibid.,137.

although the gun was still present as the villian, it was used to encourage the knitted doll to kill themselves. The doll did this by attaching a loose hoop of wool within its body to a nail on the edge of the table and slowly unravelling itself down to the point where only its head remained.

With the digital realm ever expanding, puppetry can offer analogue materiality and thingness[119] that is both tactile and haptic. The materiality of a puppet, in terms of both the material from which it is made and its material animation, elevate it from an object on stage as a prop to the performer centre stage.A puppet is a theatrical device within a theatrical world, whereas a human actor is just that – an actor pretending to be something they are not, whilst a puppet can only be its theatrical self, its 'materiality' is 'the special feature of the puppet' [120] and this sheer theatricality appeals to me as a writer. It appeals to me because I enjoy the visual and the extravagant particularly through the spectacle of theatre.

In *Theatre and feeling,* Erin Hurley terms this potential for multi layered theatricality;super-stimuli. This includes effects and design decisions coupled with music, lighting, and the narrative plot; for example, the use of a colour in lighting, costume and set design to flood the senses of the audience. Blue lighting, aqua costumes, sound effects of the sea, projection of rising water, a backdrop painted to look like under the sea, and dramatic music all combine to elicit a visceral response to the notion of the threat of drowning.[121]

> [...] the extra-stimulating stimuli of the theatre directly address feelings (emotions, moods, affect, sensations)and, in so doing, draw out extraordinary affective responses. [122]

In trying to elicit philosophical and phenomenological effects a writer will have taken into account all the elements of a potential performance: narrative, characterisation, casting decisions, design, lighting effects, sound effects, the performance space, the time and place of performance.

Questions to ask of a puppet script, in consideration of phenomenology might include: is there a sense of the uncanny over and above the sheer uncanniness of

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119 After Bill Brown's Thing Theory.

120 Jurkowski. In, Kominz and Levenson (ed.) The language of the puppet (Pacific Puppetry Center Press, 1990),24.

121 Ibid.

122 Erin Hurley, *Theatre and feeling*. (London: Palgrave.2010),23.

puppets? How might a spectator respond to or receive the puppet type? How might the specified play-board affect the spectator's experience? What are you as the writer, focussing your attention on and why? Is the materiality in the text coming to the fore?These phenomenological questions are dramaturgy in action; questioning the implications, meaning and potential responses to a script.

<u>Dramaturgy.</u>

Dramaturgy is a notoriously slippery term, but my definition is: the exploration, development and facilitation of the process of performance making, whether that is literary dramaturgy (script development) or production dramaturgy (an outside eye in development, rehearsal & performance).Dramaturgy is also often used in terms of the composition of performance and refers to the mise-en-scene, the text, the actors etc.I use dramaturgy to mean an examination and facilitation of the development of a piece of performance.By literary dramaturgy I mean, the exploration, development, analysis and facilitation of the process of scriptwriting. There is no formal technique for a literary dramaturgy specifically for puppetry.

Dramaturgy is a term that carries different meanings for different people but in defining the etymology Chemers gives some historical context, '…the original Greek source of the word dramaturgy…dram plus urgia literally meaning 'making drama' and the term referred generally to playwrights and producers.' [123]

Production dramaturgy, literary dramaturgy, visual dramaturgy, the dramaturgy of the production or the dramaturg of a theatre, can each carry a different meaning. In their book *Dramaturgy and performance*, Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt explore all of these approaches, and other than the dramaturgy of a performance, (meaning the mise en scene, narrative and style) and the dramaturgy of a theatre (meaning the programme) they define the role of a dramaturg to be a 'creative critic 'or a 'critical collaborator'[124] These descriptions are used in reference to production dramaturgy, and the dramaturg being the outside eye on rehearsals and performance.

They term script dramaturgy as literary analysis and suggest it is limiting,

> A dramaturgical analysis of a written text is therefore somewhat
> provisional, since it must be acknowledged that any discussion that

123 Micheal Mark Chemers, Ghostlight: An introductory handbook for dramaturgy. (Carbon dale. Southern Illinois University Press.2010),10.

124 Cathy Turner & Synne K Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008),102.

confines itself to the script on the page has certain limitations: there are aspects of text in performance (for example vocalisation) that can only be explored through and in reference to live performance itself. [125]

Although I think this suggests that dramaturgical analysis of a script as dramatic literature is limiting, as it is meant for performance and should be read that way, I think that the type of reader who would engage in dramaturgical literary analysis of a script would be what Marinis calls a 'model spectator' after Eco's 'model reader' [126] and is therefore more likely to be reading with the expertise and vision of a writer or director.

Devised theatre dramaturgy processes are different to literary dramaturgy in that the needs of the process differ, both at a script development stage and a production dramaturgy stage.

There is little written about production dramaturgy for puppetry and nothing about literary dramaturgy for puppetry. I have found one article covering puppetry and dramaturgy by Dassa Posner, within *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*.[127] In this essay Posner discusses the visual dramaturgy of puppet performances, she makes interesting points, from a production dramaturgy viewpoint but she doesn't mention scripts or a writing process for puppetry. In the same anthology, Eric Bass's chapter, *'Visual dramaturgy in puppet theatre'* includes reference to production dramaturgy during devising and rehearsal of puppetry but doesn't mention script writing.

In *Script analysis for actors, directors, and designers* by James Thomas , many of the ideas and questions originate in Aristotelian Poetics and over the centuries have been refined and developed by others. Having read contextualising research into the Russian formalists, this how to analyse a script through formalist considerations was clear and highly informative. Although script analysis in a formalist sense is not the same as Russian Formalist theories of literature and poetry,it puts the considerations and questions long discussed and used by dramatists,theorists and directors into a clear step by step process. This is dramaturgy as a system.

In *Ghostlight: An introductory handbook for dramaturgy,* Michael Mark Chemers discusses many of the influential thinkers and theorists that have contributed to

125 Ibid.,193.

126 Umberto Eco, *The role of the reader. Explorations in the semiotics of text*. (London. Hutchinson & co.1981),17.

127 Abingdon,Routledge 2015),335.

dramaturgical processes. He gives a suggestion of the sort of work a dramaturg might get to do but it is specific to the US theatre system.

Robert Scanlan's *Principles of dramaturgy,* focusses on the ideas of time and action in theatre. It includes a brief 'how to' for production dramaturgy and Scanlan introduces his plot bead diagram theory. This is about creating a diagram of the plot as 'drawings of the time-form' [128] or units of action to inform a director or dramaturg what is occurring in the units of time within scenes and therefore across the script, as they unfold one after the other. A way to see the whole from the outside.

In the *Routledge companion to Dramaturgy*, Duska Radosavljevic suggests,

> The domain of dramaturgy is neither solely the map (which I would say belongs to the director) nor the story (which may start with the writer but ultimately belongs to the actor) but the journey itself (which is an experience and therefore immaterial, speculative, personal as well as potentially shared.)[129]

Puppetry is only ever itself; a world of potential symbology, surreality or mimicry. Enjoyed by children and adults alike. Created through solo or collaborative devising, adaptation or solo original writing. Performed across the World and over thousands of years, people respond to puppets in a way that they do not to human performers. This response to puppetry can be an emotional, psychological or visceral experience. Gaining an understanding of puppetry and phenomenological responses to it opens up numerous questions for the writer or director of puppetry. To question, critique and pursue further research in the development of a script is dramaturgy at work.

128 Robert Scanlan, *Principles of Dramaturgy (*Abingdon: Routledge,2020),7.

129 Duska Radosavljevic in Magda Romanska, *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy (*Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 43.

Chapter 3

Script writing.

Who would write for puppetry and why? Perhaps, a writer that is new to puppetry and works alone. Or for reasons of aesthetics, or economy and financial restrictions, for reasons that the narrative and character content is symbolic, fantastical, post dramatic or surreal and difficult to reproduce with humans. For reasons of dissidence, as Tina Bicat points out[130]. Perhaps, someone who is a writer and not a puppet theatre maker but appreciates the art form as a spectator. A puppet theatre maker or writer who wishes to work as a solo artist. A writer who has been commissioned by a human theatre to write a puppet play.

What is a script? A piece of dramatic literature certainly, but also what Micheal Chemers calls 'a blueprint for creating a work of art'[131] Chemers refers to the work of Aristotle by saying that 'Poetics can be called the Ur-dramaturgy'[132] the fundamental exploration of the structure, aesthetics and style of drama that is still referred to today.

An expanded and developed Mosaic Scale for puppet theatre proposes guidelines for script exploration and development when writing for puppetry as a solo playwright, both throughout the process of writing that script but also in the development of it for performance. My assumption is that one writes a script for performance and not solely as dramatic literature.

Penny Francis' suggestion that visual theatre is un-chartered territory for the wordsmith[133] is something that held me back from trying to write for puppetry in the past, a feeling that perhaps these were two mediums that simply didn't work together, or that to write for a form of visual and or devised theatre was somehow not 'real writing'. Cathy Turner comments on the exclusivity of writing for performance in the article "Writing for the contemporary theatre, towards a radically inclusive dramaturgy*":*

> [...] there is also writing that is deeply embedded in the performance-
> making process: one thinks, for example, of the work of writers within a

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130 Tina B icat, *Puppets and Performing Objects. A Practical Guide*.(Marlborough. Crowood Press.2007), 49.

131 Chemmers, *Ghost light,* 72.

132 Ibid.,19.

133 Francis, *Puppetry, a reader in theatre practice*, 99.

company such as Kneehigh Theatre – how often do we hear the names of Anna Murphy, Carl Grose and Tom Morris mentioned in discussions of the company's work? Is this, too, 'proper' writing?... there is no simple distinction to be made, such as that between 'writer as artist' and 'writer as dramaturg'; the question of a single artistic vision (as opposed to serving a shared endeavour) is a complex one but does not bring about the divide between 'writing proper' and 'not writing '(just typing). [134]

Jurkowski (quoted in Francis) declares why he thinks puppet scripts have been scarce in the past and continue to be irrelevant today:

The reason is found in the difference between the puppet and the actor… The actor needs a script; the puppet can do without. This explains the absence of dramatic texts written for the theatre of puppets (...) No need whatever for a script where a simple story, written or otherwise, will serve as model. [135]

This seems too simplistic and a little disingenuous, suggesting puppeteers simply don't use scripts. Of course a human manipulating a puppet is capable of improvising a basic story through a series of action based visual scenes, and perhaps many puppet shows throughout history have been the performance of simple and often well known tales. But, surely the art of puppet theatre can be more than a simple story. A complex narrative told through the medium of puppets for a sophisticated audience requires a deep understanding of the characters and storyline by the manipulator/performers and a script, whether written before rehearsals start or developed by the company and used as an aide memoire can only be a useful thing.

How much dialogue does the script need? Can the narrative be shown without any Dialogue? Dialogue can and does exist in puppetry, but the visual action outweighs the aural narrative thereby suggesting that stage directions or description of action in a puppet theatre script are integral to story-telling.

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134 Cathy Turner, *Writing for the contemporary theatre, towards a radically inclusive dramaturgy.(*Online.*),*80.

135 Francis, *Puppetry: A reader in theatre practice*, 99.

Many puppet performances include dialogue, but each puppet is one visual representation of a character and unless a trick puppet will always look the same, as Steve Tiplady points out: '[…]the audience can lose interest in a static face delivering a big block of text.' [136]

Although I have created successful, wordy shows in the past, (through a process of collaborative devising,) specifically *Noir*, a pastiche of film noir, which is a genre that is known for its witty word play and dialogue, I believe that visual action is narrative in puppetry. *Spaghetti*, another devised show, had no dialogue at all and worked well. First drafts of *The Blue Lady* contained a good deal of dialogue and this was a productive way for me to develop the narrative and characters. Once I felt I had a good storyline I edited the dialogue to the bare minimum,to only the language that was absolutely necessary to move the story on or explain a character's actions.

I also needed to consider the number of characters and therefore puppeteers in any given scene and how this might affect dialogue. Does the puppeteer need to be manipulating and speaking for more than one puppet and what are the implications for clarity of character and story? Is the puppeteer hidden from view and might this make performing multiple voices easier or harder? What sort of language does the puppet need? How to portray the character through language? As a form of visual theatre, should the puppet theatre playwright be editing out dialogue? In *The Playwright's Guidebook,* Stuart Spencer declares,'…what else is there to playwriting except dialogue? Well, stage directions maybe – and numbering the pages. Not much else.' [137] I don't agree with this, not entirely for human theatre and certainly not for puppetry. The physical behaviour of the puppets results in visual action on stage and this is what tells the story, dialogue in many cases should only be used when absolutely necessary. This is one of the key differences between human and puppet theatre.

It is the job then, of the writer, to envisage ways to present any dialogue in ways that are 'believable'. If the dialogue is vital and that information cannot be imparted in another way – how is it written to be exciting and not draw unwanted attention to the notion of speaking puppets? Aston and Savona uphold that,

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136 Tiplady quoted in Raven Kaliana, "Puppets and Words: An Unholy Matrimony". (Animations Online. Ed.30 Summer 2010), 3.

137 Stuart Spencer, *The Playwright's Guidebook* (London. Faber and Faber.2002), 195.

It is traditionally the function of dialogue to create the 'reality' of the dramatic universe and the protagonists within it as constant and consistent elements for the duration of the fiction… [138]

Among drama and literary theorists there has long been disagreement about 'the question of precedence'[139] regarding 'the dialogue of characters and the stage directions that frame that dialogue'.[140] Jiri Veltrusky thought the dialogue should take primacy over stage directions (although conceding that stage directions are also important)[141] It is interesting to me that Veltrusky thinks this way about human theatre, as he was a keen puppet theorist of the Prague school, but I can not find any reference to his ideas about this topic within puppetry.

Within human dramatic performance, the dialogue can often be one of the most important elements of the text for a spectator or reader. In that it is what the audience experiences and what is paid attention to by most readers of drama as literature but equally the sub-text and exposition that can be told visually can make the stage directions just as important. Michael Wright explains,

[...] behaviour as activity which reveals inner process…the stage directions, then, create another kind of dialogue through behaviour. And behaviour is an extremely important aspect of thinking theatrically.[142]

There are exceptions to the rule, and a human play with no stage directions can be impressive as both readerly dramatic literature and performance. For example, Sarah Kane's *4:48 Psychosis* is a play written entirely without stage directions and with no specification of characters or dialogue allocation, alternatively Samuel Beckett's *Acts without words* is termed a mime and is written only in stage directions. A puppet play with no stage directions is non-specific and has the potential to be too vague to stage without considerable dramaturgical work on the part of director and puppeteers.

138 Aston and Savona., *Theatre as a Sign System*) ,67.

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid., 73.

142 Michael Wright, *Playwriting in process. Thinking and working theatrically*. (Portsmouth USA. Heinemann. 1997), 6.

On the other hand, some directors and puppeteers might find this lack of specificity exciting: a clean slate onto which they can put their own unrestricted creative vision, what Veltrusky called '[...]mere librettos, mere materials that can be used to construct a work of art'[143]

Esslin[144] states that the *Haupttext (*Main text) is what the spectator of a performance sees and the Nebentext (Next or alternative text) is read, analysed, dramaturged and responded to by the production company (actors, director, designers) suggesting that Nebentext takes precedence in the process of the written text becoming a performance.

For example, many historical scripts, particularly from the mediaeval and renaissance eras tend to be plays without prescriptive stage directions and a contemporary director of these plays is led to *'create a Nebentext of their own'.[145]*

So, how might a puppet script differ from a human script? What do the creative team need to see on the page? Aside from some of the considerations mentioned in the previous chapter on puppetry (type of puppet, showing the character on the page, dialogue or not, play-board), the puppetry action needs to be clearly defined and easily found within the script. Even if dialogue is present, the role of the puppeteers and the director is to perform the story through movement and action, thus stage directions are important.

Some of the Aristotelian rules of human theatre script writing are universal to writing for any narrative performance and therefore apply to writing for puppetry: What does the protagonist want? If it doesn't move the narrative on, cut it. As Stuart Spencer writes,'[...]the idea of action- the thing that a character wants and which propels him forward through the play.Or the idea of conflict - that which gets in his way.'[146]

The considerations already discussed are relevant whether the script is an entirely original piece, an adaptation, or an interpretation. However, there are a few specific things to consider if it is an adaptation or interpretation. The type of puppet needs to be thought about in more than just terms of atmosphere and believable characterisation. For example, what might be implied, perhaps semiotically, if one was to adapt *Schindler's List* for glove puppets to be played in a Punch and Judy style booth?

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143 Ibid., 74.

144 Esslin quoted in Aston & Savona., *Theatre as a Sign System*, 73.

145 Ibid.,75.

146 Spencer,*The Playwright's Guidebook,* 12.

In adapting an existing human script to become a puppet script, what are the obvious differences between human performance needs and puppet performance needs, including acting styles, play-board and possible editing of dialogue? What is the best way to show the narrative (without trying it out in rehearsal) that conveys essence, emotion, character and narrative? Short of stating that it must be performed word for word, akin to Samuel Becket's mythological stipulations,[147] interpretation is part of the creativity of performance and many directors may ignore or change stage directions to fit their vision. As the writer, if in collaboration with a director, one has to choose the things to fight for, that one considers most important.

The format of my script is similar to existing human scripts with stage directions and dialogue, but the puppet narrative is in boxes of described puppet action which are separate on the page from the dialogue, as the action needs to be described to create the stage directions. which in turn helps to tell the story. In a script for puppetry, stage directions become the text as they reveal the action that is visible to the audience – action is narrative in puppetry, as in film.

Similarities with Screenwriting and comics.

Screenplays and graphic novels utilise storytelling through visual action, and this can be applied to writing for puppet theatre. Film is primarily a visual medium and cinematic narrative works best when shown through images. Silent film can be said to follow a similar presentation style to puppetry. In his thesis, "The Puppet, the Cinematic and Contemporary Visual Theatre: Principles, Practices and Logos", Thomas Butler Garret states: 'a silent film would often not have a script so much as what would now be referred to in Visual Theatre as a 'score' - a setting out of, principally, the movement of the piece...'[148]

Acting styles in silent films are much more gestural than in later talkies, any dialogue is on inter-titles and these are kept to only the dialogue that is absolutely necessary to help the narrative, the spectator has to do a little more work to join the narrative dots.Writing specifically about the early films of Charlie Chaplin, Butler Garret says:

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147 "*Any production of Endgame which ignores my stage directions is completely unacceptable to me. My play requires an empty room and two small windows. The American Repertory Theater production which dismisses my directions is a complete parody of the play as conceived by me. Anybody who cares for the work couldn't fail to be disgusted by this*." So wrote playwright Samuel Beckett in 1984, for a note inserted by his own legal insistence into the programme of an American production of his play, Endgame. (Quote from The Guardian.06/04/15)

148 T. Butler Garret, "The Puppet, the Cinematic and Contemporary Visual Theatre: Principles, Practices and Logos" (Thesis.University of Brighton/University for the Creative Arts. 2009), 58.

> [...]the dominance of the visual and the gestural over the written and
> the spoken was not only a necessity, but indeed a virtue, and it is not
> hard to trace a line back to the Modernist puppet influenced theatre
> practice, cabaret and vaudeville that spawned the creators of these
> films. [149]

The frame of the screen or the frame of the picture within a comic focuses the attention of the spectator onto the image which best conveys what the author wishes to show. Frame is an important consideration for puppetry. The frame focuses the image and the image tells the story. Within the frame, what are we being asked to see? How is the image, scene or shot framed? What is the frame? –A window? A door? A landscape? A particular room? The proscenium arch?

Within *The Blue Lady* I have used scale and frame to pinpoint action in different ways. Table top puppets performing as if they were humans within a drawing room, framed by the table that is their play-board, action framed within a doll's house, and life size ghost puppets utilising the room the audience are in as their frame. Deleuze talks of '*the subjective image*'[150] and how or what the camera sees. This too can be applied to puppetry, as in film it is possible to jump from place to place, view point to view point and to a different protagonist and the audience is capable of following the narrative with ease. What is our point of view – who is looking or where are we looking? What or who else is in the frame and what does that tell us about the narrative or characters? It was not a concern for me when writing The Blue Lady that the subjective image could be table top puppets one moment and the next a boat made from books in a different scale.

Other examples of cinematic image are: '*active*' [151] the audience sees what is happening all around the protagonist and /or what they are taking part in or doing from their point of view. In the Blue Lady, the séance scene is an 'active' scene from Cassandra's point of view. In response to the writing of Deleuze on cinema, American puppeteer Kate Brehm was inspired to create a show following some of Deleuze's cinematic theories, Brehm points out the similarities between filmmaking

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149 Ibid., 59.

150 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image.(* London, The Athlone press.1986), 71

151 Ibid.

and puppet theatre[152] In particular; Deleuze's affection image and montage theory for cinema are relevant to screen writing and therefore puppetry.

Affection image – is an image in cinema (that is often but not always a close up of a face) that shows the moment of inspiration to action or the instigation or cause of an affect. It can also be shown without a human protagonist in the image; the telephone rings, the storm arrives, the gun is picked up. It is about the story behind the image and the action as a result.

Montage in filmmaking or screenwriting provides a series of images, usually without dialogue, to illustrate character, place, time, or cause and effect within a narrative, of which the spectator makes sense through filling in the gaps. When writing a montage sequence for puppetry, it may be wise to stick to one or two types of puppets in a short sequence so as the viewer comprehends clearly. A montage that uses shadow, marionette, glove, table top and object to represent the same character would become confusing and probably pretentious. A mixed scene may also lead the imagination to be saturated.

David Mamet suggests the 'following the hero around' way of many American films is uninspired story telling. To be closer to 'dream-like qualities' in order to determine a more interesting shot list,a film director should ask themselves – what is this scene about? In writing for puppetry (as for humans), determining what the scene is about can help to get to the crux of the narrative conflict and thereby help to create a better way of showing the scene (a more interesting shot list).

In *Theatre as a sign system*, Aston and Savona give the camera in cinema as an example of the 'eye'[153]that focuses on what the director wants to give meaning, the camera looks at what we see, but they argue 'In theatre, there is no such device.

        Everything is put before us and we have a panoramic as opposed to a partial and pre-selected view of the stage'. [154] They, of course, are talking purely of human theatre, but puppetry can give us a specific view, for instance when considering scale and framing it is possible to have a close up in puppetry, like a film shot.

In comics the frame of each image can be a different size depending on the flow of the narrative, specific focus or importance, whereas the frame of animation and film is always the same size and shape; the screen on which we watch. Wide shots and

152 Posner, Orenstein, Bell, (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Puppetry,* 84.

153 Aston & Savona,. *Theatre as a Sign System,* 101.

154 Ibid.

close ups are doing something similar to comic frames. Playing with scale, type and play-board in puppet theatre achieves this in a way that it closer to a comic strip as the frame can be any size or shape.'...Each panel of a comic shows a single moment in time and between those frozen moments – between the panels – our minds fill in the intervening moments.' [155]

Closure is the term for the work the brain does to fill in the gaps in information. Panels in comics can be just an image or an image with words. Montage in screenwriting is doing a similar thing to comic action to action, subject to subject and scene to scene panel transitions, and this can be applied to puppetry scenes on the page or the stage.

When discussing panel to panel transitions, McCloud explores: action to action, this requires a small degree of closure, it shows the cause and effect of an action. This can be used to tell narrative through action.

Subject to subject: requires a significant amount of closure or 'reader involvement' [156] to 'render these transactions meaningful.' [157] These are panels that allow the reader to make a leap in the narrative. This can be used to impart narrative information without having to see it. In The Blue Lady, an example of this is when a paper doll made from a letter appears and speaks the letter's contents.

Scene to scene: this can also require significant involvement and closure, it takes the reader from one place and time to another. This can be used to travel through space and time. The boat with Cassandra's mother and sister drowning is an example of scene to scene in The Blue Lady.

McCloud goes on to discuss types of image in comics including, word, picture or duo specific images. In puppetry, if words only add a soundtrack they are not needed in a script.

In scripting for puppetry, scenes could be written thus:

- Word specific: the language has precedence; to be used when there is no visual way to impart the information.

- Image specific: Visual images and action imparting the narrative and showing character.

155Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The invisible art. (*NYC. Harper Collins.1996), 94.

156 Ibid., 71

157 Idem.

- Duo specific: To be used when a point needs to be reiterated or for comedic or horror purposes. Duo specific should be used with caution, as it affords equal weight to language and image and can risk repetition or show *and* tell.

- Interdependent: Can include narration or voice over, and images to illustrate an idea, concept or memory.

These comic and screenwriting theories can be applied to storyboarding as a technique for creating a puppet script. Storyboarding can be a short cut process to find a narrative, the needs of the characters and the story. Storyboarding is, in effect, a truncated comic strip. The author can draw or create a series of images that show the scenes or main ideas of the narrative. If these images are drawn on individual pieces of paper, they can be moved around to help the author visualise a different order or outcome to the storyline.

Applying comic book and cinematic theories to writing for puppetry can help with creating an action-based narrative, showing rather than telling and creating a sense of place, scale and focus through image rather than words, all of these elements, when written into a script, help to expose the meaning and the aesthetic vision of the playwright.

On applying the mosaic scale to scripting considerations for the first half of *The Blue Lady,* it became clear that I had quite a few scenes in which the type of scene was interdependent. I checked this and found that these scenes were showing action, while also being narrated or include a voice over of a letter, and so this was not a problem.

When thinking about scriptwriting for puppetry, considerations include:

- The point of view – whose point of view are we seeing in any given scene? If this jumps around does it become confusing?

- The frame – how might the picture be framed and does this change the scale or the focus?

- The narrative - is the narrative allowing for closure on the part of the reader, through scenes that apply subject to subject or scene to scene and image specific or affect image descriptions?

Chapter 4

The Puppet Made Me Do It; The Uncanny and The Visceral in Puppetry.

I have always been interested in the uncanny in performance and in particular the supernatural uncanny. Puppets allow me to play with the uncanny in a way that foregrounds the living/dead object and that is not solely based in materiality. Is it possible to pre-suppose the uncanny and the visceral, to write them into a script? Does puppet manipulation itself play into the uncanny or inhibit a writer or dramaturg from pre-supposing the potential for uncanniness or visceral response? A visceral response to puppetry is linked to the sense of the uncanny.

As a puppeteer myself,'The puppet made me do it', is the manifestation of how each puppet creates their own character and this in itself can be an uncanny experience for the puppeteer.

In Croon productions' *Attack of the 50 foot Woman*[158], the puppet of Harry (one of the main characters) was a marionette of a smooth 1950s man in a tuxedo. The character we wanted was a tall, straight backed, arrogant slime ball of a man, who gaslights his wife into believing she is mad and has not seen aliens at all. However, when he came to be manipulated, he had a kink in his left leg that made him always appear slightly drunk. We put a permanent cocktail glass in his hand and the ensuing character was in fact much more duplicitous and creepy than we had previously envisaged. This puppet was never going to be as simple as the original design and was a good example of the puppet being in more control than perhaps we as puppeteers would like to think.

The mosaic scale exercise relates to the central challenge of trying to capture the visual, uncanny and visceral experience of puppetry.

What is the visceral in puppetry?

What is it that makes puppet theatre a particularly visceral experience? With *The Blue Lady* I wanted to write a spooky script, a show that in production has the potential to be a visceral and uncanny experience for the audience. The ability of our minds to imagine what might or indeed might not be there is the visceral at work. Implication, manipulation of imagination and the tension of delayed catharsis are

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158 Prema Arts Centre Gloucs, 2012,Shambala Festival 2013,The Bierkeller , Bristol, 2013, Bedford Theatre 2014.Canal Cafe, London 2014

what imbue fear in a reader or spectator. The near hysteria of the what is about to happen moment?

The visceral is a deep emotional response and can also be a physical response to something that includes thrill and sensation (both in terms of a physical sensation and a sensational approach).The feeling of being frightened, disquieted, uneasy, confused even is one that many people seek out and enjoy. In 2013, Frank McAndrew, a psychologist at Knox College in Illinois, and one of his students at that time, Sara Koehnke, created a hypothesis on what creepiness is.[159] Creepiness, McAndrew says, comes down to uncertainty.They reported that, 'It is our belief that creepiness is anxiety aroused by the ambiguity of whether there is something to fear or not and/or by the ambiguity of the precise nature of the threat'[160].These same emotions manifest in a response to the uncanny.

It is not only spookiness that elicits a visceral or uncanny response. Humour is subjective and there are many reasons why we may find something funny, as there are many different types of laugh. What John Wright calls the 'visceral laugh'[161] is reliant on slapstick, physical humour and sometimes violence at the expense of the performer. As Wright says, 'visceral humour emerges when life overtakes us. In other words, when the events around us appear to be moving faster than what's going on in our heads.' [162]

In *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman*, the heroine Nancy, has become the 50 foot woman and appears on stage for the first time (made from a shop mannequin and obviously out of scale to all the puppets previously seen). She is on a rampage of revenge against her philandering husband, Harry. As her pursuit of Harry continues, she is attacked by toy digger trucks, flying helicopters and police cars with guns mounted on the roof. Eventually she catches Harry and drapes him via his marionette strings over a giant pylon as he is electrocuted. Audiences laughed and applauded as this rampage happened, seeming to delight in and find funny the violence, slapstick and physical humour being dealt out to both the heroine and the villain. The moment at which Harry is electrocuted on the pylon is an example of the visceral and the uncanny as funny; the puppet (familiar/unfamiliar as living object) is electrocuted on a scaled down pylon (scale and stage prop as uncanny item) and the shock of

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159   https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/history-creepy-dolls-180955916/(Accessed 06/01/20)

160   https://www.knox.edu/news/creepiness-study-by-knox-college-professor-frank-mcandrew (Accessed 13/0821)

161 John Wright. *Why is that so funny? (London. Nick Hern.2006)*,12.

162 Ibid., 13.

seeing this happen to a character previously engaged with is both viscerally funny and uncanny.

Is a visceral response to the supernatural only truly experienced through a 'real' event?What is it that people are experiencing when they are spooked by a picture, story or piece of music?Vernon Lee wrote many supernatural stories, yet she believed that the supernatural could not be shown in art.[163] The very essence of the supernatural was rendered obsolete when people try to record it in art form – she thought that the visceral response or the notion of the uncanny is diminished, because things that '[…]have been confined and defined within the story, strips them of their mysterious immaterial power.'[164] If the visceral response to the supernatural is only truly experienced through a 'real' event, why are horror films and supernatural imagery, books, plays and painting so popular? Erin Hurley has described neurological research that gives some insight into this. In 1996, Italian neuroscientists created experiments around how the brain responds in the same way, when watching someone else undertake a dangerous action as experiencing that same dangerous action for yourself.[165] Hurley concludes,'The brain, then, operates like a small theatre, producing representations of action and emotion that are not necessarily executed by their audience but are nonetheless electrically experienced by them.'[166]

With a script, the writer is explaining the logistics of the performance to the reader (a potential director or designer say) therefore it must be difficult to write the visceral in a script. Rather, the writer is trying to write instructions for facilitating a visceral response to the performance.

Having watched and read many spooky dramas as research into the process behind the instigation of tension and fear, things that are intended to encourage a visceral response include:

- Taking time to build to the scary stuff, build, small reveal, build, big reveal.

- Building to a massive momentary reveal and only giving the reveal for a matter of seconds and then a black out, any longer and the brain 'sees' it properly and ceases to be scared.

163 Hilary Grimes, *The Late Victorian Gothic: Mental Science, The Uncanny and Scenes of Writing*. (Ashgate, Farnham 2011), 112.

164 Ibid.,117.

165 Hurley, *Theatre and feeling.* ,30.

166 Sarah I. Myers, *The Sentient Stage: The Theatrical Uncanny in Contemporary Performance*.(PhD Thesis. Columbia University.2018),31.

- Sound effects – spooky effects and music can help to elicit a visceral response including moving the sound around the space. In Ghost Stories by Jeremy Dyson and Andy Nyman a stage direction commands '*dreadful soundscape, subliminal at first, rising in intensity*'[167] A cacophony of action and sound at the point of no return – the chaos builds from things we have seen and heard already.

- The grotesque can elicit a visceral response; unusual and impossible physical deformity can create a response not only of disturbed confusion but also disgust. Faceless puppets can be very scary. A puppet body that somehow emerges from a human body can be repellent and fascinating.

In dramaturging *The Blue Lady* I have made a point of including elements from the above list: the puppet of the blue lady herself has no face, nor does the puppet of the child. There is a low and constant rumble sound effect throughout. The ghosts are just suggestions until at least halfway through the script. In earlier drafts, the blue lady put in an appearance after only six pages. On exploring the notion of tension and building fear, I changed this. She now doesn't appear until much later and it is followed by a blackout.

Intentionally writing the visceral.

Things to explore when considering how to write instructions for pre-supposing a visceral response to a puppetry performance:

- Is the subject matter spooky, supernatural, explicit or violent? It doesn't have to be to elicit visceral responses but these genres will provide obvious visceral action.

- Is there a sense of delayed catharsis?

- Are there stage directions to produce action that create a physical sensation and or a sensational approach?

167 J. Dyson & A.Nyman, *Ghost Stories.*(London. Nick Hern Books.2019), 15.

- Do stage directions instruct: to only give the reveal for a matter of seconds. Any longer and the brain 'sees' it properly and ceases to be scared. Is there a black out after reveals?

- Is the script using words that conjure physicality?

- Is there what John Wright calls the 'visceral laugh'?[168] Slapstick, physical humour and sometimes violence, at the expense of the performer or puppet?

- Is there reference to sound effects that induce a physical response?[169]

- Is there what Erin Hurley calls Super Stimuli?[170] Effects and design decisions coupled with music, lighting, and the narrative plot to reinforce place or atmosphere? Is the script, one that encourages 'sensory effects of theatre'[171] or the 'lived experience' [172] from an audience?

168 Wright, *Why is that so funny?, 12.*

169 Dyson, J & Nyman, A. *Ghost Stories.,*15.

170 Hurley, *Theatre and feeling*, 23.

171 Fortier, *Theory/Theatre: An Introduction.*, 39.

172 Ibid., 38.

<u>What is the uncanny in puppetry?</u>

Jetsch and subsequently Freud, who in response to Jentsch, would write his own exploration of The Uncanny, were both writing from a European, white, middle class, male, early twentieth century position of notable privilege.[173] Their theories about the emotional or psychological affect a known unknown or unfamiliar familiarity can have on people, resonate through puppetry. Ernst Jentsch first discussed the term uncanny, in his essay '*The psychology of the Uncanny*' written in 1906, ten years before Freud:

> With the word unheimlich, the German language seems to have produced a rather fortunate formation. Without a doubt, this word appears to express that someone to whom something 'uncanny' happens is not quite 'at home' or 'at ease' in the situation concerned, that the thing is or at least seems to be foreign to him. In brief, the word suggests that a lack of orientation is bound up with the impression of the uncanniness of a thing or incident. [174]

When confronted by a puppet that lives, the uncanny response is common for many. For me, sometimes the uncanny response is a desire to feel empathy with the thing I see or experience. Other times, the uncanny response is the recognition of a situation or behaviour; the feeling of, I recognise this but I don't quite recognise it and therefore I can't empathise with it, I am confused by this familiarity. As Jentsch wrote,

> Among all the physical uncertainties that can become a cause for the uncanny feeling to arise, there is one in particular that is able to develop a fairly regular, powerful and very general effect: namely, doubt as to whether an apparently living being really is animate and, conversely doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate.[175]

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173 '*The weaker the critical sense that is present and the more prevailing psychical background is affectively tinged. This is why women, children and dreamers are also particularly subject to the stirrings of the uncanny and the danger of seeing spirits and ghosts.*' Ibid.12

174 Ernst Jentsch, *On the Psychology of the Uncanny.* Translated by Roy Sellars *http://www.art3idea.psu.edu/locus/Jentsch_uncanny.pdf (*Accessed 10/10/17), 1.

175 Ibid., 8.

The experience of the uncanny can be pleasurable but is not always so, many people are disturbed by puppets. As John Bell points out, both Jentsch and Freud's approaches problematise the uncanny.

> […] by associating the uncanny with doubt, uncertainty, abnormality, disturbance and other undesirable effects, Jentsch also problematises the uncanny, something Freud would press even further.[176]

Why should it be that a feeling of the uncanny is seen as negative? Some people, of course, do respond with genuine fear to puppets but the inherent contradiction of the uncanny is to be attracted and repulsed in equal measure. Many people are drawn to puppets because they are delighted by the uncanny aspect.
Otakar Zich was a precursor to the Prague school linguistic circle, he wrote of two possibilities for human response to puppets: one is accepting them as themselves and nothing else and therefore finding them funny, while the other is that

> [...] puppets can be taken for live beings in that we put emphasis on their apparent manifestations of life (their movements and speech) and take these shows with sincerity. In such a perceptive mode, the awareness of the factual un-liveness of puppets moves to the background and it is apparent merely as a sensation of something inexplicable, a certain mystery that raises a sense of amazement. In this case puppets have an uncanny effect on us.[177]

Petr Bogatyrev disagreed with Zich's descriptions stating that an audience might find puppets funny or uncanny if they always perceive them in relation to human theatre and that to take puppetry at face value as an art form with its own system of signs not related to human theatre allows it to be itself and therefore not funny or unsettling by comparison. Very small children perhaps are wont to respond in this way but I have to agree with Zich, that some of the things people most enjoy about puppetry is that it creates a sense of comedy and/or the uncanny. Some people find any type of puppet manipulated into life to be uncanny while others need the puppet to be disturbingly human looking in features, movement, colour, texture, shape and size

176 Posner, Orenstein, Bell, (ed.), 46.

177 Otakar Zich, *Puppet Theatre.(*Theatralia.2015), 93.

before they will admit to a sense of the uncanny. All types of experience can be on a spectrum of the uncanny.

A puppet can only be itself, it is not the actor signifying the character, it is the character. This is the paradox of the uncanny at play. When I watched *War Horse* onstage,[178]I was delighted at the realness of the movement of Joey the horse. I knew it to be a puppet and could see the manipulators all the time, yet the movement of the puppet mimicked a real horse to such an extent that I became caught up in the sheer emotion of the piece, believing that Joey was at war. A visceral and emotional response is tied to a sense of the uncanny; for although I knew Joey was a puppet, it seemed so real in its movements and behaviour that I was entirely emotionally engaged yet simultaneously disconcerted.

Angela Curran notes that in 1765 in his introduction to the works of Shakespeare, Samuel Johnson coined the term '[...] the paradox of fiction…Johnson asked the question: how is it possible to respond with genuine emotion to that which we must know is not real?'[179] Curran mentions the interest of philosophers in empathy and sympathy with characters. Empathy (feeling with), Sympathy (feeling for) and Simulation (imagining/simulating their responses)*.* [180] How can we have empathy with or simulation for a puppet we know has no real feelings? Can we only ever feel sympathy alone for a puppet character?

When discussing the uncanny, Hilary Grimes differentiates between cause and effect

> Whereas the supernatural relates to the external, to disturbances in the exterior world, the uncanny is psychological, representing disturbances in the internal body or mind: in other words, the supernatural is a cause and the uncanny is an effect.[181]

Surprise is a key element in experiencing the uncanny, what Vera Tobin calls the frame shift. [182] This is the surprise at the realisation that an interpretation based on 'partial or ambiguous information'[183] is, in fact wrong, or something else altogether is going on. This moment of surprise is an experience of the uncanny. These stage

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178 2009,National Theatre,London.

179 Angela Curran, *Routledge philosophy guidebook to Aristotle and The Poetics (Abingdon. Routledge.2016),*297

180 Ibid.,305

181 Grimes, The Late Victorian Gothic , 112

182 Vera Tobin. *Elements of Surprise.* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, University of Harvard press.2018), 89.

183 Idem.

directions from *The Blue Lady*, form a frame shift that would hopefully be a surprise for the reader or spectator, 'On the top of the life size chest of drawers there are dominoes, books and ornaments. These are now a church and a cemetery of gravestones where before they had merely been discarded toys.'*[184]*

In Sarah Meyers' thesis; "The Sentient Stage: The Theatrical Uncanny in Contemporary Performance" she references psychologists Solms and Panksepp's term 'prediction error'[185] a term that can describe what is happening when we experience the uncanny. A mental hiccup or blip happens, when what we mentally predict or assume is disrupted by a different outcome or result; the unknown and sudden noise that makes our heart race and our hair stand on end. Meyers argues that the mind and body are not separate and that Freud's presentation of the uncanny response as situated 'at the unstable border between the conscious and the unconscious' [186] mind, is a dated concept. The mind is the body and vice versa, the visceral effect of the uncanny happens both physically and mentally; 'The uncanny, like pain or grief or any strongly physicalised emotion, thrusts our bodies back into our awareness.' [187] Meyers also argues that theatre is about performance and not literature, 'a play that may be exceedingly uncanny when read can be rendered mundane in performance and vice versa.'[188] This is true in that the response of a reader relies on that person's imagination rather than the visual representation of another person's imagination. How then, does the writer of theatrical performance try to place the uncanny on the page, so that it may be translated to the stage? She writes,

> Theatre allows us to encounter uncanny phenomena in a somewhat controlled environment. Perhaps the key distinction between the uncanny of real-life and the uncanny of the stage is that the latter is created by design.[189]

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184 LeQuesne, *The Blue Lady*,14.

185 Myers, "The Sentient Stage" ,5.

186 Ibid ., 22.

187 Ibid ., 21.

188 Ibid ., 14.

189 Ibid., 7.

Vera Tobin also mentions the pleasures of the text as being '[...] the material and emotional conditions of book reading, theatre going...make us especially vulnerable to "cursed thinking".' [190] 'Cursed thinking' is Tobin's term for the curse or indeed gift of knowledge. Knowing more than you think a character does. Knowing that it is just a puppet. Both of these examples of cursed thinking can lead to moments of both the uncanny and surprise when one is apparently proven wrong.

A stage direction or a set, prop, puppet, or object design can elicit an imaginative feeling of the uncanny and be the blueprint or suggestion for bringing that moment to life on stage. In a real life setting the interaction with the familiar unfamiliar is the experience that is uncanny, a prediction error that the embodied mind momentarily tries to comprehend. In a dramatic text the narrative, characterisation, stage directions *and* the design potentialities suggest a performance that may be experienced as uncanny.

In *The Blue Lady,* I chose to describe the ghosts as close to being human as possible without being played by a human actor, for the opportunity for a prediction error from a reader or spectator.

> Human Mary is adjusting the bed clothes of the life size bed, she pulls back the sheets to reveal a small child.
>
> Pulling back the cover completely, it is revealed that the child is dead. He has no face.
>
> The door opens, and slams shut. The lights go out.
>
> The child has gone.[191]

There are a number of categories into which the uncanny may fall on stage. Both Bennett & Royle and Sarah Meyers point out some of the key areas. Meyers is focussing specifically on theatrical uncanniness and lists the categories as:

- The uncanny is immersive, that which is dead is alive and vice versa: 'In the theatrical uncanny, the line between animate and inanimate becomes intentionally blurred.'[192]

190 Tobin, *Elements of Surprise*, 89.

191 LeQuesne,*The Blue Lady.* 2019, 15.

192 Myers, "The Sentient Stage",29.

- Mixed media performance and non linear temporality.

- Playing with perspective; '[...] by disturbing our spatial perceptions, the production reproduces a state in which our very well being is at stake.' [193]

Meyers specifies that puppets '[...] bypass our conscious minds and speak directly to the inner child in us.' [194]

Bennet and Royle referring to literature, talk of automatism,'[...] a term that can be used when what is human is perceived as merely mechanical' [195] A character in a trance or hallucinating can come under this particular reference. In *The Blue Lady*, Cassandra is both puppet and automatised; in a trance-like state when under the influence of laudanum.

Confusion over scale, perspective and spatial reality could be a reminder of our childhood exploration of potential danger in the world,'[...] the cold fear of the uncanny may well have evolved as a warning that ...a mistake is imminent.' [196] Anthropomorphism,'[...]children's toys loom large in certain books and films about the supernatural.' [197]

Even if the narrative is not explicitly frightening, the use of altered perspective, differing scale, LFX, SFX, and empty space amongst other imagery that we associate with fear and frightening events can prompt us to '[...]recreate the phenomenology of fear, by presenting heightened focus and attention and altered states of temporality.' [198] As Jentsch said,

> In semi-darkness it is often especially difficult to distinguish a life-size wax or similar figure from a human person.For many sensitive souls, such a figure also has the ability to retain its unpleasantness after the individual has taken a decision as to whether it is animate or not. [199]

Both Meyers and Bennet & Royle list containment and claustrophobia[200] and in discussing containment Meyers includes caves, underground passages, and the

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193 Ibid.

194 Idem.

195 A. Bennet, & N. Royle, *An Introduction to literary criticism and theory*.(Abingdon: Routledge.2016) 38.

196 Ibid., 72.

197 Ibid., 37.

198 Ibid., 114.

199 Jentsch, *On the Psychology of the Uncanny.,* 9.

200 Ibid., 38.

haunted house. She states how,'[…] containment creates focus and even alters the perception of time'.[201] The puppet theatre, most often smaller scale than human theatre, can be a spatial container for the focus of a world in miniature, in which this focus and scale contribute to puppet time, in itself an uncanny experience.

Bennet and Royle list silence, death, the fear of being buried alive and ghosts. In *The Blue Lady*, Mary insists on a bell on Cassandra's coffin (a popular concern of the Victorian era was the fear of being buried alive) and we later discover Cassandra was indeed still alive when the lid of her coffin was nailed shut.

Nicholas Royle points to the importance of sound and sound effects.[202] Both in experiencing real events and when reading a description. Particularly sounds that remind us of something else, something unpleasant or disturbing. In *The Blue Lady* I have written stage directions that include,

> SFX: the sound of almost imperceptible sobbing and small children running. Low drone-like hum can be almost heard, this continues throughout and rises in pitch and speed at moments of fear.[203]

The uncanny may be experienced through deja vu, through the liminality of puppetry, waxworks and automatons (living yet not alive), through the uncertainty and eeriness of the supernatural, the unstable borders of our known world, unknown containment, through doubles and mirror images (twins, the doppelgänger) and through the surprise of a realisation or reveal (intellectual understanding, spooky manifestation or jump scare). Royle highlights that,

> [...]the uncanny seems to be about a strange repetitiveness. It has to do with the return of something repressed, something no longer familiar, the return of the dead, the "constant recurrence of the same thing" (U p.356)[204]a "compulsion to repeat" (U p.360).[205]

Theatre is at once unreal and hyperreal, about presence and absence in different, simultaneous senses. Both the phenomenon of ghosts and the belief in them can be

201 Ibid., 114.

202 Ibid., 136.

203 LeQuesne, "The Blue Lady",4.

204 U refers to Sigmund Freud's *The Uncanny* trans by James Stackey. *Pelican Freud Library* (Harmondsworth; Penguin,1985) 339-76.

205 Nicholas Royle,. *The Uncanny* (Manchester, Manchester University Press.2003.) 84.

described in the same terms, and the phenomenological response to ghosts, fear and supernatural theatre performance as a live (and dead) experience is uncanny.

Intentionally writing the uncanny:

Things to explore when considering how to write instructions for pre-supposing an uncanny response to a puppetry performance:

- Is it set in a recognisable, familiar or ordinary place? The effect of the uncanny relies on the familiar becoming unfamiliar in some way.

- Does the opening set up a sense of eeriness, through description, design specifics, reference to music and or sound effects?

- Does it reference recognisable tropes of the Gothic, horror, suspense or surreality?

- The poetics of surprise can be applied to dramaturging the uncanny; is there potential for what Vera Tobin calls a cursed thinking switch? Does the narrative include a frame shift?

- Is there supernatural suspense? Stories about ghosts, mysteries and monsters are familiar yet unfamiliar and strangely recognisable in their fear inducing otherness. The uncanny in literature tends to be confined to stories about the supernatural, ghosts, monsters, mystery strangers, and dolls that come alive. It is this type of subject matter that most often creates the sense of the uncanny.

- Is there an element of magic, trickery, machinery, digital effect or hocus pocus, that in production might be received by an audience as real? A sense that there are no longer people puppeteering.

- Is there reference to dimmed lighting effects?

- Is there reference in the narrative to things seen but not quite understood. Things seen as other than they are out of the corner of an eye.

- Is the scale, perspective[206] and/or spatial reality odd or unusual?

- Is there a sense of claustrophobia or containment? [207]

- Does it play with temporal reality and linearity[208] over and above the concept of puppet time?

206 Myers, "The Sentient Stage"

207 Both Myers and Bennet & Royle list these elements

208 Myers, "The Sentient Stage".

Chapter 5

The Mosaic Scale.

Following my research through the practice of writing *The Blue Lady* and the considerations of puppetry, scriptwriting, the uncanny and the visceral, I have formulated a five-step process for literary dramaturgy of puppet theatre scripts. The mosaic scale as a process as well as an exercise is a new approach and came as a result of the culmination of research and development of other dramaturgical exercises.

The process does not need to be read or followed in a linear way, it can be accessed at any stage, depending where you are in the process of development. The entire system is a mosaic building process, designed to help create the bigger picture of a performative puppetry script and to ask the questions that lead to the decisions that make the puppet show the best it can be.

What could the step-by-step process be, to dramaturg a puppet theatre script as part of the writing and editing process? What does a creative team need from a performative puppet theatre script? As Micheal Chemers writes:

> A play is a machine that produces meaning. As the blueprint for that machine, the script of the play has to actually work – in other words, it has to be performable.[209]

To recap, my definition of dramaturgy is: the exploration, development and facilitation of the process of performance making, whether as part of a literary or production process. As Chemers describes it, dramaturgy is, '[…] the aesthetic architecture of a piece of dramatic literature (it's structure, themes, goals, and conventions.)[210] What then, are the considerations and what could the process be, for an interrogation of that aesthetic architecture in progress?

209 Chemers, *Ghostlight,* 93
210 Ibid., 3.

Things to bear in mind at the beginning and throughout the writing process:

- Who is the target audience?

- Puppet type – what does it need to do? Literally what does it have to do and characteristically what does it need to be?

- How many puppets and therefore how many puppeteers?

- Play-board and Performance space.

- Co-presence decision - should the puppeteer be both manipulating puppets and playing a human character at the same time?

- Visible or invisible puppeteers - how might the reception of the show be or the phenomenological experience change if puppeteers are visible on stage or not?

The steps of The Mosaic Scale system are:

1) Initial Analysis: Analysis of decisions on style, format, and story.

2) Repeat and Revisit: Considerations that are revisited throughout the process, including design, puppet type, scale, and size.

3) The Visceral: Considerations that encourage a visceral response to the puppets and puppetry.

4) The Uncanny: Considerations to encourage an uncanny response, over and above the sheer uncanniness of puppets.
5) Phenomenological Overview: Considerations of the experience of and the response to the puppetry for both puppeteer and audience.

Each step of the mosaic scale allows the writer to ask questions of their process, ideas and decisions whilst writing and or editing their script. Not every question will be relevant for every script and depends on the genre, puppet type, structure and format, but this will be self explanatory as the writer, dramaturg or puppeteer progresses through the steps, the steps do not need to be followed numerically.

Within the overall system is an exercise also called the mosaic scale—it is this exercise that gave the system it's umbrella term. To re-cap: the exercise, which can be utilised during all of the five steps, may be used to look at the number of times a character, theme, or motif appears in a scene or show. It allows for an exploration of balance, rhythm, and style, and it indicates if the thing being examined is missing or occurring too soon or too often.The exercise can be used to explore the use of scale, size, framing, viscerality, the uncanny, effects, design choices, narrative events, and puppet type. It can be used during the devising process, once a draft script is written, or in rehearsal.

More broadly, the mosaic scale exercise can be used to establish themes and the regularity of specific puppet or character appearances. Questions that might come up are: Are there specific conflicts that keep appearing? Is the puppet that was supposed to be the sidekick always on stage? If so, how does this change the dynamic of the show?

How to use the Mosaic Scale exercise:

Step   1: Decide on a scene. Decide which scene or selection of pages to work on. Any more than 10 pages can create too much data and it can become too complicated to absorb the findings.

Step   2: Create a key. Choose icons (or mosaic tiles) that represent the particular things you are testing for in that scene. It doesn't matter what the images are , it only needs to make sense to you.

Step   3: Check each page for occurrences. Mark the icon onto the page where it occurs – if it appears multiple times be sure to record that.

Step   4: Record occurrences. On a separate blank page record the page number and what icons appeared on it. This gives an easy to access overview of what is occurring or recurring. It can be helpful to record the data in a table with the key included on the same page, for clarity and ease of reference. Figure 3 and 4 show data tables for mosaic scale analysis I did on themes

and moments of viscerality and uncanniness in *The Blue Lady.*

Figures 3 and 4 show mosaic scale exercise data testing for viscerality and the uncanny from The Blue Lady.

Mosaic Scale.

The Uncanny for The Blue Lady   10/01/20

Key:

- Sense of eeriness? LFX/SFX -
- Gothic, horror, suspense or surreality -
- Cursed thinking switch -
- Frame shift -
- Deus ex machina -
- Things seen out of the corner of an eye -
- Odd scale, perspective or spatial reality -
- Claustrophobia -
- Odd temporal reality -
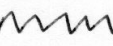
Page 1	Page 2	Page 3	Page 4	Page 5	Page 6	Page 7	Page 8

Figure 3 Searching for The Uncanny using the Mosaic Scale exercise.

Mosaic Scale.

Viscerality for The Blue Lady.   **10/01/20.**

Key:

- Spookiness, supernatural, explicit or violent scenes -

- Delayed catharsis -

- Black out after reveals -

- Words that conjure physicality -

- Visceral laugh: slapstick, physical humour or violence - HaHa

- SFX that induce a physical response - ᴧᴧᴧ

- Super Stimuli - ALL

Page 1	Page 2	Page 3	Page 4	Page 5	Page 6	Page 7	Page 8
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Figure 4: Searching for the Visceral using the Mosaic Scale exercise.

The Mosaic scale – 5 steps for writing for puppet theatre.

The mosaic scale consists of five steps, within each step are various questions, considerations and exercises for dramaturging a puppet theatre script in progress.

1) **Initial Analysis** - This step includes editing, asking oneself questions about and making decisions about the format and structure that the script will take. What are the key scenes of the story? Knowing the key scenes can lead to a deeper understanding of the narrative. The ability to tell the story in seven lines allows the writer to see if there are any obvious narrative issues and also if the story itself has a pace, rhythm and structure that works. What are the rules of the world?The process of writing character breakdowns. Editing – Is this a piece of visual storytelling? Does the dialogue need to be pared back? This stage is one that is repeated again and again for editing and development of the narrative and the script. Regularly editing and interrogating all the decisions made. Who is the intended model reader? Following the mosaic scale analysis to discover recurring themes and images, and the overall structure in terms of character appearances and behaviour. What is the subject and theme? Have new themes emerged through the writing?

Many of the exercises in step one are existing formalist script analysis exercises as discussed in chapters one and two.

2) **Repeat and Revisit** – These questions and considerations will be revisited throughout the writing process. What puppet type are you writing for? This question may be one that is revisited as the narrative and characters develop, it may become evident that the first choice for puppet is not suitable or there may be the need for a different type of puppet to represent other characters or different versions of the same character. What are the unique properties of the puppet type that has been chosen, is the puppet doing what it is needed to do? Do the aesthetics and design of the puppet matter to the characterisation or narrative? Is there a design detail that is specifically needed to impart something about the character or story that needs to be written into the script? How will puppet time affect the pace and rhythm of the script in performance? Does the narrative and script meander thoughtfully or gallop at high speed and is that correct for the story, the characters and the attention of the reader? Is the puppetry trope of the visual as action present enough or is there far

too much dialogue? Is the scale working, in terms of the imagined play-board and performance space but also differing scale between puppet types. Does perspective play a part in the perception of scale?

3) **The Visceral** – Is there some sort of mystery that would lead ultimately to a sense of catharsis? Does the script use language or stage directions that conjure physicality? Are there stage directions that describe action that might be taboo or excessive, particularly if written for or performed by human actors? Is the humour physical or even violent at the expense of the puppets? Are there stage direction descriptions of scenes that would be considered 'Super-stimuli'; effects and design decisions coupled with music, lighting, and the narrative plot all within one scene, almost an overload of theatrical information?

4) **The Uncanny** (Not every script will need to consider the uncanny) – Is there a familiar unfamiliarity within the story, characters, design, puppet type or setting? What visual specifications have been written, to help create the right atmosphere for an uncanny response? Is there a sense of Deus ex machina, or that the puppets could be in charge of themselves? Is there the opportunity for the immersive and what Mark Fortier terms the 'lived experience'[211] of performance? Is there reference to dimmed lighting? Does the script suggest a sense of containment, claustrophobia or altered perspective and scale? Does the narrative and/or the script play with linear temporality?

5) **Phenomenological overview** – Where is the narrative focus? Whose story is being told and why? Is the sheer materiality of puppetry coming to the fore? If not, might it just as well be a script for human actors? Does the script illustrate a world? What might the spectator/reader response be; this is dealing with semiotic considerations and may be difficult to define absolutely, as each spectator will bring their own perception and analysis to the script or performance.

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211 Fortier, *Theory/Theatre*, 38.

1) Initial Analysis:

Narrative:

- Tell the narrative in seven sentences.

- Key scenes – what are the key scenes that make the show?

- Do the themes or tropes of act three mirror or repeat act one?

Rules of the world:

- Who are the main characters and what can and can not happen in the place the narrative is set?

- Do the puppets engage directly with the audience? If so, why?

- Point of view – whose point of view are we seeing in any given scene? If this jumps around does it become confusing?

- How can these rules be broken?

Character:

- How does the character appear on the page?

- What does the script tell you about the character/s and therefore how can that be portrayed through design/visual clues and puppet type?

- Think about the 'meaning' of existence tacit in objects -what are they for?[212] How does this make their emotional response logical?

Structure:

- Is the plot episodic? (This includes no necessity for any particular order of the scenes.)

- Is it causal or linear? (Exposition – inciting incident – rising action -crisis/climax – falling action – resolution.)

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[212] *A human may feel sadness/pain/guilt when they shoot someone but how does the gun feel? Good. because it is made for that very job.'*
Rachman Rachev, Professor of puppetry arts.(Bulgarian Academy of Arts. October 2014)

- Does it follow a different structure?

- How does the structure affect the puppetry logistics? Do you need to be re-considering play-board, puppet type or number of puppeteers because of the structure?

Format:

- Does the script have a particular format? Does the layout specify the puppetry clearly?

- What is the best way to show narrative and character that instructs the director and puppeteer? This can be attempted through clearly definable and easily found action and stage directions.

Potential interpretation:

How might the script be interpreted by a reader?

- Is there an element of your narrative or theme that is fundamental to the script?

- Have you written the fundamental elements without becoming didactic or over prescriptive?

- Is it a piece of human theatre *with* puppets, human *and* puppets or a puppet only piece?

Human theatre *with* puppets – a human piece that utilises some puppetry as part of the narrative or performance.

Human *and* puppet theatre – a piece that utilises human actors as characters alongside puppet characters to impart the narrative.

Puppet theatre – The narrative is imparted solely by puppet characters.

Visual Dramaturgy applied to a written text:

- Human and object interplay: what decisions have been made about co-presence[213] and in/visible puppeteers[214]?

- Spatial relationships: On imagining a performance, does the staging balance? Are the puppets the right size and scale in comparison to any human performers?

Mosaic Scale narrative and character analysis:

Use mosaic scale analysis to record themes and recurrence. How many times does a chosen icon appear in the script, and ask if this is this too often, or too soon. Considerations:

- Images that represent theme.

- What repeats? What are the major motifs of the script?

- How often do particular characters appear as the central character in a scene?

Editing::

- Interrogate all your decisions.

- How to show the scene without words or dialogue?

- Does it flow?

- What is missing?

- What makes you cringe or bores you?

- What repeats too much or too often?

Theme and subject:

What is the theme, or idea of the piece? Is it easily definable?

213 Paul Piris, in Posner et al., *Routledge companion to puppetry and material performance*. (Abingdon: Routledge 2014),30.

214 Renee Baker. *The visible and invisible puppeteer workshop.* Little Angel Theatre. London. February 2016.

Subject matter is the narrative, the context of the story, what or who's story is being told.

Theme asks questions or a specific question repeatedly.

The subject matter of *The Blue Lady* is a ghost story and inheritance.

The theme is female empowerment.

Ideograph:

Finding 'an image or ideograph that could serve as the poster for the play.'[215] This can help to condense or concentrate the essence, and the theme of the production. It can also be used to develop character and therefore design within puppetry, at both a literary stage for the lone writer as well as in production dramaturgy.

2) Repeat and Revisit.

Unique properties – The unique properties of different types of puppet presuppose and even sometimes dictate particular dramaturgies.[216]

- What does the puppet do well?

Aesthetics:

- What type of puppet/s have you chosen?

- What material is it made from?

- What does this choice of puppet suggest?

- What does the design tell you about the character or the context that it is performing in?

- How might the atmosphere or concept change if the type of puppet is changed?

- Feature signs – Does an object or item of clothing represent a character? Can an item of clothing associated with a particular profession be used as the puppet?

215 Anne Fliotsos, *Interpreting the play script: contemplation and analysis.* (NYC. Palgrave.2011), 26.

216 In this context, dramaturgies means theatrical and performance style.

- Synecdoche: is the puppet a part that stands in for the whole or the real thing?

The visual is action:

The physical behaviour of the puppets results in visual action on stage and this is predominantly what tells the story.

Puppet Craft:

- Is the puppet action clearly defined yet not prescriptive choreography?

- Have you written your puppet characters as active, physical and existing through action? How can you best show action and narrative visually?

- Does this puppet type or design need a very specific play-board?

- How many puppeteers does it require to make the puppet breathe and come to life?

Puppet time:

Watching puppetry requires the spectator to slow down. People often respond to puppet shows as being slow but once the spectator has joined the concept of puppet time, it flows at exactly the right speed.

- Pace. At what pace will the performance go and is this evident on the page?

- Will the action gallop along or does it meander thoughtfully?

Mosaic scale of frame, visual scale of puppets and type of scene:

- How might the audience perceive the scale? Does it change?

- Considering the frame – how might the picture be framed and does this change the scale?Is it in relation to the play-board and the set? Is it in relation to the puppeteer? Is it in relation to the other puppets?

- Cinematic scale – Does the piece play with scale in a cinematic way, from wide vista with small characters to large close ups?

Comic Theory Considerations:

This can help the writer avoid a static or stagnating script by creating dynamic staging potential. Are there subject to subject, scene to scene and image specific or affect image descriptions?

Subject to subject descriptions: These are panels or passages of stage direction, that within the context of the narrative allow the reader to make a leap in the narrative. It can be used to impart narrative information without having to see it.

Scene to scene descriptions: This takes the reader from one place and time to another. This can be used to travel through space and time.

Image specific: Visual images and action imparting the narrative and showing character.

Affect image: Often, but not always, a close up. It shows the moment of instigation, or the action that leads to the resulting narrative.

Duo specific: To be used when a point needs to be reiterated or for comedic or horror purposes. Again, duo specific should be used with caution, as it affords equal weight to language and image and can risk repetition or show *and* tell.

3) Mosaic scale of Viscerality.

- Is there a sense of delayed catharsis?

- Are there stage directions to produce action that provokes a physical sensation and/or a sensational approach?

- Is the script using words that conjure physicality and or materiality?

- Do stage directions instruct: to only give the reveal for a matter of seconds. Any longer and the brain 'sees' it properly and ceases to be scared. Is there a black out after reveals?

- Is there visceral humour? Slapstick, physical humour and sometimes violence, at the expense of the performer or puppet?

- Is there reference to sound effects that induce a physical response?[217]

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217 Dyson & Nyman, *Ghost Stories.*, 15.

● Is there Super Stimuli?

4) The Uncanny

Intellectual and design considerations:

● The poetics of surprise can be applied to dramaturging the uncanny; is there potential for a cursed thinking switch? Does the narrative include a frame shift?

● Does it reference recognisable tropes of the Gothic, supernatural/horror, suspense or surreality?

● Is it set in a recognisable, familiar or ordinary place?

● Deus-ex-machina. Is there an element of reality that in production might be received by an audience as magic, trickery, machinery, digital or hocus pocus? A sense that there are no longer people puppeteering.

● Is the scale, perspective and /or spatial reality odd or unusual?

● Is there a sense of claustrophobia or containment?

● Does it play with temporal reality and linearity?

Sensory effects of theatre:

● Does the opening set up a sense of eeriness, through description, design specifics, reference to music and or sound effects?

● Is the script, one that encourages sensory effects of theatre or the 'lived experience' [218] from an audience?

● Is there reference in the narrative to things seen but not quite understood. Things seen as other than they are out of the corner of an eye.

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218 Fortier, *Theory/Theatre*, 38.

Lighting:

- Is there reference to dimmed lighting effects?

5) <u>Phenomenological overview.</u>

After all of these stages, a final check of some of the elements of the phenomenological approach can help to concentrate the work. What are you as the writer, focussing your attention on and why?

- Is the materiality within the text coming to the fore?

- Does the text illustrate a world?

- How might a spectator respond to or receive the puppet type?

- What is the perceived experience of the puppets as characters, as they go about their narrative? (Empathy, sympathy, simulation.) Why might this be? Is it the writing? Could it be the puppet type coupled with the writing?

- Whose point of view does a reader perceive the text from? How does it change if the protagonist or the point of view is changed?

- How might the specified play-board affect the spectator's experience?

- Does the text reference itself, in this case puppetry? Is it self knowing?

<u>Findings from Mosaic scale critiques.</u>

I have used the mosaic scale process to dramaturgically critique three published puppet theatre scripts: *War Horse* by Nick Stafford, *10 Days on Earth* by Ronnie Burkett, and *Odd if you dare* by Neenagh Watson and Rachel Field. There is an abridged report for each of these scripts in Appendix 1.
Throughout my critique of these scripts and as a result of what I have learned about the process, I repeatedly updated and developed my five-step process. Applying what I had learnt from putting these three other existing scripts through a mosaic scale process, I dramaturged *The Blue Lady* and *MONSTER*.

<u>Dramaturging The Blue Lady.</u>

Seven-line telling of the narrative:

1) In 1890,housemaid Mary recounts the events leading up to heiress Cassandra's death, as solicitor Musgrove tries to prove whether Cassandra's will is legal or not.

2) Mary tells of Cassandra's grief and fear of poison pen letters, leading to laudanum induced premonitions of the future her uncle, Sir Henry wants for her.

3) A day before her 21st birthday, a fake spiritualist séance becomes very real and Cassandra is warned by the blue lady not to marry her cousin Robert and that she must make a will.

4) Although she is not yet 21 and therefore it will not be legal, Cassandra convinces two people to witness her will.

5)The Blue Lady appears to Cassandra and in her terror she takes a dose too much of laudanum and slips into a coma.

6) Sir Henry forces Mary to help him place Cassandra in a sealed coffin, Cassandra wakes inside the coffin but Mary is alone and can not open the lid to save her, she dies.

7)The doctor concludes that Cassandra has only been dead for two hours, thus she died at age 21, Musgrove informs Mary that this means the will is legal and she inherits everything.

The structure of *The Blue Lady* is a traditional human play layout but with puppetry action and stage directions described in a demarcated box, this marks it out as separate from human action or any dialogue.
The stage directions are based in action and also indicate the aesthetics of each puppet and the entrances. The script has dialogue but also scenes of action with no speech.
The structure is essentially casual and episodic. The structure is such that the most puppeteers needed on stage at any time would be four and therefore, four

puppeteers and two actors would be the perfect number of performers but it could be produced with two puppeteers and two human actors/puppeteers.

The subject matter is a battle for an inheritance within a haunted house. While the theme is misogyny and female empowerment.

There are examples of most of the scene descriptions and scene specifics (subject to subject descriptions, scene-to-scene descriptions, image specific, affect image and duo specific) throughout the script, it is well balanced.

The visual is action in this script. The puppet action is clearly defined in separate boxes from the human action.

The puppet characters are written as active, physical and existing through action. The action and narrative are shown visually through stage directions that tell the narrative of the characters but they also have some dialogue.

I chose table top puppets for the main characters' narrative because I wanted the effect of smooth almost realistically human movement as if we are watching Mary's memories, and this is what these puppets do well. This type of puppet can require up to three puppeteers but one or two is usually sufficient.

I chose life-size empty clothes for the ghosts because I want to achieve a sense of the uncanny and a viscerally spooky response and I feel that this would achieve this.

These puppets would be manipulated by pulleys and strings that do not require the stage presence of a puppeteer.

The letters are personified through figures of the sender made from letters, to signify the written element not being a memory but rather a projection of someone in the mind of the receiver.

For the laudanum induced visions of the past and possible future, I chose doll's house figurines, small rod marionettes and toys to play with the scale in comparison to the table top Cassandra, and to suggest that these are her memories, visions and dreams and are unreal reality.

The scale of puppets changes on numerous occasions, the vast majority of the puppet action is played by table top puppets but dolls house puppets play out three scenes, puppets made from letters and books appear three times as do life size puppets. Marionettes and toys play one scene.

Each change in puppet type allows for a different frame to position the scale correctly. For example; the doll's house itself frames the figurines, the table top

puppets are framed by the scale of the items around them, the room and the life size furniture frame the blue lady and the child puppet. The boat, Mama and Charlotte puppets made from books, pages and letters would need to be framed by a spotlight and in scale with a suggested vast ocean of the blue chenille table cloth. This piece plays with scale in a cinematic way from general scale (table top scenes) to wide vista (the ship at sea).Black out is another way to frame an image. There are three blackouts through the script.

I have written this as a piece of puppet theatre with humans. That is to say, it differs from human theatre with puppets in that the puppet element takes precedence, and the humans are there to support the puppet narrative.

There is delayed catharsis, in the mystery of the window tapping, the ghostly visitations and what became of Cassandra. The mystery to solve centres around Cassandra's fate and who is/was the blue lady.

There is reference to sound effects that conjure a physical response;

> SFX: the sound of almost imperceptible sobbing and small children running.
>
> Low drone-like hum can be almost heard.*[219]*

There are stage directions designed to provoke a physical sensation or a sensational approach:

> After a while she rises, walks to the edge of the wardrobe and wrapping one of her strings around her neck she jumps, hanging her-self.[220]

and

> She has a grotesque physicality and moves like a spider. She scampers up the wall and across the ceiling above the bed.[221]

There is a blackout after the very first scare and then at the point where the blue lady appears there are two in close succession. I have included the second blackout, to

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219 LeQuesne, "The Blue Lady", 4.

220 Ibid., 15.

221 Ibid., 25.

afford puppeteers and technicians a moment to reset as well as for effect, but this would be up to a director to consider.

There is no intentional visceral humour, but there is violence, at the expense of the puppet in suicide, drowning and suffocation.

The uncanny is specified through visual elements and examples which are key to a disturbing or unsettlingly familiar element of the narrative include:

> Human Mary is adjusting the bed clothes of the life size bed, she pulls back the sheets to reveal a small child. Pulling back the cover completely, it is revealed that the child is dead. He has no face.[222]

and

> Gradually the ghostly, skeleton outline of the blue lady appears in the room. She is a human sized rod puppet represented by just the blue dress, not full like a healthy living woman but rather somehow deflated.[223]

The table top puppets are each described as an individual person and their physical and visual design is key to imparting character but I also chose this size and type of puppet because I find that between 24" and 34" tall, puppets are slightly disturbing in their realness.

I would hope that the operation of the blue lady and the child will provoke a sense of there being no people puppeteering.

This is set in a recognisable Victorian upper middle class drawing room that people may know from real life experience but certainly from film and TV. The opening creates a specific sense of place through description and design specifics.

There are clear references to recognisable supernatural, suspense and Victorian Gothic tropes in the narrative but specific puppetry examples of this include; the floating woman as a ghost, the puppet representation of laudanum induced visions, puppets as the character who sent the letter or the telegram. I have written the appearance of the blue lady as life size and manipulated by unseen wires, in the hope that this may provoke a cursed thinking or frame switch, due to this puppet inhabiting the same scale as the room that the audience are in, I hope she could

222 Ibid., 15.
223 Ibid., 25.

actually spook an audience, rather than being much smaller and therefore easier to employ a sense of alienation towards. There is plenty of suspense and I hope the cacophony of fear surrounding the visitation by the blue lady and the séance scenes encourage a lived experience that also links with super-stimuli in theories of viscerality. There is a reference to dimmed lighting in the opening description: 'The set throughout is lit as if by candle light and gas lamps.' [224]

I have focussed my attention on the material theatricality that might be possible within this puppet ghost story.

The text illustrates a Victorian world of sexism and class issues. We see the bulk of the narrative from the point of view of Cassandra with Mary as the main protagonist at the beginning and at the end.

The play-board is a large table and other furniture surfaces within a set or large drawing room space. This may affect a spectator's experience if their sight lines are affected by a lack of raked seating, but this is a concern for the director rather than the writer.

Following this process and as a result of my findings I edited the script once more, to try to decrease the dialogue again, but also to put in a line here and there to make the narrative flow more succinctly, for example as a result of the mosaic scale analysis it became clear that there was a lack of reference to Cassandra's will and I was concerned that this vital element of the narrative wasn't clear enough. It also became clear that Cousin Robert is a bit of an enigma, where is he? We don't need to meet him, he represents a force for confusion in Cassandra's life, even from afar. He is present to underscore the historical and contemporary issue of men as free humans in the world and women as 'other', permitted or controlled by sexism. As an archetype he is shadow to Cassandra's hero.[225]

Dramaturging MONSTER.

Dramaturging the experiment in research that was MONSTER, was a different experience to dramaturging The Blue Lady because MONSTER had already been produced as a performance and is an existing finished script. My findings from dramaturging the script, led me to conclude again that the performance that existed

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224 Ibid., 4.

225 Christopher Vogler. *The Writer's journey. Mythic structure for writers.* (Studio City. Micheal Wise productions. 2007),65.

as a result of someone else directing my script was disappointing to me. As it was not possible to stage *The Blue Lady*, the short project of *MONSTER* was created to experiment with how a director and puppeteers might respond to a previously unseen script and what their needs were in using that script.

I did not follow a rigorous five-step dramaturgy at the time of writing or developing the performance because my process was in the early stages at that time. The results of *MONSTER* led me to include processes that are designed to help a writer to discover what they feel is an absolute in their script. Specifically visual dramaturgy applied to the text and the mosaic scale. What cannot be cut and is integral to narrative, character, aesthetic, tone, pace or puppet?

Early considerations before writing *MONSTER* included an adult target audience, and small rod marionette puppet type and toys. (This was later changed to all toys and dolls through development and was written specifically for two puppeteers.) Initially I wrote it to be performed on a table top play-board. It was written to be performed on Bath Theatre Bus; a single decker bus converted to be a travelling venue. Therefore the set up had to be small enough to fit the width of the bus (the stage area) with enough space for the puppeteers to move round the side of the table with ease.

Once the script had started to be developed by the director, extra scenes of co-presence were written in as her vision developed.

Seven-line telling of the narrative:

1) Cinematic monsters have broken out from their rest home in the Hollywood Hills, just as four American teenagers on a night out break into the grounds.

2) Teen Nancy is carried away by Hitchcock's Birds and then trampled to death by Godzilla, before her boyfriend Chuck kills Godzilla in retaliation.

3) Their friend Randy is tasked with looking in the bathroom for the monsters by resident psychiatrist Dr. D'eath where he is murdered by Psycho in the shower scene.

4) Dr. D'eath accidently takes the experimental elixir she's been feeding to the monsters to enrage them.

5) Teen Sydney manages to escape Jonny and his axe, while Chuck in his car is driven into the swamp by Christine the car and drowns.

6) Sydney and Dr. D'eath sail to the remote island laboratory to try to get the antidote to the elixir, but the doctor takes extra elixir instead and becomes manic and rampaging.

7) Dr. D'eath reveals herself to be the mad one, all of this has been in her own imagination and she is taken to solitary confinement.

The main characters are the four teenagers and Dr. D'eath, the puppets do not engage with the audience. The point of view is the teenagers, and each teen gets a scene to be the main protagonist. All the characters are either dolls or toys or are played by a human with costume and props.

The structure is causal yet episodic. The format is the same as I have used for *The Blue Lady*; the puppetry action is in demarcated boxes and any dialogue is written as it would be in a traditionally formatted human script. The model reader is a director or puppeteer. It was written as a puppets only piece.

The scale of some of the puppets changes in order to signify a wide lens cinematic shot and distance. The use of smaller puppets also helps with spatial relationships. It was written for small scale rod marionettes as they walk, run and express well but in production, the director changed the rod marionettes for original dolls to be used as table top puppets. This saved time and money but is not as aesthetically pleasing or dramaturgically as clean as puppeteering small rod marionettes. I feel the atmosphere became quite different as a result of this change in puppet type. The Barbie and Ken-type dolls gave it a pantomimic and cartoon feel, when I had been keen to utilise aesthetics that would have made the atmosphere feel as dark as possible. If I were to rewrite it I would amend this. Written for rod marionettes and toys, the original play-board was a table top but a subsequent change by the director to a bureau and record player cabinet was suitable for table top dolls. I did not use feature signs or synecdoche in this script. I deliberately wrote the protagonists at a different scale to many of the monsters for comedic effect. The action is framed by the play-board spaces; either the bureau top or desk area and the top of the record player cabinet. The extension of a large blue cloth to create the lake is framed by the dry land of the bureau and the cabinet.

From my mosaic scale findings, if I was to rewrite *MONSTER* I would cut the teenage protagonists down to just Chuck and Sydney. I would also get rid of Godzilla, The Birds and Christine and concentrate on the human psychotics. This would allow for a deeper connection with the two main characters and it would also place the narrative in a more realistic world. A world that was a secure mental health unit from which these criminals have escaped putting the teenagers and the doctors at risk, from a real world threat.

Dr. D'eath's descent into manic hysteria and the reveal that this world exists only in her imagination, after the whole story has been presented as being in the here and now is an opportunity for a cursed thinking or a frame switch. The script references horror and suspense. There is no sense of trickery or realness. Although *MONSTER* contains many of the criteria for encouraging and including the uncanny, the tone and the puppet types (whether the previously written rod marionettes or the dolls) are too silly and light-hearted to instil a genuine sense of the uncanny.

Stage directions that provoke a physical sensation or a have a sensational approach include:

> Godzilla appears and stamps on Nancy's body, then kicks her off the table. [226]

and

> The psycho shower scene is re-enacted by Norman Bates and Randy. There is blood all over the shower curtain. Randy is dead.[227]

The script conjures physicality through the violence and the chases. Materiality is not as evident as in some other puppet scripts but manifests through the use of the toys and the furniture to shape-shift. There is plenty of violence and slapstick humour.
I feel I have focussed a lot on the deaths of the teenagers to the detriment of an adult approach to suspense and horror, which is what I started out wanting to achieve. If I was to rewrite it I would focus on the fear and suspense created in the original films. The perceived experience of the characters may be somewhat shallow as they were not written with any depth or time to get to know them. This script

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226 Emily LeQuesne, "MONSTER"(2017), 48.

227 Ibid., 51.

needs to have just two main protagonists or three if you count Dr. D'eath and fewer monsters so that it has a more believable premise, this in turn would encourage genuine engagement with the suspense, the uncanny, the visceral and the horror. The materiality of puppetry is evident but is not made the most of, again materiality could be utilised to increase the horror. I think the text successfully illustrates a world that pastiches the cliches of horror films. I think spectators would receive the puppet types as comedic and believe in the plastic cinematic world.

Things I would change if rewriting *MONSTER*:

- Specify a much darker design aesthetic.

- Rewrite the protagonists and only have two teenagers.

- Loose the animal and car monsters and concentrate on the psychopaths.

- I would create the world as a secure mental health unit, from which these criminals have escaped putting the teenagers and the doctors at risk, for a sense of real danger and conflict.

Chapter 6

Conclusion.

Upon reading this thesis, to the inexperienced writer or performer of puppetry, thinking about writing a puppet theatre script, it may seem as if there is a seemingly enormous list of considerations, particularly within dramaturgy. Puppetry is ultimately an active performance genre, particularly in that puppeteering requires someone to literally bring to life an inanimate object. The key things to bear in mind will become

clear when the writer new to puppetry has some practical experience of working with puppets.

Considerations include: a puppet can only be itself, it is not an actor. The type of puppet chosen can entirely change the meaning of the script, each type of puppet has elements that it does best and different aesthetics. With puppets the visual is action; when the puppet moves, a spectator automatically starts to interpret the narrative of the action they can see. Spectators do this with puppet theatre to a far greater extent than with human theatre, the action of a puppet getting out of a chair and leaving through a door can often tell us more than the same action delivered by a human.

Puppet time is the slowing down of real time in puppet performance. This is partly due to the process of manipulation leading to movement and action that needs to be delivered in a deliberate and considered way, otherwise the puppetry can descend into šmidlat and be unbelievable. As in a screenplay, stage directions in a puppet script become the text as they reveal the action that is visible to the audience – action is narrative in puppetry, as in film and in comics.

In puppet performance many cinematic framing and viewpoint techniques are utilised and this is acceptable to the reader or spectator because of the similarities with screenplay narrative style and the ability of film to jump from place to place, style to style and even protagonist to protagonist while the story still makes sense to us. Applying the cinematic idea of an interesting shot list to writing puppetry can help to avoid a one point of view, one type of puppet narrative that could become somewhat static. However one does need to be aware of the notion of closure between different frames of image. Is there an enormous leap in meaning or understanding needed from one image to the next for the narrative to flow and still make sense?

Dramaturgical decisions can be taken by either the writer or the director. A director may change things, but if I have written the elements that for me are indispensable, I will have created a script that is as true to my vision as possible and therefore the story that I want to tell, this after all is what all writers do. I have tried to create a script that specifies the elements that I consider important without being overly prescriptive. The writer, the inventor of the world, doesn't have to be a designer and choreographer too, any puppet I can imagine is possible.

What part does imagery play in this? Is there a stage for the reader at which imagery ceases to be evocative and becomes prescriptive? With my script, *The Blue Lady*, I gave thought to what within the narrative and the structure of the play was absolutely vital. What would change the imagined performance of the play if it was omitted or changed by a director? The elements that I felt were inadmissible to my vision of the play are written in. This is not about authorial precedence but rather an exploration of format alongside functioning and compelling narrative in a script that is a useful blueprint for a puppet theatre director.

Puppetry is a performance form that relies for the most part on visual action to impart narrative. Dialogue can and does exist but the characters and their narrative are most easily imparted through movement and action and as such stage directions to describe the action are very important within a puppetry script. This is not to say that the stage directions are choreography for the puppeteers, as this would be very prescriptive and censor the creative input of puppeteers and directors, not to mention making every production exactly like the last.

Stage directions in a puppetry script can take the place and do the job of, some or all of what dialogue does in many human plays. The format I have chosen, of placing the puppet stage directions in a demarcated box, can encourage a reader to engage with that element as central to the narrative and therefore to any potential performance.

Phenomenological considerations for the writer include the visibility or not of the puppeteers and the potential semiotic interpretations inherent in every choice. Ultimately the final vision will be the director's choice but these considerations can help with decisions about puppet type for the writer. Questions to ask oneself: What does this choice of puppet suggest? What does a puppet design tell us about a character without having to use dialogue? Again, the type of puppet that is being written for, needs to be shown or the script will be no more than a human or fantasy story play script and the company performing it could just as easily adapt an existing story or play for puppets. What format does the script take and does this make it a usable text? What will a director be considering, when preparing for a production of the script and does the script help to reduce the amount of extra decisions they may need to take?

There is an intrinsic uncanniness to a puppet play which comes from the anthropomorphism of an inanimate object. Does this mean the consideration of

dramaturging any further elements of uncanniness into the script is unnecessary? That depends on the genre of the story, the nature of the characters, and the type of puppets chosen. Questions to consider in relation to the uncanny include: Does the sensory effect of all elements of theatre (characterisation, the puppet design, scale, lighting effects, sound effects, perspective, and set design) help the spectator to really feel the performance? Does it allow the reader or spectator to see things in a different way? Is there reference in the narrative to unexplainable things? Is the perspective confusing, is there a sense of containment and does it play with time and the assumption of linearity?

The experience of the uncanny in puppetry can lead to a visceral response in a spectator, but puppets can also perform violence and taboo subjects to a more explicit level than perhaps a human would be prepared to. The potential physicality in the script or a sensational approach can be a precursor to a visceral response.

To dramaturg whether at the literary stage or in production is the development of performance. There are many books that start to explore the idea that dramaturgy is a difficult thing to define but few seem to describe a way to actually do it. My definition of dramaturgy is: the exploration, development and facilitation of the process of performance making, whether as part of a literary or production process. The Mosaic Scale for dramaturging puppet theatre scripts has a series of questions for the writer to ask of themselves and their script throughout the process.

Those who might employ the mosaic scale include; a puppetry director or puppeteer, writers of puppetry and dramaturgs. It could be used to analyse existing puppetry scripts as a writer, director or dramaturg and also as a step by step process to facilitate the development of new scripts by a writer.

Within puppetry the Mosaic Scale exercise can be used specifically to explore the use of scale, puppet type, motif,the uncanny, the visceral, and space. It is also a useful exercise to explore: character, action, subtext,exposition and temporality, balance (including choreographic balance, gender balance and rhythm) and use of effects,and within human theatre these latter topics can also be explored. For example,to get an overview of the balance of the characters in terms of genre, frequency of appearance or who might actually be the protagonist we can use the mosaic scale exercise to check: Who is the central character in any scene? Do certain characters appear very early or very late in the script? Is there a gender imbalance? Is there a lot of focus on particular characters to the detriment of others?

And therefore,should scenes be moved? How often does a character appear? If you have discovered it is for 1 line on page 11 - Could that line be given to someone else?

The Mosaic Scale system and exercise could be applied right across writing for performance and may be useful particularly in immersive and interactive theatre, where the consideration of audience response and audience as protagonist is key. The entire system could be applied to any performance making process that includes an element of choreography, and the Mosaic Scale exercise would work well as a production dramaturgy exercise for dance, physical theatre and circus. I think the Mosaic Scale exercise could also be applied in poetry, fiction,film making, and writing for gaming as an efficient way to ascertain the repetition, occurrence or pattern of motif, character,events and images.

Specifically developed to explore the visceral and the uncanny within writing for puppetry and the patterns of occurrence and repetition on the page,the Mosaic Scale as a process may be limited at this point to writing for visual styles of theatre but,I plan to continue my exploration of the mosaic scale as an accessible dramaturgical tool kit, including in rehearsal and production and how this differs from literary development.

Some possibilities include the development of a production dramaturgy process – specifically a Mosaic Scale for puppetry in rehearsal. I would also like to pursue a plan to research and apply the Mosaic Scale to object theatre.Although a form of performance with objects it is different from puppetry in it's creative process and performance technique. My ambitions for future research also include expanding the Mosaic Scale to specific forms of human theatre writing,notably verbatim, reminiscence and immersive theatre. I am also interested in how it could be applied specifically to performance that takes place outside of traditional theatre spaces and outdoors.

The Mosaic Scale has pushed my own dramaturgical style into a much more focussed and clear process. As a puppet theatre maker – both in devising and as a lone writer, I see the journey of development as a series of steps towards the final piece. Each step of that process now has a clearly defined set of considerations and questions and as such this makes the first drafts or the early devising sessions far less intimidating and frustrating as an artist.

I am currently at the beginning of the process for producing *The Blue Lady* and I am in discussions with potential collaborators.

Some puppeteers believe that the point of puppetry is that it is created without a pre-existing script and that it's place as a devised or post dramatic visual art form is the essence of what it is. I believe there is space for all approaches, what is so exciting about puppetry is that anything goes.

GLOSSARY.

Cranky - A back lit shadow screen on a moving roller. The roll of shadows is usually a moving backdrop to a story and is hand turned and moves from image to image.

Humanette - A puppet that consists of a doll-sized torso with movable arms and legs (either a glove puppet or a rod puppet manipulated from below) the head is the puppeteer's own head/face. The puppeteer's body is hidden from view usually by stage curtains or some sort of booth type of play-board.

Marionette - Doll-like puppet with strings. Can have from four to 16 strings to operate different parts of the body. Usually represents human, animal or fantasy characters.

Object theatre - Performance that has similarities to storytelling, using objects that have another use or meaning outside of the performance as characters and to illustrate the story. Can represent anything.

Play board - The stage the puppets perform on, can include: a traditional human theatre stage, a table top, a Punch and Judy booth or a shadow screen.

Rod marionette - A four-to-six string marionette with a metal rod from the head to the manipulation mechanism.

Shadow puppet - A cut-out 2D figure or character that throws a shadow onto a screen when lit, usually from behind. Can represent anything.

šmidlat - Slovak word for smudge,sometimes used as a slang term for busy, messy, frenetic puppeteering.

Table top puppet - A puppet, similar to a doll, that is manipulated by between one and three people and performs on a table top style play board. Usually represents a human or animal.

UNIMA – Union Internationale de la Marionette. The international union of puppeteers.

Appendix 1: Overview of Literary Dramaturgy of existing puppetry scripts.

War Horse by Nick Stafford.

First performed October 2007 at the National Theatre, London.

7 line telling of the narrative:

1) In 1912,Joey is won at a horse auction by Ted, who bids high against his hated brother-in-law.

2) Ted's son Albert is the only human Joey trusts or will let train him, they form a close bond.

3) War erupts and Ted sells Joey as a war horse for £100.

4) Joey and his friend Topthorn, another war horse, are trained and go into battle in France.

5) Albert signs up and goes to war, to look for Joey.

6) Joey and Topthorn experience the horror of war, are captured by the Germans to fight and become hospital cart horses until eventually only Joey remains alive.

7) On armistice day, Joey runs into No Man's Land, where the English win him in a coin toss and when a near blind Albert recognises Joey at the field hospital they are reunited.

The script for *War Horse* has a traditional human play format. It is a piece of Human *and* puppet theatre. There is a disclaimer on page two about the stage directions needed for the parts of the horses:

Joey – the central character – Alice, his mother, and Topthorn are all horses. None of them speaks but all – especially Joey have detailed through-lines.

This involves many more stage directions than is present in a normal play, and these barely indicate the detailed relationships between horse and human that need to be plotted to tell this story. A full description of the horses' movements and reactions would be a script in itself. Therefore what follows is intended to be sufficient to begin. [228]

228 Nick Stafford, *War Horse* (London, Faber & Faber.2007), 2.

The themes of act three repeats act one.The scale is all life size and remains so throughout the script. Human and puppet interplay is very present, this is due to the piece being a human and puppet script and exploring themes around the relationships between humans and horses.

The visual is action in this script. The puppet action is clearly defined but not prescriptive choreographically. The puppet characters are written as active, physical and existing through action. Action and narrative are shown visually through stage directions that tell the narrative of the horse/s. Some of the production dramaturgy is presupposed due to the horses needing to be life size. If the horses were not life-size then the piece would need to be directed as a puppets only piece.

Scenes, character and narrative are shown without speech or dialogue through the stage directions. The narrative flows very well. What is missing for me is more of the story being from Joey's point of view, it still feels very human centric, even though, when looking at my mosaic scale puppetry analysis it is clear that over ¾ of the script has puppet action. It contains a lot of human dialogue, I would want to edit out as much of the dialogue as possible. I don't like the songs and it is not clear to me why they are necessary. There is nothing to suggest that they are traditional songs from that era, so my director's head thinks they are filler. The relationships between humans and horses told through interaction between human actors and life size puppet horses, lends a certain viscerality and uncanniness through the imagined observation of the materiality of the puppets. There is delayed catharsis in Joey and Albert being reunited. Action that creates a physical sensation includes: Joey being whipped, Joey kicking Ted, Topthorn's death, Coco's death by bayonet, and British tanks advancing on Joey. The script uses words to conjure physicality, including: 'reacts violently' [229] 'Joey's agitated' [230]'...limbs missing, bloodstains, heads that appear to be incomplete...' [231] There is reference to sound effects that conjure a physical response when the tank appears, 'the terrible sound is getting closer. Joey turns his head to listen,…...Then the rumbling, squeaking starts up again, getting louder and louder.' [232] There is evidence of super stimuli:

229 Idem.

230 Ibid., 17.

231 Ibid., 35.

232 Ibid., 77.

France: Second passage of time sequence, from Christmas 1917 into 1918.

Soldiers – including the dead Nicholls – advance.

Explosions on screen.

Men die on screen.

Ribs emerge from the earth.

Huge poppies grow.

Mud takes over.'[233]

There are no aesthetic definites of the puppets that are specified in the script, but life size puppet horses, will by their very nature have an element of the uncanny about them. Visual elements that are specified that add to a sense of the uncanny include: the tank coming onto the stage and the sound effects of the battle. There is no potential for a frame shift and it is not self reflexive.

There is no reference to things unknown seen out of the corner of the eye, but the inclusion of real yet dead characters allows for a supernatural unreal realness to be present.

There is a sense that the uncanny is present over and above the inherent uncanniness of puppets because of the close bond between Albert and Joey and the anthropomorphism of the horses.

The materiality is not at the fore in this script, this is because it is written as if the horses are real, with no mention of puppetry, bar the original disclaimer at the beginning. The text illustrates the world of 1910's rural England and the battlefields of WW1 France. The perceived experience of the puppet horses as characters is helped by the anthropomorphism of the horses, but not so much as to 'Disney-fy' them. We see the narrative from both the point of view of Joey the horse and also Albert the young man.

233 Ibid., 67.

10 days on Earth by Ronnie Burkett.

1st performed April 2006 at The Canadian stage company in Toronto.

7 line telling of the narrative:

1) Darrel is 49, his mental age is no more than 10, he lives with his elderly mother, Ivy.

2) Ivy was an unmarried mother in a time and place when this was frowned upon, she looked after Darrel and her father and never did marry.

3) Ivy has died in her bed, but Darrel is unaware of this and goes about his daily life for 10 days.

4) Darrel talks to his friends and goes to work, he is excited for Halloween in a few days time.

5) Darrel's favourite book, Honeydog and Little Burp is his inner monologue/ Honey dog and Little Burp are always together looking for a place to call home.

6) Memories and flashbacks tell the story of Ivy and Darrel's lives, as time passes and Darrel becomes gaunt and alone.

7) Eventually, Darrel is looked after by his elderly friend Irene and later he realises the truth about his mother's passing.

The script for *10 Days on Earth* has a traditional human play layout. It is a piece of puppet theatre. The structure is essentially casual but the memories and children's book character fantasy scenes allow for an episodic element. Stage directions at the very beginning incorporate the puppet logistics, set design definites and the size of the puppets and consequently the play-board. Stage directions also indicate the aesthetics of each puppet and the entrances and exits but are not based in action. The script is very dialogue heavy, with long drawn out monologues.

The visual is *not* action in this script. The puppet action is not clearly defined, it is rather static apart from stage entrances and exits, particularly in the Puppet (human)

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character scenes. The characters are not written as active, physical and existing through action. Some limited action and narrative are shown visually through stage directions that tell the narrative of the storybook animal characters. The puppets are meticulously described but there is little description of action to tell the story, it is all told through dialogue (or stage notes that do not make clear what the audience would see or know).This could easily be a human play and even possibly a radio play.

This meanders thoughtfully and is even a bit slow in places. This is due to the lack of written action, describing the narrative and over reliance on long passages of speech.

All the puppets are long string marionettes, measuring from floor to control 92 inches. The human characters are described in a very realistic way, with particular detail given to their clothing. The storybook animal characters are the same type and size of puppet but in keeping with their storybook world aesthetic they are clothed animals, which includes characters such as a pink sheep. This play-board is specified in the staging notes as being 22 feet wide by 8 feet deep and 12 feet high. This suggests the need for the venue to be relatively large. This set and puppets would swamp a small studio venue for instance, losing any pathos or indeed sense of the uncanny for the spectator.

This script is a good example of the debate around use of puppets versus use of human actors. In production this would be an example of the spectacle of theatre, rather than an exploration of the materiality of puppetry, and that is valid. This is a piece of puppets only theatre but could easily be produced as human theatre with puppets, with all the human characters played by humans and the storybook animals played by puppets.

The narrative flows very well. It contains such a lot of dialogue, I would want to edit out as much of the dialogue as is possible. The puppet characters all exist through their monologues and dialogues and the descriptions of them in place of stage directions.

I find it hard to imagine a feeling of viscerality to a production of this script, over and above watching puppets per se. The script does mention the materiality of some of

the puppets, but only in terms of their visual impact. For me, the only scene where materiality and physicality combine to create a potentially visceral experience is the hot air balloon scene:

> [...] MADAME COO'S skirt begins to rise and in a snap it reverses and becomes a rainbow striped hot air balloon. She disappears under the structure of the trick, and hanging below the balloon is a little basket, holding tiny miniatures of HONEYDOG AND LITTLE BURP. The whole contraption floats above the playing area and during the narration while the Cranky shows a continually moving aerial view of patchwork fields and trees below. [234]

There is delayed catharsis in Darrel understanding that his mother has died. There is reference to sound effects that conjure a physical response, when the scene transitions from house to city and train station. There is reference to super stimuli,

> Transition into the city.
>
> Whereas the house is quiet, represented perhaps most singularly by the clock, outside is chaotic, loud, brassy, unpredictable yet oddly rhythmic in its own orchestration. With the assistance of lighting design, stage left is no longer IVY's upstairs hallway, but a bus stop.[179]

Visual elements that are specified that add to a sense of the uncanny include: the realism present in the narrative and character aesthetic adds to a sense of sadness, loneliness and believability that can sometimes be missed in narratives that are not based in a sense of reality. The characterisation is what presupposes the uncanny over and above the sheer puppetry uncanniness. It is somewhat self reflexive, in that the reference to Honey dog and Little Burp's world is very obviously a sharp change in design and style and becomes clearly a puppet show. For the majority of the narrative it is set in a recognisable, familiar, ordinary place – a contemporary Canadian city, in the 2000's. There is no reference to things unknown seen from the corner of an eye, dimmed lighting effects or a frame switch.

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234 Ronnie Burkett, *10 Days on Earth*. (Toronto. Playwrights Canada Press.2006) 11.

The materiality is not at the fore in this script. The perceived experience of the puppets as characters is helped by the aesthetic description and the attention to detail of each character. We see the narrative from both the point of view of IVY and Darrel. It is mostly Darrel's story.

Odd if you dare by Neenagh Watson and Rachel Field (song lyrics by Sylvia Hallett).

First performed May 1994, London.

7 line telling of the narrative:

1) A man dumps a female body in the city, the authorities cordon off the area.

2) A young woman, Ida writes a note and leaves home, another young woman, Molly runs away after her abusive father is furious that she is pregnant.

3) Molly gives birth in a graveyard, while an angel sings, she leaves her baby in a basket by the church, where a nun collects it.

4) Ida gets a job as a stripper in a seedy club and is chased by an abusive man into the park.

5) Molly, is begging in the park and saves Ida from the man, they become friends, dogs fight and mate like humans do.

6) Ida gets into heroin and takes it in the park near Molly who has become a street sex worker.

7) Molly dreams of her baby, but vulnerable Ida is found by the strip club man and he rapes and murders her and we see that the body at the beginning was Ida.

The script for *Odd if you dare* is formatted as continuous stage directions interspersed with song lyrics. It reads almost like prose. The structure is episodic. The themes in Act three mirror act one. Puppetry is very present but it is not always clear if the character referred to is played by a puppet or a human. As this appears to

be a puppetry only piece I would assume the characters are all puppets, however the type is not always specified either. A late detailed reference to main protagonist Ida (on page 21) as a stripper puppet suggests that Bigot, Ida and Molly are also played by puppets.The action is very clearly laid out, it is prescriptive in what the puppets are doing, although it doesn't specify choreography.

The scale and type of puppets change throughout the script; projections of wire images of Ida and Molly as shadow puppets. The Angel is a humanette. 'The Nun is constructed from a sheep's skull and broken black umbrellas, with two umbrella handles as her feet.' [235] The Devil is a Punch and Judy-style glove puppet. Ida as a stripper is a half body puppet. The Dogs are made from discarded objects(metal waste, bikes, machinery, shopping baskets.)

The puppet type for the protagonists in the main body of the narrative is not specified in the script.
The scale does change depending on the type of puppet utilised. Shadow projections of the characters faces are going to be a different scale from a visible 3D puppet. The humanette is small scale in comparison to the Nun puppet.

The puppet action is very clearly defined, only stage directions are used to describe the action of the narrative. There is no dialogue. The puppet characters are written as active, physical and existing through action.

The format shows the narrative easily without dialogue. The voice over (TV announcer, off stage character) works well when used sparingly. The song lyrics are not quite right. Personally, I find them contradictory or counter to the narrative. I think the use of song works in this script but the poetry needs some development. The narrative flows well but it stops abruptly. What happens to Molly?

There is no delayed catharsis. There is a visceral mystery contained in the opening scene – who is the body? There are stage directions to produce sensation or a sensational approach – birth, rape, murder, the drug sequence. Words that conjure physicality used in this script include: 'Pain both physical and emotional'[236] , 'In a

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235 Baraitser, Theatre of animation, 19.

236 Ibid., 18.

state of over-excitement, leaps forward and grabs horridly...'[237], 'angrily forces.'[238], 'the bigot lashes out, knocking her down.'[239], and 'her body contorts.'[240]

The script includes sound effects that conjure a visceral response:'there begins a faint humming underneath the park sounds.'[241] There is reference to super stimuli: The opening scene utilises 'real' street lights, a set of traffic lights, projection screens, movable and wearable cityscapes, SFX of city noises, film of city streets and character action.

There are very clear aesthetic definites of some of the puppets that are specified in the script. There are multi layered affects in this script which encourages the sensory effects of theatre.

Without knowledge of the puppet types used for Molly, Ida and Bigot it is difficult to read any puppet specific uncanniness over and above the context and theme of the narrative. Although it does reference surreal tropes, including the shopping basket dogs, the umbrella nun and the angel. It is set in recognisably contemporary London streets and park. Visual elements of the puppets, that are key to a disturbing or funny element of the narrative, include the surreality of the spiritual/religious imagery in the form of the nun and the angel, and the surreality of the dogs against the human stories portrayed by human looking puppets. The opening sets up a sense of eeriness, through description, design specifics, reference to music and sound effects. There is no reference to things unknown seen from the corner of the eye, but there is an ever present threat of someone or something, a sense of dis-ease and danger. The materiality is definitely coming to the fore, through the puppet type and design information evident in the script and because these designs are representations as artistic or poetic ideas. The text clearly illustrates a world that is intended to represent the streets of a large, contemporary British city.

237 Ibid., 21.

238 Ibid., 24.

239 Ibid., 28.

240 Ibid.

241 Baraitser, Theatre of animation, 27.

APPENDIX 2: SCRIPT FOR MONSTER

Character list:

Dr. D'Eath	Human.
Dr. Bill	Human.
Dr. D'Eath (female) -	small rod marionette
Chuck (white teenager)	Small rod marionette
Nancy (white teenager)	Small rod marionette
Randy (boy white teenager)	Small rod marionette
Sydney (girl black teenager)	Small rod marionette
The Birds	flock of birds
Godzilla	toy dinosaur
Norman Bates as Mother	Black & white 2D
Regan x 2	spider walk and floating doll / big spinning head
Jonny	small rod marionette/ close up of head
Christine	Red Plymouth car

The stage is set –

The lights are low.

SFX: horror type sfx and music can be heard. A slow build up to a cacophony of fear. (creaking floorboards, footsteps. Long moments of silence that are broken by the shock of a monster howl. Very very tense. 'Classic' suspense music –that sometimes even feels like you can hear other things in it…. Was that the Jaws theme? Or Psycho? That can't be… Tubular Bells? Oh dear, it is.)

Sfx: the sound of the sea can be heard

A doll's house size toy theatre is placed stage right on a long trestle table. It looks reminiscent of the Bates Motel house. It spins to show a different interior on each side of the building and the sides open to reveal the interiors.

Stage left on the table and the floor is a collection of 1970's and '80's suitcases – these open to reveal dioramas for scenes and interchangeable props for close ups.

Dr D'eath (*human speaking into a dictaphone*): Case study 6: I have found that the elixir tends to create a sense of serenity in Mr. Nosferatu . I suspect that the 20% mixture of psilocybin to 20% larcactdyl and 10% ketamine with a 50% holding liquid (sherry) is the correct dosage for him. Is this the correct dosage for everyone? As acute relief is required for many of the residents, I have upped the dosages by 30% and administered it to all on the ground floor, one hour ago.

SFX: There is very loud car revving noise followed by an almighty crashing and the sound of glass breaking and monsters howling. We hear a huge scary noise but see nothing.

Dr: What the Hell?

Bill: Hello? Mrs D'eath?!

Dr D: It's Dr! How many times!

Bill: There's been a break out!

Dr: Who? Who has escaped?

Bill: Most of the beasts and some of the humans.

Dr: If we can find one of the humans, we might be able to find

                                         out what the hell's going on.

Bill: What about…. Her?

A convertible American car drives onto the stage. Inside are: 2 straight teenage couples. The boy in front is driving. These puppets are small half body rod puppets.

The car pulls up at a drive -in cinema. The lid of a record player is the screen.

SFX Action on screen

The legs of a Barbie doll can be seen 'swimming' across the top of the lid as if the space beneath is under the sea. A shark appears from below and starts to ascend towards the swimmer.

The End.

SFX :Jaws theme.

The car pulls away and starts to travel.

Nancy: Put the radio on Chuck.

SFX: Radio comes on

V/O News reader: Reports are coming in of a break out at Drum Tree Hall,

the Hollywood rest home for cinematic monsters. We

asked Dr. Evilyn D'eath, the chief psychiatrist there what

the threat to the public might be.

V/O Dr. D'eath: There is no cause for alarm at this time. We are currently

only missing a few animals.

V/O News reader: Can you tell us how it happened? Exactly what sort of

monsters do you have up there? Should we be afraid?

V/O Dr. D'eath: Traditionally, monsters are attracted to teenagers.

Particularly how shall I put this, MATURE girls. I suggest

you are extra vigilant about your daughter and her purity.

And make sure the window is kept locked. (*laughs*)

V/O New reader: God fearing virgins gonna be safe huh?

Nancy: Change the station Chuck, let's have some music.

SFX ; '80's soft rock plays

Chuck: Hey this is the place!

Chuck gets out first, slides down hill, does some air punches.

Chuck: Come on Nancy

Nancy gets out of car and slides down hill and onto table.
Giggles and then leaps into Chucks arms.

Nancy: Wheeeeeeeeee!

Nancy straddles Chuck and they smooch quietly.
SFX 'building tension' music & Birds

> *Large birds appear around the couple. 2 on car.*

Nancy: Kiss me Chucky!

Sydney: Come on you guys, enough heavy petting already, it's getting spooky up here!

Chuck: Come on Nancy .

> *Chuck fireman's lifts her, and jumps onto desk, then throws her, legs akimbo into car.*

Nancy: Wheeeeeeee *(giggles)*

SFX :journey music

> *Large car drives off and a smaller car appears.*
> *The car passes by the ornate gates of a spooky and remote large house.*

Chuck: Did you see that place?

Randy: Let's turn around!

Nancy: It looks empty to me. Let's break in and finish what we started!

> *They park up in front of gate, then drive through.*
> *Nancy and Chuck appear in the grounds, they are kissing and getting very sexual.*
> *Birds flyround the couple, a flock of birds approach and fly off with Nancy.*
> *SFX MENACING 'the birds' MUSIC*

Chuck: Nancy!

> *The flock drops Nancy from a great height onto desk and then menaces Chuck, he shoos them away.*

Chuck: Nancyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!!!!

SFX Sound of Godzilla roaring.

Godzilla appears and stamps on Nancy's body, then kicks her off table.

Chuck: Oh God Nancy!!! Nancy!!! Nancy NOOOOO!!!

YOU BASTARD!

SFX HUGE ROAR!!!!!!   Godzilla jumps onto table.

Chuck: Uh oh! (backs away)

Godzilla advances.

Dr D'eath: Hey! Godzilla! Look here!

Godzilla slowly turns to audience.

SFX:Gunshot

Dr D shoots Godzilla from the window.

Chuck: Eat FIST !

Chuck fights with Godzilla until she falls into the ravine.

Chuck: That was for Nancy (looks at audience and whispers)

Nancy!

Sydney and Randy appear at window.

Sydney: In here! Quick!

Chuck: Sydney! Randy!

Chuck leaps through door.

Chuck (bursts through doo0r: NANCY!!!!!!!!

Dr:	Oh! Hello! Now look,there's been a mass escape. Many of the beasts and some of the human psychotics from the ground floor are out of their rooms.
Chuck:	What do we do?
Dr:	Do? Nothing. We wait here until it's safe to leave.
Chuck:	Safe to leave? Shouldn't we capture them again?
Dr:	This isn't a prison young man, this is a retirement home for fictitious characters. They each have their weak point. For instance, Godzilla? Can't turn its head- so didn't see me. They'll be caught.
Chuck:	Well I'm not going to sit and wait to die.

Chuck sits down

Dr:	Apart from Mr. Nosferatu as a hybrid supernatural …

Doctor has a flip chart with a picture of each monster on a new page.

Randy:	I think the word is vampire.
Dr:	Apart from the vampire, we have what can be termed a menagerie of animal monsters to find: Godzilla,
Randy;	You said you just got that one.
Dr:	Correct. The Birds. (*under her breath*) A multi flock homicidal aviary.

Silence

Dr:	The Fly. He's a hybrid scientific. But as he's a monster when he's the fly he's with the animals but I think he's still in his room.

Randy:	I don't mean to interrupt but shouldn't we be thinking about a plan rather than discussing the semantics of the monster genus?
Dr:	We need to split up, you boy, take the bathroom.
Randy:	What are *you* going to do?
Dr:	Change. No woman ever went to look for a monster in day clothes.

The 2 humans move downstage.

Together:	We must wear nighties.

SFX:Stripper music

They strip to their nighties.

SFX Scream and spooky music/soundscape comes on.

Randy appears behind one window at a time, looking for the bathroom.

Dr Bill becomes Norman Bates.

He has a shower curtain attached to his sleeve,in his pockets are a shower head, sink plug and a large bloody knife.

SFX Water running from tap

Randy falls into shower

SFX Psycho soundtrack.

The psycho shower scene is reenacted by Norman Bates and Randy.

There is blood all over the shower curtain.

Randy is dead.

SFX: Norman Bates: Oh God Mother! Mother! Blood! Blood!

Chuck enters looking for Randy.

Chuck: Randy! Randy! Randy!(beat)

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO
OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO(Breathe)OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO
OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

SFX Tubular Bells

Reagan appears .

Chuck runs off with Randys body.

SFX/Regan: *(evil laughter)* What an excellent day for an exorcism. I

                          am the devil. Kindly undo these straps.

Dr: (on top of Bureau)   Oh, my goodness, Oh my goodness. What am I to do? I

                          can't, I'm, I.

                          I'm hyperventilating. Brandy, that'll help.

The Dr: drinks from a brandy bottle

Sydney: Must escape. It's locked. How do I get out?.... The

                          basement, that'll be a way out…..Don't go into the cellar

                          in your nightie Sydney!

Sydney is now wearing a night dress.

Sydney travels into the cellar

Dr Bill enters as Johnny.

Sydney is desperately trying to open cellar door

SFX/Jonny: Little Pigs, Little Pigs let me come in. Not by the hair on

                              your chinny chin chin? Then I'll huff, and I'll puff and I'll

                              blow your house in.

> *He appears behind Record player and the turntable starts revolving .*
>
> *Jonny brings a tiny childs plastic axe up and starts to smash through the door.*
>
> *He smashes a hole big enough to put his head through.*
>
> *The axe comes through the door of the cellar right next to Sydney's head.*
>
> *Sydney Is spinning around on the record player trying to escape .*

SFX: Jonny: Here's Jonny

> *Sydney finally escapes the turntable with Johnny's head still stuck in record player.*

Sydney: (at the door)   Jesus Christ! It's push! (exits through door)

> *Sydney esacpes.*

Dr: Right, we've lost the other boy and your girlfriend – who

                              was most likely killed … as a punishment for being

                              sexually precocious and independent of spirit.

Silence

Sydney: (on bureau top)   Chuck! Doctor! Wait for me!

Sydney Jumps

> *Sydney bursts into the car.*

Chuck: Nice jump.

Sydney: Thanks! (beat) Go! Go! Go!

> *The car won't start.*
>
> *Regan appears and starts to come after them.*

The car won't start.

SFX car starter motor

Eventually it starts just as Regan is about to get in the car.

Regan leaps onto car as car starts in reverse, throwing Regan towards the

audience.

Chuck: Phew, I think we got away.

Christine appears . Lights go on. She faces the car.

Chuck: Oh Shit. (beat)   Go you guys, save yourselves, I'll draw her off!

Dr D'eath and Sydney leap out of car and away.

Christine and Chuck rev their engines, tyres squeeling.

The swamp drawer of the bureau slowly opens and the small car is pushed in.

Chuck: NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

The swamp emerges and the car goes in. SFX bubbling swamp.

Christine is watching it all and then does an evil 'car laugh'.

The birds fly in and pick her up and drop her in the lake too.

Chuck bobbing to the surface and then being sucked under, he fights a losing battle

against the swamp and slowly drowns.

The bureau drawers are 'Poltergeisted' and then birth a huge piece of blue fabric

into a huge lake .

More swampy/watery soundscape

A small tower is placed as if it is on an island .

The moon rises.

Sydney: Why do we need to go the lab?

Dr: I don't know exactly how many monsters have escaped. And, the anti-dote. I must put the calming fluid in their water supply.

Sydney: You're not making any sense.

Dr: Just keep rowing.

Sydney: I still don't understand how we got into this mess.

Dr: I had an idea. I wanted to try something on the residents. They sometimes seem a little restless or depressed even – glory days behind them and all that. But even I can't second guess how a fictitious cinematic monster will react to the elixir. And it seems it's getting worse.

Reagan appears and starts to attack them in the boat.
Sydney shoots her.
Splashing about she dies.
Suddenly she reappears and Sydney shoots her again twice.
SFX: ! gun shot
She plummets into the water.
Regan appears again charging up out of the water. Screaming "It Burns!"
SFX: 2 gun shots.
They row on and reach the lab.

Sydney: Worse? Nancy was kidnapped by The Birds and then trampled by Godzilla. Randy was stabbed by Norman Bates or should that be his mother? Chuck was Drowned

by Christine, I've been terrorised by Jonny and now we're

sailing towards an isolated Gothic tower surrounded by

water and we have, what? Four bullets left? Worse you

say?

Sydney and Dr appear on the island by the tower.

Sydney: Have you taken any of the elixir doctor?

Dr: You'd better wait in the boat.

Sydney: Yes m'am.

Sydney exits and the doctor starts to climb the tower.

Dr: Already so many dead but if I can administer an

antidote… but wait. Do I even want to make it stop?

I don't think I do! Ha! Power at last! I think an even higher

dosage.

(*at a window*)I need to start looking manic, express

something about revenge, being overlooked all these

years, maniacal laughter, hair coming undone, smoke.

(*On the roof*) I AM THE MONSTEROUS FEMININE!

As the manic speech continues The human Dr. D'eath takes over and the puppet is

now just a toy doll, it is Dr. D'eath the huamn who is the maniac. She starts talking to

the puppet rather than 'as' the puppet.

Maniacal laughter again. Monsters cross borders

between life and death, human and beast. The word

Monster derives from the Latin – Monstrum: 'something

put on show', which in turn derives from Monere,

meaning to warn. A monster is a warning. And now is my time to let the world know. I am warning you Hahahahahahahaha.It's working. I must administer this elixir to the remaining monsters, it is much stronger than the other batch! Maniacal laughter. I will take over the world!!!

Sydney is alone in the boat on the lake.

Dr. D'eath has been put into a straight jacket and comes to attack Sydney as if she were a giant octopus.

Sydney: But, I'm the final girl. I'm supposed to live for the sequel! It's a franchi……..

The ENORMOUS octopus devours the entire boat and Sydney.

Dr. D'eath stands up manically laughing.

Dr.Bill: Well, I think we're making excellent progress Mrs D'eath.

Dr: It's Doctor Octo to you SCUM!

Dr. Bill gives Mrs D'eath gives an injection in the neck, she becomes meek.

Dr. Bill ties up her straitjacket and leads her off.

Dr.Bill: Orderly! Orderly!

BLACKOUT.

The End.

MONSTER!

Practice as Research: Script Writing for Puppetry.

THIS PROJECT SHOWS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEORY & PRACTICE IN/AS RESEARCH:

MONSTER is a play for puppet theatre written as part of practice as research: scriptwriting for puppetry.

- What issues might arise in the production of a puppetry script written with an alternative creative methodology? Is a literary dramaturgy specifically for puppetry possible?

- How might a director or puppeteers respond to it and how far from my vision would the director's cut be?

Stage directions reveal the action visible to the audience – ACTION IS NARRATIVE in puppetry. I have formatted my scripts to have puppetry action in a separate box from dialogue.

WHAT THE DIRECTOR HAS TO THINK ABOUT & THEREFORE WHAT THE WRITER NEEDS TO PUT ON THE PAGE.

- Puppet size, type and aesthetics. NOT design.

- Any specific & integral set design that is needed. Staging possibilities, including play-board.

- Puppets only/ or Humans & puppets? The number of characters.

- The number of puppets and the number of puppeteers needed.

- Semiotics – what are the puppet ideas saying?

PROCESS OF WRITING MONSTER:

- Immersion in classic '60s-'80's horror films.
- Wrote 1st draft .
- Sent to others for feedback.
- Edits.
- Passed to director.
- Edits
- Rehearsal
- Cuts
- Show.
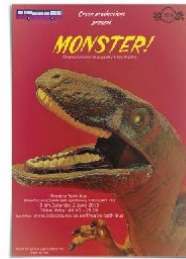
'Writing for puppets? What puppets? Given the diversity of styles, some traditional, some modern, that this art from offers, this is the principle question that haunts me right through my writing process. What is the ideal type of puppet that will best serve the text, that will best establish communication with the public and rouse in them emotions that are worthy of this 'theatrical magic'?'[1]

CONCLUSIONS:

- A director can cut anything -Writer needs to know, what is integral to the script. *'everything mentioned in the script is needed as a puppet or is an integral prop or piece of staging. I have omitted any other details of stage or interior design.'[1]*

WHAT HAPPENED:

- The director's vision created a show that was human theatre with puppets(& clowning) and much more child friendly than my puppets only, adult script!

- Director, puppeteers and technician all liked the format & structure "Easy to use".[3]

- The director rejected: Some of the puppet types and set design specifications, for reasons of time, cost and her own aesthetic tendencies.

- No choreography or direction detail needed in script - Puppetry is a visual theatre form and very much about the creative interpretation of the puppeteers and director.

- Puppetry action in a separate box is clear and easy to follow.

1. Voisard, Claire, *Écrire pour la Marionnette* . Marionnettes Numéro 51, 1989 https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/jeu/1989-n51-jeu1069035/16361ac.pdf (accessed 07 September 2017)1.
2. Emily LeQuesne. *The Blue Lady*. 2019
3. Tomasin Cuthbert – Director of MONSTER. 2019.

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