

Multimodality and Theatre: Material Objects, Bodies and Language

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The nature of theatre as an art form relies crucially on two major channels of expression – which I will refer to as ‘modalities’. The modality which aligns theatre with other literary forms is the use of language, but the modality which distinguishes it, and also aligns it with language-independent forms like dance, is the material form which grounds the linguistic expression. There are various dimensions of the material aspect – human bodies, objects, the stage itself, the set, etc., and it is important to ask specific questions about the role of each in constituting the genre. Opening these types of questions is also useful in building stronger connections between cognitive approaches to theatre and cognitive approaches to language. The latter are now undergoing a major shift towards dealing with embodied and visual aspects of communication and bringing these facts to bear on questions regarding the emergence of linguistic meaning. Theatre, as an inherently multimodal form of art, can provide additional strength to these endeavours, by highlighting the power of multimodality and language in their intensely creative form.

The multimodality of theatre

Defining theatre as multimodal art has certain analytical consequences. The description aligns theatre with a range of artefacts where multimodality is central to the form and meaning.

Most naturally, theatre becomes a close relative to opera – where the stage and the bodies are used similarly, but language is downplayed in order to give more importance to music. But contemporary art forms – highbrow, lowbrow and middlebrow alike – rely heavily on multimodality as well. Examples are varied, and new forms keep emerging. Artistic forms may combine visual display, music and poetry reading in various ways, whereas open-air events often mix theatre and music. All these forms combine language and image with specific spatial and visual solutions. In what follows I will look at some examples of interactions between space, material objects and language.

Graffiti art and street art are an interesting example of the treatment of space. They often rely on visual display of language while using visual images in interesting combinations with the material objects and surfaces on which they are displayed. In this sense, street art uses what is available in the material world, and reconstrues it creatively. Such reconstructions often rely on the very basic components of cognitive development, called image schemas. In a recent article, Mandler and Cánovas (2014) argue for several levels of spatial foundations of cognition. They show that in the earliest stages of child development children learn to understand concepts like 'move into', 'occlusion' or 'container', so they have a very early sense of spatial dimensions and accessibility of objects. These schemas then quickly develop into more complex structures, combining with other concepts. Now, street art often plays on these very basic structures, redefining spatial configurations in ways sometimes surprisingly similar to what theatre does. For example, a German street artist, Evol¹ has painted an oblong block of concrete at the edge of the pavement to look like a block of flats – in the ugly style of plain concrete architecture. The work not only relies on the materially available piece of the environment, making it into a representation of a building, but also, through playing cleverly on the difference in size between the painted concrete block and the surrounding buildings, it creates a surprising and attractive effect.

Also, through this artwork, the entire environment has changed its nature. In fact, the first image in the online gallery referenced here has a construction worker sitting on the 'building', talking on his phone, which adds to the surprising effect of size, but also makes the viewer think of another, much smaller city inside the real city, and notice the ways in which such realities may coexist. On the theatrical stage, reconstructions like this one are a natural occurrence – buildings are smaller than they would normally be, while rooms may be a lot bigger, natural environment may be signalled by a single tree, and food is often represented by empty dishes, large enough to be seen from a distance and yet somehow in proportion to the actors' bodies. And yet these token material presences (scenery, props) are intended to totally redefine environment – turn a flat surface of wooden boards into a small part of an entire living world – the storyworld. What street artists often do, then, relying on the combination of the visual and the material, is what theatre also does, in genre-specific ways. And we can argue that the spatial cognition underpinnings underlie both forms of artistic expression.

The primary difference is the approach to containment. Street art creates a space that redefines the surrounding space and blends the two into a more complex and multilayered artefact. In effect, the familiar reality of a street becomes an unbounded stage on which various scenarios can be played. But exactly because it is unbounded, it enriches the experience of the reality space.

Various examples of street art (graffiti or publicly funded installations) have their effect precisely in construing the world as multidimensional. When we see metal sculptures of people walking out from under the pavement² (so that parts of their bodies are invisible, under the surface of the street, while the upper parts are already on the surface, among the passers-by), we have to construe an underground space wherein they have existed until now and are at present emerging from. The role of a theatrical piece is to do something very similar – suggesting those invisible worlds of which the audience can only see a part, building the entire narrative icebergs by extrapolating from the visible tips. And yet, assuming the existence of those invisible spaces is necessary for a play to make sense. This holds true for the Classic Greek Stage, Noh Performance, Shakespeare's Globe, Ibsen's drawing room, and the contemporary post-dramatic theatre; a little stands in for a lot.

The stage, unlike a city environment, is bounded. However, the boundaries it imposes are of two kinds. The permeable areas of backstage and offstage are like the invisible spaces from which the street art figures are emerging. Their crucial characteristic is that the audience does not see them but has to imagine some sort of continuity of the onstage world. When a character enters, in the context of the play, he or she enters from the space belonging to the space constructed on the stage – another location, another room, etc. Knowing that there is no actual adjacent extension of the onstage space does not change the fact that viewers treat incoming actors/characters neither as aliens from outer space nor as stagehands who have come to remove a no-longer-needed prop. These persons come from another part of the storyworld.

The other boundary, the one between players and audience, is more impermeable, because the audience is not supposed to enter the storyworld. Of course, contemporary theatre does many things to create an impression that there is in fact no boundary between the world of the viewers and the world of the stage, but it is only successful to a degree – the boundary may be a see-through one, and, so to speak, hear-through or even touch-through one, but it does not go away, and the sense of conceptual independence of the real world and the storyworld remains valid. Still, the manipulations of the conceptualization of space rely on some shared mechanisms. The spatial multimodality of a theatrical event relies on some of the same mechanisms that other multimodal forms display as well.

There is also the issue of how we interpret actual discourse on the stage. In ordinary forms of spontaneous communication, linguists talk about a 'deictic centre' – the here-and-now of the discourse, in which the speaker always refers to herself as 'I' and addresses the hearer as 'you'; of course, these roles alternate throughout the conversation.³ But the set-up regulates much of the understanding of what people say – so, if a speaker talks about something

happening 'now', it is naturally understood to relate to the time in which the conversation takes place. Much work has been done on showing that using such expressions may also be a token of the speaker's viewpoint. For example, in the discourse analysed in Rubba (1996) speakers talk about 'here' when they talk about a (pretty distant) neighbourhood they align themselves with, rather than the room or the building in which they are being interviewed. There is thus a natural understanding that the here-and-now does not have to be the actual here-and-now. In theatre, the deictic centre of the audience is naturally different from that of the play, but the viewers can align themselves mentally with the location and time they are observing.

Thus, in theatre, the deictic centre is that of the storyworld, not the actual reality.⁴ In other words, *Romeo and Juliet* always takes place in Verona, regardless of whether it is staged in London, Munich, Tokyo or Verona itself. The storyworld is the here-and-now of the play. But the 'I' and 'you' represents the essence of the play's multimodal nature – the bodies and voices of persons from a different world (that of the current out-of-theatre reality) are used to represent the speakers and addressees in the storyworld. But, at the same time, the words spoken in the storyworld are addressed to the viewers in the out-of-theatre reality. Acting is a living blend of two realities – the content of what is said represents a character and the storyworld she or he is part of, but the body and the voice come from a different reality. But its effects are also bi-modal, as the words inform both the storyworld characters and the viewers, often affecting them in different ways. Other material tokens of 'character-hood', such as costume, hairdo, make-up, etc., are also material blends – they belong to the storyworld and the reality, both. That seamless connection between the body and the voice on the one hand and the words spoken on the other represents two realities, but the audience responds to the 'I's and 'you's spoken as representative of the storyworld – because language users cannot but automatically accept the words spoken to be the actual words of the speaker. The deictic blend of theatrical discourse is what creates the illusion of reality on stage.

The multimodality of theatre poses important questions about the potential role of each of the modalities and about the nature of the interaction between them. As the instances of art forms discussed above clearly show, communicative modalities do their job regardless of the context they are used in, but interaction between modalities can reveal or suppress aspects of the construal. There are various ways in which creative work puts multiple modalities to work, but theatre can be understood better if that broader context is taken into consideration. This chapter looks at some of the dimensions of multimodality of theatre and discusses some examples from drama to illustrate the points. Initially, though, I will outline some of

the aspects of both the linguistic and material modalities that play a central role in the construction of meanings. The overview will also show the central role of the human body in linking the two major modalities and allowing the audience to grasp the meaning of the events. The body is the focus of the disturbing blend created, and it is also the vortex of the multimodal complexities of theatre as an art form.

Theatre and narrative structure

Drama tells a story. The narrative structure is complex and significantly different from other narrative forms. Traditionally, theatrical events tell stories in a more or less sequential way, and the changes of location are not easy. I will not elaborate here on the traditional requirement of the unity of place and time, but we can speculate that narrative verisimilitude may have been part of the motivation. Taking deixis seriously could lead to the understanding that theatre provides an opportunity for people to witness the events and hear the conversations as they occur, here and now, so the audience is easily imagined in the role of a silent and invisible witness to the actual events unfolding on the stage. The occasional need to step outside of the 'witness' mode and become an addressee created the role of the chorus, which was a theatrical equivalent of the omniscient narrator.

These specificities aside, for very practical reasons it is difficult to tell a story through drama which would be as scattered as a contemporary novel might, unless the playwright resorts to innovative solutions such as Stoppard's *Arcadia*, and has the present and past realities on the stage simultaneously. Another solution is using one of the characters as a narrator on occasion – but then the assumption is that the character is recounting events that he or she saw, so the 'deictic truth' is still the core assumption – the speaker tells the story to the addressee here and now, reporting on 'then' and 'there' when relevant, but at the time of the events, the current teller was an observer just like the audience is now. This, as the example from *Julius Caesar* (discussed below) shows, opens interesting multimodal questions: What if the audience needs to experience realities off the stage, not just learn about them? The offstage – the extension of the storyworld onstage – is inaccessible to the audience's witness role, and thus needs to be narrated, implied or guessed. Because the story is mostly acted out and only occasionally narrated, the use of modalities has to be different from that of a novel, when everything is relayed through language.

Arcadia is a very relevant example of how complex narrative structure is built through the constant onstage location. The play takes place in one

room – the schoolroom in Sidley Park, a large country house in Derbyshire. Some of the events belong to the past of the house, 1809, while other scenes take place in our times. In the middle of the room there is a large table which accumulates a number of objects as the play goes on. It starts with some books, a portfolio and a sleepy tortoise. Stoppard's stage directions as to what is present in the room and on the table are very rich in detail, although he also adds: 'During the course of the play the table collects this and that, and where an object in one scene would be an anachronism in another (say a coffee mug) it is simply deemed to have become invisible' (1993: 15). What these directions do not provide is a clear answer to the question – invisible to whom? Clearly, they are to be invisible to characters from the other period, but are fully visible to the audience. The audience needs to see and appreciate all of them.

The objects on the table are the central focus of the events – a book of poetry, gardening books, an architect's portfolio are all left on the table in 1809 scenes, to be then picked up and looked at by the characters 180 years later. The tortoise is always there. Early in the play, at the end of a scene, a character in 1809 leaves an apple on the table, and at the beginning of the next scene a character in the other period picks it up and cuts out a slice to feed it to the tortoise. The piece of fruit thus becomes a material 'connective tissue' linking the past and the present into one story. It is interesting that the first such instance is of an object that is so easy for the audience to notice and recognize. Other objects that transfer between times are ones containing crucial information. The play touches upon a broad range of issues of history of literature, physics and mathematics, but the plot, essentially a mystery plot, depends entirely on how characters in the present discover the story of the past from documents left behind, scattered and lost.

All the objects on the table are material 'carriers' of information – they provide easy access to the thoughts of the characters who wrote their notes and letters, read from books and produced drawings. They are also crucial to the narrative construction, as the mystery plot is untangled entirely on the basis of the various documents, as the contemporary characters gradually uncover their content. Importantly, the viewer gets most of the story, except its dramatic ending, from the 1809 scenes, while the contemporary characters learn gradually, acquiring evidence and making mistakes. In other words, the story-construction process, focused on the past, is in a way divided between the audience and the contemporary characters – an ingenuous narrative structure, built out of the scraps of information left on the table.

The materiality of the schoolroom, the table and its mess of objects is the vortex of the play which jumps back and forth across a gap of 180 years, until, in the final scenes, both periods are represented in the room at the

same time – the shared location is further reinforced by a blended time. In an earlier work (2012), I have argued that the story emerges as a blend⁵ of various narrative spaces. The final scenes of *Arcadia* seem to be giving this idea its material dimension – the physical location of the stage displays the blend.

Besides, *Arcadia* makes a very clear use of space, perhaps *because of* rather than *in spite of* its focus on one room in Sidley Park. There is the Sidley Park garden outside the French windows, and there is a music room next door. These are not seen, but often heard. In many instances, what is heard from the garden or the music room is suggestive of the time other than the one represented in the schoolroom – the story blend is thus maintained throughout, and in various modalities – sound, materiality and location. Additionally, one of the contemporary characters, Gus in one time and Augustus in the other, joins a party in costume appropriate to the 1809 period – as an embodied representation of the blend of the two periods.

To sum up, *Arcadia* exploits all modalities in order to help the viewer construct the story spanning 180 years and involving various mysteries of passion and science. We cannot say the story is 'told' by the play – it is multimodally represented for the viewer to build.

The language of the stage

The interaction between language and other modalities not only defines theatre as a different artistic event, but also changes the language of the play. There is a common assumption, again built entirely on the standard role of the deictic centre, that, at least roughly, discourse on the stage is the type of discourse which is normally appropriate in conversation. Of course, the 'roughly' part is where the whole issue resides. Even in the case of contemporary drama, it would be easy to see that it is not the case. It is enough to compare a corpus of conversational discourse with any play to see that people commonly speak in a much less coherent way, that the turns in conversations are often shorter, that there are numerous false-starts and sudden changes of tack, etc. It is not my goal to seriously compare theatrical discourse to natural discourse, but we can learn quite a bit about the language of the theatre by looking at earlier forms, as in Shakespearean drama.

Poetic devices aside (people did not speak in iambic pentameter and nobody claims that they did), there are aspects of theatrical discourse in Early Modern drama that need to be viewed in the context of the story being told and the needs of the audience. The audience needs to know what happened and what characters tell each other, but they also need to know what is in the characters' minds, and it is hard to count on the characters always

communicating their thoughts clearly. What novels started doing through various means of 'representation of consciousness' was also done on the Early Modern stage, but without stylistic devices that emerged in modernist prose.

The linguistic formula that emerges very naturally out of the deictic set-up of any play is not just speaking, but speaking to an addressee. However, it does not have to mean a conversation, but rather a form of speech which is ostensibly addressed to someone, but with no expectation of a conversation-like exchange. There are essentially three forms it might take. The most obvious one of them is a soliloquy – a longer reflection, and most naturally addressed to the audience, though not necessarily involving eye contact with the viewers. The audience understands 'To be or not to be' in the context of a soliloquy; the story world is semi-permeable and Hamlet is talking to us about the events within.⁶ The second form is speaking in the presence of addressees, but in a manner so deeply focused on the speaker himself/herself that the presence of others is made legitimate only through some very basic forms of interaction, often not responding at all to what the primary speaker is saying and not creating a two-way exchange. For example, in *Richard II*, the king engages in long pieces of oratory in the presence of his courtiers, but they are not part of any conversational exchange. In Act III, Scene 3, he finds himself on the walls of Flint Castle, in the presence of Duke of Aumerle and Bishop of Carlisle. When Aumerle tells him that Northumberland is returning after talking to Bolingbroke, Richard digresses into a long discourse starting, 'What must the king do now? must he submit? / The king shall do it: must he be deposed?' (3.3.43-4)⁷ He deplores the deposition he fears, he weeps over his downfall, but the discourse does not respond to Aumerle's announcement or prepare us for what Richard will do once Bolingbroke arrives. Only in the last four lines does he address Northumberland, who has arrived meanwhile. The whole fragment has two goals – giving Northumberland time to get up to the castle walls and letting the viewers appreciate Richard's thoughts. Ostensibly, he talks to his courtiers, but they do not respond or interact, until the plot picks up again with Northumberland's arrival.

The third form is pretending to actually have an addressee, and speak to objects, ideas, images, elements of the environment, material objects or to oneself.⁸ Each of these dialogic structures impacts the meaning made of the language by the audience. In an earlier scene in *Richard II*, Richard has just landed on the coast of Wales, returning to his kingdom. Moved by this, he engages in another monologue-like discourse:

I weep for joy
To stand upon my kingdom once again.
Dear earth, I do salute thee with my hand,

Though rebels wound thee with their horses' hoofs:
As a long-parted mother with her child
Plays fondly with her tears and smiles in meeting,
So, weeping, smiling, greet I thee, my earth.

(3.2.4-10)

Throughout this fragment, Richard is using the earth he stands on as an addressee, saluting his land, and then asking it to not support the feet of his enemies who are trampling on it. This ostensible address again has the role of letting the viewers understand Richard's emotions – love for his land and his revulsion at the invasion. The formula of speaking to a material presence, not a human interlocutor, is Early Modern drama's equivalent of free indirect discourse – even though it takes on the spurious form of direct discourse pattern.

It is particularly important in the context of materiality, which is my focus here, that the faux-addressee is represented by the very stage – in this scene, representing the land off the coast of Wales. In the instances I discussed in earlier work, such as Juliet's dagger ('O happy dagger! This is thy sheath!') or Romeo's poison vial ('Come, bitter conduct! Come, unsavoury guide!'), there are in fact objects – props – being spoken to, held up for the audience to see. But the very wooden boards of the stage are a different case – the material stage on which Richard stands is also the storyworld material surface on which he stands.

A full discussion of these types of onstage interaction is not within the scope of the present chapter, but the very range of such forms suggests that a close analysis of dialogic structures of discourse on the stage is needed if the sources of meaning in the discourse of theatre are to be fully understood. Language is the primary communicative modality in a theatrical performance, but it is not an independent one. The division into the page and the stage cannot be maintained. Language participates in a multimodal set-up and its form is adjusted to suit the needs of the multimodal event unfolding.

The meanings of materiality

Material modalities of the theatre are numerous, and each has a role to play. I have already mentioned the stage as a representation of the storyworld, and elements of the play's scenography also contribute to the representation of the central aspects of the storyworld. But there are also material objects.

Objects are bearers of all kinds of meaning. In his companion book to an exhibition at the British Museum, Neil McGregor (2013) discusses material objects found on the archaeological sites of the theatres of Shakespeare's time.

A fork, a dagger or a cup, they each tell a story. From the cognitive perspective, the story crucially depends on what one knows about the historical context. The fact that the small fork found would have probably been used by a theatregoer to pick oysters out of their shells represents a kind of knowledge structure that is now referred to as a frame (Fillmore 1985 and 2006). Thus, a frame of 'fork' today would simply mean 'an eating utensil', but the presence of an unusually small fork within the bounds of what used to be Rose theatre evokes the kind of knowledge only some historians and archaeologists might have – that people would snack on oysters in a theatre (the rest is understood – eating oysters with your hands would be a very inefficient practice).

However, objects are not always used according to their typical frames, and they can undergo so-called 'functional reframing'. I have somehow never invested in a real rolling pin, but I have washed a wine bottle long ago and I have been using it to roll-out the pie dough ever since. So, when I ask a family member who will be helping me bake to take out the rolling pin, she or he will take out the empty wine bottle, which has been functionally reframed and so can legitimately be called a rolling pin. This may seem like a very down-to-earth process, but it depends on our ability to use words on the basis of new practice or inside knowledge and not solely on the basis of a dictionary definition, standard shape or typical usage. Of course, if I want a bottle of wine open, I would not call it a rolling pin, since the basic meaning has not changed and not all objects normally called 'wine bottles' will now be called 'rolling pins'. This household anecdote, however, describes the potential of objects to play roles other than their basic functions – and this is what theatre builds on.

When no reframing takes place, objects are most naturally used as props – in such cases they would be used in the same way in which theatregoers would use them in their lives. So, if there is a stool on the stage, it is most likely going to be used by a character who is going to be seated, but if there is a throne, it would require the presence of a king. Occasionally, however, material objects begin to play roles beyond the representation of some real-life routines and are reframed in the context of the discourse. In this vein, Sofer (2003) talks about the stage life of props to show how various types of objects take up meaningful spaces in drama. It is important, however, to show how the very nature of the objects interacts with the emergence of the story. When their material role stops being the central one, they cease to be simple props, and become what I will refer to as *dramatic anchors*.

The term 'anchor' is used here following the work of Edwin Hutchins (1995, 2005), who discusses material anchors to complex blends. One of the examples he talks about is a watch, to show how our very complex construal of time-measurement is built into the idea of a watch, with its

face representing the cycle of hours in a day, the hands moving to indicate the position in the cycle, etc. An enormous amount of conceptualizations is effectively suppressed from view and compressed into the pretty simple interaction with the face of the clock. Hutchins talks about 'offloading' layers of conceptual structure onto the anchors, so that we do not have to think of the cycle of the day, the length of hours or minutes and all that complexity every time we need to know what the time is. It is enough to remember how important it is for a small child to learn how to read the clock to appreciate the degree of compression the anchor carries. Of course, the compression has gone much further with digital watches, and watches built into phones, so that now many people have entirely compressed the material form of a clock out of their construal of time-measurement.

The fact remains that there are material aspects of our interaction with reality that rely on various layers of compression of conceptual structure. Another example of such a concept is a queue – an abstract idea of organized sequential access which manifests itself through a number of people standing in line, facing in one direction, and progressing towards the desired access point as the line moves. There is no material line anywhere, and yet the conceptualization makes people behave in a specific, line-like way. One could argue that the stage is another form of a material anchor. It has features parallel to the watch anchor (complex construal of the fictional storyworld as a separate space) and those parallel to line anchor (people orient themselves on the stage and next to it in ways that respect the conceptual set-up – as we have seen, they can even talk to it). Overall, we have to share an understanding of the fact that the stage is conceptually independent of the rest of the world we live in, that only those participating in a construal called a play have the true right to be there, but would not speak in their own words, etc. The imaginary line dividing the stage from the audience, regardless of its history and increasing permeability, is still a material anchor separating the real world from the storyworld. The complexity of the compressions is enormous, but the point is very much in agreement with Hutchins' idea – we are offloading the entire concept of theatre onto such material and spatial conventions and we adjust our behaviour accordingly. It is thanks to these anchors that the material modality of theatre regulates how we read what is being done and said. And importantly, if a play is being staged on an open lawn rather than in a theatre complete with the stage, the curtain, etc., the anchors are figuratively there – we still understand the experience based on the conceptualizations, not just their material representations.

I have built on the idea of anchors before, when I proposed the concept of *narrative anchors* – expressions that evoke elements of the storyworld which help the reader construct the major aspects of the story the text tells (Dancygier

2007, 2008, 2012). For example, in a rather simple case, the idea of 'the green light' across the water is what allows us to construe the meaning of *The Great Gatsby* – the distant and underspecified visual marker that encapsulates the lost love. It is just far enough that it has no concrete shape, but it is rich enough in meaning (representing Daisy's new life) to demand complete attention. Narrative anchors are quite often expressions describing a material object – a photograph, an old letter, a key, etc. These are not simply objects (like props) – they allow the story to achieve its coherence and meaning.

Dramatic anchors have a dual function, and they are both material anchors (though only to the ongoing conceptualization of the play's meaning) and narrative anchors, as they contribute to the understanding of the story. They do materially participate in the performance, but they also guide the viewer in constructing the meaning of the play (consider Chekhov's seagull, as one such example).

Another kind of a dramatic anchor in a play is the body, or rather, the viewer's tacit understanding of the nature of movement, embodied responses to stimuli such as cold, pain or exhaustion, but also responses to emotions – crying or laughing, stooping down as a sign of depression, spring in the step as a symptom of health and energy, shivering with excitement, etc. These do not necessarily apply to a specific body of a specific actor, but the viewer brings in a conceptualization of what a body does, what can be done to it and how it may function as a representation of an event. Thus an actor's body, signalling a whole range of physical and emotional responses, becomes an anchor to the embodied and emotional aspects of the events narrated.⁹

In what follows, I will consider two examples from Shakespeare's plays where material objects function as dramatic anchors, not just props, and where embodiment is evoked for purposes central to the play.

Caesar's mantle

Julius Caesar focuses on the events surrounding the death of Caesar, the plot leading to the killing, and its consequences. But one of its more memorable scenes is the scene where citizens gather to be present at Caesar's funeral. Even though he was not involved in the plot, Mark Antony is given permission to speak to the crowd – this is the famous 'I come to bury Caesar not to praise him' speech, in which Antony ends up praising Caesar and turning the hearts of the crowd from condemnation of Caesar's life to the desire to avenge his death.¹⁰ After making it clear that the deeds of the killers were by no means honourable and that Caesar was not an evil usurper as he was claimed to be, Antony turns to Caesar's body, waiting to be buried, and to Caesar's mantle,

which he holds up for all to see: 'If you have tears, prepare to shed them now. / You all do know this mantle' (3.2.172-3). Then he reminisces about the first time Caesar wore the mantle, after a victorious battle. The mantle is beginning to function as a dramatic anchor, as it starts to represent the man who owned it – the man who had just been brutally murdered. The cloak evokes not only Caesar, but also the glorious past. The crowd is prompted to recall earlier, happier times of the story, rather than be totally immersed in the current flow of accusations and recriminations. A noble move, and appropriate at a funeral.

But then Antony focuses on the current state of the mantle, showing places where the assassins' daggers hit it. There are several wounds, and then Antony gets to the wound inflicted by Brutus:

Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;
 And as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,
 Mark how the blood of Caesar follow'd it,
 As rushing out of doors, to be resolved
 If Brutus so unkindly knock'd, or no;
 For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel:
 Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him!
 This was the most unkindest cut of all;
 For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,
 Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
 Quite vanquish'd him: then burst his mighty heart;
 (3.2.178-9)

In these lines, Antony is telling the citizens how Caesar died, but while displaying holes and bloody marks on the cloak he is in fact re-enacting the murder for them. They are expected to no longer treat the garment as a simple cloak, Caesar's possession, but as a body, being tormented and wounded in front of their very eyes, by the hands of men who claimed their deed was honourable. Unlike the past of the previously recalled time of glorious victories, this is a recent memory, so fresh that the blood on the cloak may not have completely dried yet. The immediacy makes it more charged.

By using the mantle as a material metonymic device Antony is displaying the scene of murder, calling out the killers' names and showing the gruesome deeds in detail. Most importantly, though, he describes this scene of suffering and cruelty, but does not claim the horrific wounds to be the ultimate cause of Caesar's death. He suffered from the stab wounds, but died out of horror and disappointment at the betrayal of his most beloved Brutus. His description of Caesar in agony over the betrayal, not physical pain, is the most emotionally charged aspect of his speech.

So how does that happen? Why do the citizens cry for Caesar and want to avenge him, when a moment ago they believed he was a cruel tyrant and deserved to die? Of course, they seem to be unusually susceptible to rhetoric, but besides that they saw a performance worthy of the best stage, and their minds responded as the performer intended. Antony starts with the frame of Caesar – the victorious general. He evokes past events, events which are in stark contrast with the accusations of abuse of power. Not everything the play tells happens on stage, so the narrative is here enriched with this flashback, but also a different light is shed on the personality of Caesar. Using the mantle as a metonymic device, Antony conjures up the body of Caesar, in his military glory. But then the same proud body is hurt in cruel ways, and by showing the gashes on the cloak, Antony is in fact showing the gashes in the flesh. He re-enacts the murder scene, not by aligning himself with the killers (this would require acting out the blows), but by pointing to the bodily harms they caused. In effect, he makes the citizens experience the killing right then and there. They are either taking the viewpoint of horrified witnesses or mentally simulating their own vicarious experience of being brutally hurt, first physically and then emotionally. Mental simulation is often described as a source of gut-level understanding of the events being represented – if that is indeed the case, the viewers' reaction, both in the scene and in the theatre, is to align their own bodily potential with the body evoked by the mantle and imagine being stabbed, hurt and also betrayed. Antony is evoking the body to prompt an embodied reaction; he is using a material object (the mantle–material anchor) to evoke past events and recent events of the story (it becomes a narrative anchor) and to simulate embodied experience to prompt empathy and anger, and to give a different interpretation of the recent event – it was not an elimination of a tyrant, it was a brutal killing and a betrayal by the most trusted friend (now the mantle also provides a focus for the interpretation of events in the play, and so becomes a dramatic anchor).

The scene continues in a rather surprising tone. Antony is aware of the effect he has achieved (which obviously he wanted to achieve) and sees the citizens weeping with pity. He makes a rather unusual comment: 'Kind souls, what, weep you when you but behold / Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here, / Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors' (3.2.198-200). This sounds almost as if Antony were dismayed with the force of the spectacle he had staged. He is observing that, strangely enough, people are moved to tears by his re-enactment of a killing, but not by the sight of the wounded, dead body of Caesar. He may just be a sophisticated enough orator to know that a powerful re-enactment of murder is more effective than observing the inactive effect of the crime. He (Shakespeare?) may also be

enough of an intuitive cognitivist to understand that provoking a simulated alignment with the pain and despair of the great man as he is being killed by those closest to him is more emotionally effective than a display of his mutilated and degraded body. But the fact that the comment is made, almost sarcastically, sounds like an acknowledgement of the multimodal power of theatre. Performance is better than static display, objects immersed in events can speak more convincingly than bodies, perception of simulated action is better than only hearing a story. When he later describes himself as having 'neither wit, nor words, nor worth, / Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech' (3.2.224-5) we almost want to cry out – but you know how to use the power of a material anchor and you understand the force of performance; you are a man of the theatre.

Richard's crown and the broken mirror

Unlike the swift and brutal death and deposition of Caesar, Richard II requires a long and painful play to be un-kinged (I use the word instead of 'depose', because much more than loss of title is happening to Richard during the play). As I suggested in earlier work (Dancygier 2012, Chapter 6), Richard's deposition is a process that starts early in the play, even when Bolingbroke still feels obliged to kneel in the presence of his king, and is very consistently built into the up/down opposition, in words, the use of the stage, and people's behaviour. Metaphorically, the opposition is typically understood to evoke a whole range of oppositions: good/bad, happy/depressed, healthy/unhealthy, powerful/powerless or having/not having status. Importantly, the contrast is said to develop into this complex network of opposing meanings on the basis of our embodied sense of well-being. We are active, moving and in control when our body takes the upright posture, and passive, static and unable to control things when we are lying down. One of the most common metaphorical extensions of this essential embodied pattern is into the domain of power and status – the more powerful the person, the higher they are in the hierarchy imposed onto a field of human activity, be it politics, wealth, administrative structure, artistic prestige, etc. It is thus almost natural to see Richard throughout the play talking about himself as moving down. He imagines himself being dead and buried under the surface of the road, as low as one can sink, so that even the lowliest subject can trample on his kingly, then-still-crowned head. He descends from the castle walls to meet Bolingbroke saying, 'Down, down I come', and even though he is actually moving downwards, the meaning obviously signals his premonition of the deposition that will be forced onto him by Bolingbroke.

There are many places in the play where up/down is the central dimension evoked, in all the range of its metaphorical meanings. And in Richard's story the downward spiral presents him as unhappy, powerless, unhealthy, morally suspect and, eventually, dead. The whole spectrum of 'down' meanings is there, built into language, the material form of the stage, movement, use of space, gesture – all the modalities of the performance.

Then comes the deposition scene. Everything is clear, and nobody has any doubts about Richard's fate, but the formal deed needs to be done. Importantly, Richard needs to cooperate in this. Thus the Duke of York tells him he should give up the crown out of his 'own good will', even though he is in fact being brutally removed. Richard is very much aware of the mockery of his own good will in the act and so decides to make it into a performance. In this, he will use the one material object that physically will pass from the current king to the next one, as a symbol of the transfer of the title – the crown. He thus holds the crown and asks Bolingbroke to hold it on the other side, and so they stand, both holding on to the crown (and the title), while Richard talks about his grief. As a performative choice, it is a very strange solution, and not a very dignified one. The two men, two kings, are holding on to a crown, but neither of them is wearing it, nor is there any sort of ritual transfer, though one might expect that Richard would take the crown off his head (where it marks him as king, while in his hand it does not) and an appropriate official would put it on Henry's head. This would not be an official coronation, but a good enough performance (with the use material objects, of course) of the transfer of power.

In the actual scene the two men stand there for a bit, very unnaturally, and so narratively this is a moment of stasis. It is not unusual that an unnatural moment of inaction is built into a play to extend the narrative time taken up by an important event. What naturally can take seconds, may take minutes on the stage, so that the importance of the event is appreciated. Meanwhile, Richard evokes several important embodied dimensions – up and down (again), weight, motion and visibility:

Now is this golden crown like a deep well
That owes two buckets, filling one another,
The emptier ever dancing in the air,
The other down, unseen and full of water:
That bucket down and full of tears am I,
Drinking my griefs, whilst you mount up on high.

(4.1.184-9)

The metaphor of the two buckets is almost unseemly considering the high stakes and the importance of both men. But Richard plays on the oppositions

which depict Bolingbroke's success and his own degradation. Richard's bucket is down, but because it is in the well, it is also invisible, and immobilized by its own weight, while Bolingbroke's bucket is up high, light and 'dancing in the air'. Importantly, the image Richard creates is not that of transfer (which would be expected), and the up/down dimension is only the result of the contrast between being free of the burdens of life and being weighed down by them. Additionally, the movement of the two buckets (and men) is connected – when Richard goes down, Bolingbroke goes up. One could argue that even though throughout the play Richard has been portraying himself consistently as 'down', here he is primarily presenting himself as powerless, overburdened by grief, removed from the attention of the world in which he used to exist and connected in a mirror-image way with the fate of the man who wants to destroy him. The crown is the cause of all this, but, for now at least, Richard and Henry are in a political sense in the same situation – they are both holding on to the crown, but they are not kings, either one of them. One is on his way up, the other on his way down. But while they both hold the crown, they share it, and as Richard describes himself to be the king of his griefs, they have to share those too.

The meaning potential of the two objects evoked in the scene – the crown which is materially there and the well with its two buckets imagined by Richard is constructed through evocation of the frames, through exploiting spatial and embodied schemas to build metaphorical meanings and through the inaction and the awkward situation of the main characters. As in other cases, the crucial scene achieves its meaning multimodally – through language, the bodies and their posture, material objects (whether actual or imagined) and the strange lack of motion and action.

In the next part of the scene, Richard calls for a mirror: 'Let it command a mirror hither straight, / That it may show me what a face I have, / Since it is bankrupt of his majesty' (4.1.65-7). The scene that unfolds, at the end of which Richard shatters the mirror, has often been talked about as a closure of the drama of Richard's two bodies – the body natural and the body politic. The shattering of the mirror is then read as the final and irrevocable destruction of Richard's body politic – his existence as a king. I want to suggest that the meaning here is much more complex. Starting with the very meaning of the mirror (described in detail in Cook 2010), we need to consider the material aspects of what the object does and could mean. A mirror gives a reflection of the object placed in front of it – an image that should faithfully represent the reality. This literal meaning is often exploited based on the conceptualization that a representation of reality could be construed as a different type of reality. In literature, mirrors are often used to exploit the idea that when a person looks in the mirror, they see the image of themselves that they normally do

not see, for obvious reasons – one cannot see one's own face. So in various novels, characters are described looking in the mirror and seeing someone else – a parent whose influence affects their life, a person they would like to be or the person others would want to see in them. So yes, it is natural to think about mirrors as not mere reflectors of reality.

In the play, Richard wants to see his face. When asked to read deposition documents while the mirror is being brought, he refuses, saying he will read 'himself', like a book, when looking in the mirror. He looks to see if the change in his situation has changed him in a visible way. Metaphorically, however, vision is very often used to represent knowledge and understanding, so we can assume that Richard needs to understand the degree to which the changes in his life affected him as a person. Moreover, the repeated use of word 'face' is important here, in terms of the aspects of embodiment involved. Richard does not just talk about seeing 'himself' – the whole person, body and soul. The face is the central representation of the person, one which reflects not only age and looks, but also any emotional expression. We know people's feelings often from their body posture, but the face is the best indicator of the inner person. What Richard seems to be trying to see in the mirror is precisely that – the inner person that he cannot otherwise observe. In a metaphorical sense, he tries to look himself in the eye.

The material features of the mirror have an important role to play as well, as the final comment Richard makes is about fragility. He talks about the fragility of worldly glory, but also of the face again – the reflection of his inner person he has just looked at: 'A brittle glory shineth in this face: / As brittle as the glory is the face' (4.1.287-8). Having said this, he shatters the mirror, and the reflection of his inner self along with it. The looking glass anchor thus relies on the material features of the mirror – its ability to show what we otherwise cannot see, its ability to reveal something about the person who looks into it, and its fragility. That fragility, or the ability to fall apart easily is what mirrors share with some construals of human psychology. We can talk about a person being 'shattered' to mean that their emotional persona has suffered. The self is often talked about as a brittle object as well (we often say 'I'm falling apart', or 'I'm in pieces'). Based on these features we can interpret the mirror as a means Richard uses to think about himself from his own personal perspective (to 'read' his own face), not from the 'royal' perspective everyone else takes. He also talks about the 'face' (the inner self) being brittle. In its final moment, when the mirror is shattered, the scene gives a material form to the idea of his spirit being shattered and no longer unified, coherent and whole. Under this interpretation, the mirror is a dramatic anchor that completes our understanding of Richard's story and refocuses it from the very obvious political level to an equally important personal level. Richard as

a former king stands there, humiliated, while the other Richard, the inner self that has suffered so much, is now broken beyond repair.

To sum up, the material presence and nature of the mirror evokes a range of meanings that make it in to an effective narrative anchor. The onstage performance of its potential transforms it further into a dramatic anchor – an element of the play that builds on its multimodality and material nature to construct narrative and literary meaning.

Conclusion

Multimodality of theatre is the source of not only its meaning potential, but also of its complexity. The interaction between the material, the embodied and the linguistic is intricate, and relies on a number of dimensions: visual perception, frame evocation, conceptualization of the human body, understanding of space and, last but not least, the language. But the use of language in a play is not only an independent though important modality, it also supports other modalities in very specific ways. Highlighting the frames, clarifying the nature of events observed and foregrounding the metaphorical meanings of material occurrences are just some of the roles language plays. In future work, we should attempt to untangle the net of various relationships among the modalities. But also, we may find inspiration in other forms of creativity where multimodality is the primary feature of meaning construction.

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Theatre, Performance and Cognition

Languages, Bodies and Ecologies

Edited by

Rhonda Blair and Amy Cook

Bloomsbury Methuen Drama

An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

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Contents

Bloomsbury Methuen Drama

An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

Imprint previously known as Methuen Drama

50 Bedford Square
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1385 Broadway
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USA

www.bloomsbury.com

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First published 2016

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-4725-9179-1
PB: 978-1-4725-9178-4
ePDF: 978-1-4725-9181-4
ePub: 978-1-4725-9180-7

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Typeset by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India
Printed and bound in Great Britain

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Acknowledgements

This work came out of several years of working with the American Society for Theatre Research's Working Group in Cognitive Science in Theatre, Dance, and Performance. Some of the usual suspects who deserve mention: John Lutterbie, Bruce McConachie, Rick Kemp, Naomi Rokotnitz, Stanton Garner, Diana Calderazzo, Nicola Shaughnessy, Pamela Decker, Vanille Roche-Fogli, Maiya Murphy, Sara Taylor, Teemu Paavolainen, David Bisaha, Stephen DiBenedetto, Eric Heaps, Vivian Appler, Laura Lodewyck, Collin Bjork, Slade Billew, Gabriele Sofia and many others.

The book came together thanks to key help from Kristin Leadbetter and Daniel Irving.

Rhonda Blair thanks Southern Methodist University's University Research Council and SMU's Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute for financial assistance; Robert Howell for collaboration cochairing the Situated Self seminar and for valuable conversations about intersections of philosophy and cognitive science that have informed her thinking for this book. For his unending support, she would like to thank Bill Beach.

Amy Cook thanks Indiana University's College of Arts and Sciences for travel support and Stony Brook University's Center for Embodied Cognition, Creativity and Performance for intellectual travel. For emotional travel and support, she would like to thank Ken Weitzman.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 Some of this section is derived from Rhonda Blair and John Lutterbie, 'Introduction: *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism's* Special Section on Cognitive Studies, Theatre and Performance', *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, Vol. XXV, No. 2 (Spring 2011), pp. 61–70.
- 2 In addition, a growing bibliography and resources can be found at <http://performancesciencescreativity.com>.

Chapter 1

- 1 Examples of Evol's work can be found at <http://www.nimball.com/evol.html>.
- 2 An image can be found in the following website: <http://www.artfido.com/blog/the-most-creative-sculptures-and-statues-from-around-the-world/>, image number 4.
- 3 A good overview of the issues can be found in Fillmore (1997); for a discussion of cultural specificity of deixis, see Hanks (1990). Deixis in narratives is broadly discussed in Duchan, Bruder and Hewitt (1995).
- 4 This concept is further complicated by Weimann's (2000) division into locus and platea.
- 5 I use the term 'blend' on the basis of the theory of conceptual integration, proposed in Fauconnier and Turner (2002).
- 6 For a discussion of these divisions from an historical perspective, rather than a linguistic one, see Robert Weimann (1987).
- 7 All references to Shakespeare's plays are from: Shakespeare, William. 1994. *The Complete Works*. The Shakespeare Head Press Oxford Edition. New York: Barnes & Noble Books.
- 8 In an earlier work, Dancygier (2012), I discussed one of these forms in some detail, as a linguistic construction used in poetry and on stage.
- 9 Much of the current understanding of the role of the body builds on the theory of embodied cognition. A number of scholars Johnson (1987 and 2007), Gallagher (2005), Prinz (2002 and 2004), Gibbs (2005) and Shapiro (2010) now follow the general assumption whereby much of human cognition, including the use of language, understanding of emotions, etc. is centrally rooted on embodiment.
- 10 Elsewhere cf. Dancygier (2010), I discussed the speech from the perspective of its use of negation; the reader may also be interested in the work on the use of gesture in *Julius Caesar* (Sweetser 2004, Seymour *this volume*).

Chapter 2

- 1 Thanks to Amy Cook, Rhonda Blair, Gillian Woods, Laura Salisbury and Isabel Davis, and to Raphael Lyne and the other participants of the Renaissance kinesiology workshop in honour of Guillemette Bolens at Cambridge on 25–27 September 2014, for their suggestions on this chapter.
- 2 First published in 1623 in the First Folio, the play was probably first performed in 1599. The tourist Thomas Platter's diary records visiting the newly opened Globe around 2.00 pm on 21 September 1599 to see *Julius Caesar*.
- 3 North's conspirators simply 'press' close to Caesar.
- 4 Oxford English Dictionary, online version, 'petty', *adj.* and *n.*
- 5 For instance, Gervase Babington (1592: X7^r), who would become Bishop of Worcester, states of 'kneeling & bowing', 'outward gesture dooth helpe our inward heart, and stir us vp rather to reuerence'. Ramie Targoff provides a good discussion of these ideas (2001: 4). The earliest discussion of kneeling in the West, by Peter Cantor in the twelfth century, focuses on the cognitive effects of kneeling, see Trexler (1987).
- 6 Oxford English Dictionary, online version, 'boot', *adj.* 1; 'boot', *n.* 1.
- 7 She continues, 'In so far as the influence of habit causes a translation of soul into body and body into soul, these two will form a unity-in-separation, an absolute unity without fusion. ... Between container and contained, a reversible relation abolishes the partition between exterior and interior, allowing soul – henceforth constituted as "Self" – to relate to the world, the real externality', relating to the world in a way that reflects the world back into self-consciousness.
- 8 See for instance, Lutterbie (2011).
- 9 In the prompt book for this production, scene 3.1 is labelled 'THEN FALL, CAESAR', in pencil, suggesting that this image of falling was central to the cast's interpretation of the play Rylance (1999b: 31).
- 10 For instance, the 5th move is as follows: 'Caesar grabs Metellus right arm. Caesar circles with Metellus, holding Metellus' sword arm, and points sword' Rylance (1999a).
- 11 Michael Billington, 'Saturday Review', *Guardian*, 29 May 1999: 4.
- 12 This theatre, opened in September 2014, is a reconstruction of what is believed to be the first Shakespearean theatre to be built in continental Europe during Shakespeare's lifetime. The original site housed travelling players from England who performed classics (including Shakespeare's *Hamlet*) to Baltic theatre lovers.
- 13 Lloyd (2013: 18) analogizes the lack of freedom in contemporary prisons and the way in which 'for the conspirators, Caesar represented an erosion of fundamental civil rights so huge, so towering, terrifying and confining that the conspirators believed they were in a prison'. Harriet Walter