

Theatre and Value: Confounding as Dismasure in David Greig's *The Events*

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Abstract: In this article, author addresses the politico-aesthetic value of David Greig's *The Events* (2013) in the context of globalization. Globalization is characterized as a moment in our history which is highly marked by the ideology of the "individual", of categories, and of separateness, which not only impacts the way we see ourselves and the world but also the mode in which we think, feel, and do things, preventing connectedness from fundamentally occurring. Greig's theatre has a politico-aesthetic value because it generates confounding – a formal strategy that precipitates the undoing of categories by unmarking their contours – responding and critiquing the global imperative of individualism and objecthood. Confounding introduces "dismasure" (Pascal Gielen) – an amalgamation of concepts which can be equated with difference, variety, dissensus, and different perspectives – in culture by offering unbound versions of bodies as well as other categories. Value is further produced, because through these strategies of confounding which generate dismeasure a sense of interconnection, interdependence, and co-responsibility is conceptually suggested and blown onto the spectator and her outlook on the world. In other words, the value of Greig's theatre lies in the fact that it shatters the compartmentalization of bodies, worlds, and thinking, suggesting a sense of interconnectedness.

Keywords: David Greig, value, confounding, dismeasure, *The Events*, globalization

An overview of the intersection of theatre and value in theatre and performance scholarship at present reveals an interest in the topic from the perspective of audience response. This trend is present in articles such as Janelle Reinelt's "What UK Spectators Know: Understanding How We Come to Value Theatre"¹, books such as Kirsty Sedgman's *Locating the Audience: How People Found Value in National Theatre Wales* (2016), and funded projects such as "Theatre Spectatorship and Value Attribution" (2014) carried out by Janelle

1 REINELT, J. (P.I.) – EDGAR, D. – MEGSON, Ch. – REBELLATO, D. – WILKINSON, J. – WODDIS, J. *Critical Mass: Theatre Spectatorship and Value Attribution*, 2014. [online]. [cit. 14. 8. 2017]. Available at: <http://britishtheatreconference.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Critical-Mass-10.7.pdf>.

Reinelt (P. I.), David Edgar, Chris Megson, Dan Rebellato, Julie Wilkinson, and Jane Woddis, and “Measuring the Value of Theatre for Tyneside Audiences” (2015) carried out by Joshua Edelman and Maja Šorli. The craze for measurement has also reached applied practices; see, for instance, Matthew Reason and Nick Rowe’s *Applied Practice: Evidence and Impact in Theatre, Music and Art* (2017). This is, of course, a non-exhaustive exploration of a now vast field.

Perhaps impact-based research’s motivation is not just a genuine interest in understanding audience response, among other phenomena, but is also in actually responding to the constant accusation that the arts have no value. For instance, if a point about the cultural value of performance needs to be made – Adrian Heathfield was co-director of Performance Matters, a four-year AHRC funded research project on the cultural value of performance (2009 to 2013) – it is somehow because that recognition does not generally exist. Funding towards the arts and artistic education has been under attack since 2010, when the coalition government in the United Kingdom introduced severe cuts to the sector even though we know that the arts generate more value compared to the amount of funding they receive. As the Precarious Workers’ Brigade claim, “the humanities, critical studies, and reflective practices in further education, that kind of trajectory, is under attack. It is not valued for its capacity to produce a certain kind of subject”².

All of this is happening in a world where value standards are set, for instance, by Mark Zuckerberg’s catchy mantra: “Move fast and break things”³, and where political institutions, once perhaps appreciated for their legitimacy, have lost their value to citizens across the globe to a certain extent. In this context, addressing the question of value⁴ and value in the arts seems

2 LIVERGANT, E. Learning to Stand Together. Elyssa Livergant Interviews Precarious Workers’ Brigade. In *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 2017. [online]. [cit. 1. 9. 2017]. Available at: <https://www.contemporarytheatrereview.org/2017/precious-workers-brigade/>.

3 “It [Move fast and break things] meant that new tools and features on the platform might not be perfect, but creation speed was key, even if there were some missteps along the way.” In MURPHY, S. *Facebook Changes Its ‘Move Fast and Break Things’ Motto*. [cit. 16. 8. 2017]. Available at: <http://mashable.com/2014/04/30/facebooks-new-mantra-move-fast-with-stability/#gwXbzsbIRPqn>. Facebook’s CEO lately argued for a less attractive but more realistic motto, “Move Fast with Stable Infra”, which emphasizes stability and getting things right from the beginning.

4 Some straightforward definitions of value are the usefulness or importance of something, the monetary worth of something, and the exchangeability of something. “Values” in the plural can designate the moral worth of something.

as urgent as ever, and yet it is an ancient preoccupation as well. Plato's "banishment of the poets from *The Republic* led to the development of a *positive* but defensive case for the arts, which included both self-improvement (through the cathartic and educative effect of theatre) and civic-improvement (through either distracting the populace from less savoury activity or promoting received ideas)"⁵. Two thousand years later, Barry Freeman and Kathleen Gallagher ask in their work *In Defence of Theatre: Aesthetic Practices and Social Interventions*: "What are the virtues and values of theatre and performance that, if not unique, are at least especially important today?"⁶

A possible way of thinking about the value of theatre (deviating now from quantifiable methods) is theatre's arguable need for presence: "The need for presence in theatre, the need to *be there*, however inconvenient, may be among the things that make it so valuable."⁷ Presence can indeed be a quite subversive concept in the context of globalization, attaching, as it does, value to a time that "we" supposedly do not have (because "we" are presumably too busy) and to a place (and a space for art) which constantly struggles to subsist under the threat of austerity and/or precarity. Besides, presence in the theatre necessarily means co-presence and potentially "the power to make us think together"⁸, which surely might encapsulate some value. But theatre has a need for something else, and that is stories. Cognitivists are among those who would argue for the power of stories because they conform an identity. In other words, the stories we tell ourselves and each other shape who we are. If who we become together is important, then it seems legitimate to say that engaging in story-telling practices has some kind of value.

As Erin Hurley states in *Theatre & Feeling*, "[t]heatre traffics frequently and fundamentally in feeling in all its forms – affect, sensation, emotion, mood"⁹. Although that "trafficking" can, of course, be used for different purposes, there is possibly value just in the invoking of feeling, in the sheer reminder that "we" are sentient beings, who in a clear context of precarious-

5 EDELMAN, J. – ŠORLI, M. – ROBINSON, M. *The Value of Theatre and Dance for Tyneside's Audiences*. [cit. 5. 9. 2017]. Available at: http://www.theemptyspace.org.uk/documents/_view/545f689c7bbb88fd2f8b4576.

6 FREEMAN, B. – GALLAGHER, K. *In Defence of Theatre: Aesthetic Practices and Social Interventions*. Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 2016, p. 2.

7 Ibid, p. 8.

8 STENGERS, I. The Care of the Possible: Isabelle Stengers Interviewed by Erik Bordeleau. In *Scapegoat*, 2010, Vol. 1, p. 17.

9 HURLEY, E. *Theatre & Feeling*. Basingstoke ; New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 4.

ness, both ontological and political, should have time and space to feel. Looking at a different sense of affect, Judith Butler has consistently suggested that we are disposed to feel in certain ways, within certain affective circuits which do not recognize “the equal value of lives”¹⁰. As Rebecca Schneider summarizes for us, “[a]n accounting for lives as valued and deaths as grievable is, she [Butler] argues, essential to the maintenance of a public in which persons *appear* to have rights”¹¹. Similarly, Sarah Ahmed argues that “emotionality as a claim about a subject or a collective is clearly dependent on relations of power, which endow ‘others’ with meaning and value”¹². The value of theatre in this context would be to uphold those invisible and ungrievable as visible and grievable, and position these persons within circuits of affect. Indeed, given that “not only do the stateless or migrant or *sans papiers* exist precariously, but ‘the public’s’ capacity to even ‘apprehend’ (which is not the same as recognize) these persons as live or as dead – as injurable – is also precarious”¹³. Theatre can contribute towards facilitating this apprehension.

Another way of thinking about value in the theatre is its capacity to reconnect perception and experience. As Nicholas Ridout claims in *Theatre & Ethics*: “Theatre reconnects perception and experience, thus perhaps healing wounds which are both personal (psychological) and social (political).”¹⁴ This is particularly so “in theatrical situations in which the audience is actively aware of its own participation in the event rather than a passive recipient of media saturation”¹⁵. Perhaps the value of theatre lies in its raising attention to our “capacity to do and be part of things”, i.e., in its potentially making us feel part of a network of relations and actions. Echoing Jean Luc-Nancy’s seminal *The Inoperative Community* (1991), the value of theatre lies in its suggesting (and potentially making us feel) our existence as being-with.

Although this article endorses claims such as: “Theatre is valuable in and of itself (...) Society needs theatre.”¹⁶ It is central to signpost that:

10 SCHNEIDER, R. It Seems As If... I Am Dead: Zombie Capitalism and Theatrical Labor. In *TDR: The Drama Review*, 2012, Vol. 56, No. 4, p. 150.

11 *Ibid*, p. 151.

12 AHMED, S. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. London ; New York : Routledge, 2004, p. 4.

13 SCHNEIDER, R. It Seems As If... I Am Dead: Zombie Capitalism and Theatrical Labor. In *TDR: The Drama Review*, p. 152.

14 RIDOUT, N. *Theatre & Ethics*. Basingstoke ; New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 58.

15 *Ibid*.

16 CAREY, A. – RAUCH, B. Foreword: Audience Revolution. In *Caridad Svich. Audience (R)evolutions: Dispatches from the Field*. New York : Theatre Communications Group, Inc, 2016, p. xii.

“The values that guide people are not ‘natural,’ transcendent, timeless, God-given, or inalienable. Values belong to ideology, science, the arts, religion, politics, and other areas of human endeavor and inquiry. Values are hard-won and contingent, changing over time according to social and historical circumstances. Values are a function of cultures, groups, and individuals. Values can be used to protect and liberate or to control and oppress.”¹⁷

This reveals, among other things, our power as far as values’ formation and existence are concerned. People and/or society create a value by deciding where they attach that value. For that value to remain attached to those specific things, practices, codes, and so on, it needs to be practised. This may mean that a signifying practice such as theatre can participate in the placing and maintaining of a value. This also means that when we talk about value in the theatre, we talk about value *across* it; value traverses us and includes society, life beyond the theatre, and the community as a whole. Theatre interested in value/s is intrinsically a theatre which connects with the real world. A value (as a practice rather than a quality) is then co-generated, acted upon, and lived through and beyond theatre. The question of value is therefore a question of culture and public space, where theatre can be seen as a “valuable” participant.

The politics of “aesthetics”: dismeasuring by confounding

This brings us to the work of the sociologist Pascal Gielen. In a keynote address at “The Art of Valuing: Between Evidence and Evidence-Based” event organized by the International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM), which took place in Brussels in February 2015, Gielen commented on the results of “The Value of Culture” research report by saying it was “an investigative report, in which Pascal Gielen (along with a team of sociologists, economists, philosophers, and psychologists from the University of Groningen) assembled a series of research results on the value, meaning, and impact of the arts and culture on people within society.”¹⁸

17 SCHECHNER, R. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. London ; New York : Routledge, 2013, p. 1.

18 GIELEN, P. No Culture, No Europe. In *The art of Valuing*. [cit. 16. 8. 2018]. Available at: https://www.ietm.org/en/system/files/publications/150401_ietm_the_art_of_valuing_opening_speeches.pdf.

According to Gielen, culture is about “giving meaning to human existence in society”; culture is a process of sense-making.¹⁹ However, Gielen argues that we are undergoing a crisis of sense-making because there is no trust in democracy and in political institutions. In other words, our failure to make sense, to make meaning, and to enact significant practices which confer meaning to our lives reveals itself in the failure of politics.²⁰ If there is no trust in governments, this is therefore a cultural problem. Gielen argues that the riots in London in 2011 were treated as senseless violence. This unfortunately means that value is placed in this society/culture in senselessness (and “the unimaginable”). For anybody who has seen and/or suffered inequality and injustice upfront, it does not take a lot to imagine the worst of evils being unleashed. Sociologists like Zygmunt Bauman quickly pointed out that there is “meaning” to this violence, that there is “sense” in the riots, which defies society’s value of senselessness and meaninglessness.²¹ In this context, the value of (art and) theatre is in its conferring of meaning to human life and our practices.

This process of sense-making specifically occurs through what Gielen calls “dismeasure”²². As Gielen puts it, “[a]rt introduces dismeasure in culture” when it shows that “there can always be different views [and] opinions”²³ and when it confronts people with something and twists their perception. In other words, culture is a reservoir to give meaning/significance to ourselves and give meaning by bringing dismeasure to people’s lives. Theatre can then be understood as a signifying (and therefore valuable) practice, because it introduces dismeasure into our lives by potentially creating new meanings, exposing dif-

19 Ibid.

20 See Pascal Gielen’s edited volume *No Culture, No Europe: On the Foundation of Politics*. The book’s central position is that “culture is the basic source to give meaning and form to societies. It is the essential, binding fabric of investigating and assessing identity, human activities and political awareness, enabling us to act politically”. Available at: <http://www.valiz.nl/en/publications/no-culture-no-europe.html>.

21 In this context, Sophie Nield has read the London riots as theatrical acts that stage tactics of resistance performed by those excluded from representation and exempted from meaning.

22 See GIELEN, P. – ELKHUIZEN, S. – VAN DEN HOOGEN, Q. – LIJSTER, T. – OTTE, H. *Culture – The Substructure for a European Common*. Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2015. [online]. [cit. 16. 8. 2017]. Available at: <http://nck.pl/media/attachments/317242/Culture%2C%20the%20substructure%20for%20a%20European%20common.pdf>.

23 GIELEN, P. *No Culture, No Europe*. In *The art of Valuing*. [cit. 16. 8. 2018]. Available at: https://www.ietm.org/en/system/files/publications/150401_ietm_the_art_of_valuing_opening_speeches.pdf.

ferent views, using contradiction, antagonism and dissensus, and encouraging dialogue and debate.²⁴ New significations, sense, and identities arising from this dismeasuring²⁵ might urge people to take meaning for themselves and see that they actually have meaning, that they are meaningful, that their lives make sense and take place, and that they (“we”) exist.²⁶ A specific strategy that arguably produces dismeasure in David Greig’s work is that of confounding. In an article published in *The Guardian*, Forced Entertainment’s artistic director Tim Etchells claims: “I’ve seen this many times in performances by the brilliant French choreographer Jerome Bel and by the Belgian avant-gardist Jan Fabre. Both excel in creating a space of confounding contradiction which can produce extraordinary reactions.”²⁷ In this article, I argue for the value of confounding in the work of Greig, who is a Scottish playwright.

One of the logics that globalization defends most ardently (and therefore places value upon) is that of individuality, categorization, and compartmentalization, and the ensuing senses of isolation, separation, and containment. Needless to say, this makes the world more quantifiable and measurable. Although I use the word “globalization” to describe the networked, going-global, interpenetrating character of our times, I also use it to describe the implementation of the doctrine that has given way to, or at least enormously shaped, that character. In the second sense then, globalization may generally be described as “global neo-liberalism, the global extension of capitalism under neo-liberal policies”²⁸ and as the very project and/or narrative that un-

24 By introducing dismeasure in our life, art could contribute to what Jacques Rancière calls “the redistribution of the sensible”: “a way of redistributing the objects and images that comprise the common world as it is already given, or of creating situations apt to modify our gazes and our attitudes with respect to this collective environment”. See RANCIÈRE, J. *Aesthetics and its Discontents*. London: Polity Press, 2009, p. 21.

25 The concept of “dismasure” is very close to what Maria Magdalena Schwaegermann understands as politics in the arts: “It’s a question of showing the public different positions, also unfamiliar positions, and cultural differences and in doing so, taking away reservations and anxieties in order to create openness, curiosity, and at best tolerance.” See HAMILTON, M. Arts and Politics and the Zürcher Theater Spektakel. Maria Magdalena Schwaegermann talks with Margaret Hamilton. In *Performance Paradigm*, 2007, Vol. 3, p. 3.

26 All of this means that meaning, and therefore what we decide to place value on, is a changeable thing denoting dynamism and process, which reflects that culture embeds politics and that the dismeasuring potentially provoked by theatre is highly political.

27 ETHELLES, T. The Crying Game of Theatre. In *The Guardian*, 2009. [cit. 5. 12. 2017]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2009/aug/28/crying-theatre>.

28 Cf. REBELLATO, D. From the State of the Nation to Globalisation: Shifting Political Agendas in Contemporary British Playwriting. In *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British*

derpins that extension to every nook and corner of the globe. In this context, I understand neoliberalism as:

“...a revived form of liberalism which thrived first in Britain in the seventeenth century and which recognizes and *prioritizes the individual's* right to seek self-fulfilment and to do so in conditions unrestricted by state-instituted regulations, such as the requirements to pay appropriate taxes, to heed trade restrictions or to observe employment laws pertaining to hiring, firing and paying workers”²⁹.

This is how it is flagged in Jen Harvie's description, or as Kenan Malik puts it, “[a]t the heart of [neo]liberalism stands the individual”³⁰. As Laurent Berlant has it, “neoliberalism’ [...] produces subjects who serve its interests”³¹. In *Liquid Fear*, Zygmunt Bauman argues that “[i]n the liquid modern society of consumers, each individual member is instructed, trained, and groomed to pursue individual happiness by individual means and through individual efforts”³².

This logic of individuality and “subjecthood” also extends to objects. To put it bluntly, and following Dan Rebellato, use-values (e.g., friendship) have become exchange-values (e.g., money) under globalization, and “[f]or these use-values to function effectively as exchange-values, they must acquire a certain objecthood: that is, they must become regular, bounded, self-contained”³³.

My argument is that confounding – the e/affect of bodies, categories, and structures becoming undone, unmarked, and unbounded, which characterizes Greig's work – produces dismeasure because it disrupts the described logic of individualism, confinement, and objecthood. Beyond destabilizing that particular globalization narrative, I also argue that Greig's theatre's strategies of confounding potentially produce senses of interdependence, co-responsibility, and interconnectedness. It is in this context that I understand

and Irish Drama (Eds. Nadine Holdsworth, Mary Luckhurst). Oxford : Blackwell, 2007, p. 250.

29 HARVIE, J. *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*. Basingstoke ; New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 12.

30 MALIK, K. Liberalism is Suffering But Democracy is Doing Just Fine. In *The Observer*, 2017, p. 37, (1. 1. 2017).

31 BERLANT, L. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham : Duke UP, 2011, p. 15.

32 BAUMAN, Z. *Liquid Fear*. Cambridge ; Malden : Polity, 2006, p. 48.

33 REBELLATO, D. Exit the Author. In *Vicky Angelaki. Contemporary British Theatre: Breaking New Ground*. Basingstoke ; New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 26.

confounding in Greig's work in relation to aesthetics, ethics, and politics. Indeed, I am not the first to consider aesthetics, ethics, and politics in unison. For instance, Alan Read has argued that "[i]t is not sufficient to address the 'politics of theatre' alone, the structures of funding, arts policies and jurisdictions, but in a remedial act, a practice which combines poetics and ethics, rethink what the theatre and its politics might be"³⁴. In addition, Ridout has claimed that "[a]esthetic experience becomes the condition of possibility for a particular kind of ethical relationship. The ethical relationship becomes, in its turn, the ground upon which political action might be attempted"³⁵.

In a Rancierian manner, and in my conception, aesthetics is not primarily concerned with theories of taste, as a discipline that studies art, but is rather understood within the framework of social and political reality and the potential specific repercussions of form and formal experimentation. Ethics is approached beyond Emmanuel Levinas's "the face of the Other"; it is understood as global ethics, where obligations go beyond physical and cultural proximity.³⁶ In my work on Greig, I have recurrently argued that a sense of ethics is injected in form – hence aesthetics – leaving plays injured and forms wounded.³⁷ Metaphorically, confounding usually implies violence as well because it means that structures are traversed, that contours are undone, that frames are removed, that walls are torn, that bodies reach out, and so on and so forth. The politics of aesthetics reside in confounding's capacity (among other formal strategies) to undo one of the most entrenched logics under globalization and the potential resonances that unmarking might have.

The value of confounding/dismasure (and measure) in *The Events*

Mechanisms of confounding – whereby bodies, categories, and structures become undone – are pervasive in Greig's work. However, this article is focused on confounding in *The Events* (2013), which is a play about extreme

34 READ, A. *Theatre and Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance*. London ; New York : Routledge, 1995, p. 2.

35 RIDOUT, N. *Theatre & Ethics*, p. 66.

36 See BUTLER, J. Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation. In *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 2012, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 134–151.

37 Hans-Thies Lehmann has expressed this idea in one of his articles, whose title is self-explanatory. See LEHMANN, H.-T. When Rage Coagulates into Form ...: On Jan Fabres 'Aesthetics of Poison'. In *Theaterschrift*, 1993, Vol. 3, pp. 90–103.

violent acts and specifically their traumatic aftermath. Although set in Scotland, it draws on the events in Oslo and Utoya in 2011, when Anders Behring Breivik killed 77 people in the name of white supremacy and a Christian and non-multicultural Europe. There are four characters: the Boy (the killer), Claire (a survivor and witness of the massacre), the Choir (those murdered), and the Repetiteur (who guides the choir by singing with them and playing the piano). The Choir is performed by real choirs which are from the places the performance takes place, and they change every night. This points out themes such as belonging, locality, and community. By implication, the play seems to suggest that this atrocity could happen not just to those kids in Utoya, among other victims, or kids in school shootings, but to any group of people. During the play, the spectator witnesses a mixture of dialogue, monologue, and lots of songs. The snap-shot-like, non-linear scenes have the purpose of delving into Claire's mental state and the Boy's motivations and unfolding landscapes of empathy, pain, suffering, and trauma, where the audience could possibly find a sense of healing.

The argument in this section is that several elements in *The Events* – primarily characters, space-time, and story/structure – are both carefully laid out as bounded categories and astutely undone to produce confounding and thus dismeasure. As I have argued before, confounding critiques the global logic of individuation, bringing about value through dismeasure.

In terms of character, characters in *The Events* step out of dramatic character. For instance, Claire announces with a clear Brechtian influence “[t]he father”, “[t]he friend”, and “[t]he politician”³⁸ with whom she has conversations about the Boy. All these people, related to the Boy, are in fact all performed by the Boy, confounding who the Boy is or seems to be. In addition, the Boy is performed by non-Caucasian actors (United Kingdom casts), clearly problematizing issues of multiculturalism, social identity under globalization, immigration, and locality.³⁹ In so doing, the play confounds in an unresolvable way the identity and individuality of the killer, asking pressing questions about belonging, community, and responsibility.

38 Cf. GREIG, D. *The Events*. London : Faber & Faber, 2013, pp. 25–31.

39 In Drammen, Buskerud (Norway), the actor who performed the Boy was “white and bearded, rather than an ethnic ‘outsider’, as he is in the UK production”. See CAVENDISH, D. David Greig: ‘I Always Knew I’d Put The Events in Front of a Norwegian Audience’. In *The Telegraph*, 2016. [cit. 1. 10. 2017]. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/10742089/David-Greig-I-always-knew-I-put-The-Events-in-front-of-a-Norwegian-audience.html>.

On the other hand, the Choir is a multi-tasking entity, which confounds their identity uniquely as a choir. For instance, they are a real choir, very much alive, and yet they also perform as Claire's dead choristers. The prominent presence of real community choirs on stage facing the spectator explores senses of connection between choir members and spectators, producing confounding as to who is who. I would contend that through this sense of confounding, it is suggested that this atrocity could happen to spectators, to any group of people, raising questions about common vulnerability.

As far as space-time is concerned, there is an unrestrained non-linearity and a sense of bleeding across of space-times. For instance, *The Events* intermingles the Illawarra River in Australia, "Viking warrior shamen", "Afghanistan", "Somalia", and "Leeds". Time is also epically stretched in *The Events* to encompass current global conflict, including jihadism and previous colonization processes, as seen with the reference to the aboriginal boy who witnessed the arrival of the very first ships from England in Australia.⁴⁰ In addition, Claire enacts different possible scenarios in the play where the life of the Boy takes different paths. In one, the Boy is adopted by Claire; in another, Claire kills him as a baby born with her own hands. All these spaces and times are confounded in the play, leaving the spectator floating in an uncertain yet connected space-time, suggesting perhaps that acts have repercussions along the line across history and geography.

Regarding story and structure, the shape of the narrative is highly fragmented. The form of *The Events* is broken and thus unbounded, undone, and unmarked. Greig has claimed that the play's "whole point" is that "you experience its form"⁴¹, which one could argue is broken and "glued" together in non-linear scenes. It is not only that the world is broken and that "the world breaks everyone", as Ernest Hemingway writes in *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), but also that the play endures, delivers, and stages pain and trauma, confounding whose story this is and to what community this happened. In fact, the play seems to suggest: this is our pain, this is what we have done collectively, this is the world we live in, and when these things happen, they happen to all of us. However, the play simultaneously solicits the possibility of living in a broken way.

The resourceful use of music also has an important confounding func-

40 Cf. GREIG, D. *The Events*, pp. 12–70.

41 GREIG, D. – REBELLATO, D. Dan Rebellato in Conversation with David Greig. In *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 2016. [cit. 15. 4. 2016]. Available at: <http://www.contemporarytheatrerreview.org/2016/interview-with-david-greig/>.

tion adding to the above-described undoings. Song lyrics are occasionally on electronic display, the play consciously combines the emotional with the grotesque, and the spiritual with mainstream music, confounding emotions and muddling notions of sadness, empathy, forgiveness, revenge, and so on and so forth. In my experience as a spectator, at times I really did not know whether to laugh or cry, or both, which highlights a strong confounding of emotional responses and reactions.

By refusing to locate the events in specific bodies and in a unique space-time without doing away with notions of responsibility and location – actually one could argue that these strategies precisely redraw the “limits” of responsibility and location under globalization – the play can evoke other violent events across history, and thus foreground, and suggest that brutal acts such as the Boy’s do not erupt out of nowhere but are rather ingrained in a space-time continuum or “everywhereness” of violence that can assault anybody’s life. Greig’s theatre’s insistence on strategies of confounding may be seen as an attempt to challenge the ways spectators might think of their bodies as individuated and independent: a narrative – as argued throughout – sustained by neoliberal globalization. Confounding might incite her – the confounded spectator – to affectively feel part of the porous, interconnected landscape of the scenes from the world, a process that potentially affects the play and the spectator and encompasses the creative process, the staged work, and the world itself.

I cannot finish this section on value in *The Events* without mentioning a specific project that has measured the value of the play, the project “Theatre Spectatorship and Value Attribution” (2014) carried out by Janelle Reinelt (P. I.), David Edgar, Chris Megson, Dan Rebellato, Julie Wilkinson, and Jane Woddis:

“‘Theatre Spectatorship and Value Attribution’ looked at how theatre audiences value the experience of attending performances. We collected self-descriptions of experiences of individuals who attended the theatre, which were gathered through online surveys, personal interviews, and creative workshops. We also tapped memory by asking some subjects about a performance they saw at least one year ago.”⁴²

42 REINELT, J. (P.I.) – EDGAR, D. – MEGSON, Ch. – REBELLATO, D. – WILKINSON, J. – WODDIS, J. *Critical Mass: Theatre Spectatorship and Value Attribution*, 2014, p. 5. [online]. [cit. 14. 8. 2017]. Available at: <http://britishtheatreconference.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Critical-Mass-10.7.pdf>.

The report stated about *The Events* that:

The production itself was highly valued by all but one who selected medium value. Among its assets, the use of local choirs was singled out in most responses as contributing strongly to the effect of the production. Again, the qualities of being challenging and thought-provoking were mentioned, and what one spectator described as ‘being part of a cultural conversation’. All but one of the respondents spoke to others, mostly friends, about the play, recommending it but also discussing content and ideas. The quality of the writing and effectiveness of the staging came in for praise, summed up by one respondent as ‘Brilliant acting, powerful writing with the choir adding an extra quality’.⁴³

In a context of “obsession with measurement”⁴⁴, Gielen comments on what happens with “value” in evidence-based policy. He argues that when, for instance, you study a performance, there are restrictions on time and particular events: there are no resources to study a bigger number of events and longer periods (even longer than a year). The events studied are also isolated, and therefore culture is de-contextualized. Another shortcoming is that this kind of research renders the value of culture to one of mere function: it is about what the piece “does”. Finally, there is a reduction of values to self-reflective competence – what respondents said the performance “did” – which measures a cognitive process rather than the value of culture.⁴⁵ Although I guess that Gielen would welcome the fact that one participant said s/he felt like “part of a cultural conversation” and that Reinelt, et al., emphasize that some participants shared their experiences with others, value in this report is mostly understood at the level of resonance of the show after the show.

A similar critique of impact is to be found in Baz Kershaw’s seminal study *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention*, where he argues that the empirical study of the efficacy of performance is restricted to the “theatrical environment, to the obviously observable results”, an approach which is “plagued” by “analytical difficulties and dangers”. Kershaw argues that for value – or the “socio-political efficacy of performance” – to

43 Ibid, pp. 102–103.

44 Gielen uses this phrase in the aforementioned keynote speech. For more details see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppdO7Bbc9CI>.

45 See GIELEN, P. No Culture, No Europe. In *The art of Valuing*. [cit. 16. 8. 2018]. Available at: https://www.ietm.org/en/system/files/publications/150401_ietm_the_art_of_valuing_opening_speeches.pdf.

exist, there must be an interaction between those immediate effects of performance and the “macro-level of the socio-political”.⁴⁶

This strand of criticism is also present nowadays. For instance, Caridad Svich claims that “applying the frame of efficacy to all art is unwieldly at best”⁴⁷. Like Gielen, I believe that measure and dismeasure must stand in a dialectical tension. That is, value cannot come from either one or the other in isolation but from a productive combination of both. I have been exploring how producing dismeasure might generate value. Of course, “measuring” dismeasure is a flawed method too, because I cannot guarantee that confounding in *The Events* has an impact in its socio-political context. As suggested throughout, value is created (and destroyed), practised, and maintained communally. As such, it is connected to questions of power, discourse, ideology, and thus meaning and legitimacy, where theatre has been argued to play a part.

Conclusion

While the weakness of evidence-based studies is that the value of “the after” is really hard to measure realistically – I am not claiming that analysing value through dismeasure is better or worse than impact-related research – in my article I have almost ignored the value of “before”. In other words, I have been looking throughout at value in theatre and their e/affects potentially during and afterwards. However, there is also value involved before the experience of spectating. I claimed earlier that value operates *across* where creative process is also involved. Despite being undervalued and devalued, the creative process is actually the place where value in the arts might start.⁴⁸ Indeed, I believe it is worth emphasizing the value of prep, of pre-, and of before, as part of a circuit of value which always operates *across*. How much value goes into this unseen (and most of the time unpaid) work?

Although one always tries to escape grand value judgements, I have written a full monograph on the playwright I have been talking about, and in

46 KERSHAW, B. *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention*. London ; New York : Routledge, 1992, pp. 1–2.

47 SVICH, C. *Audience Revolutions: Dispatches from the Field*. New York : Theatre Communications Group, Inc, 2016, p. xii.

48 I am of course leaving out material aspects, including questions of funding, which I have not touched upon at all in this article.

so doing I am of course implying that Greig's work is valuable and that his work is worth looking at, useful, and of merit. In my discussion on Greig, I am dealing with specific aspects of value, which others might not understand as relevant to the question of value. In addition, I am making judgements about value, which are most certainly biased by my own opinions. Indeed, my article constitutes a partial, subjective, and incomplete analysis of value in theatre, Greig's work, and in particular in *The Events*. Additionally, my ruminations on value and theatre remain abstract and formalist and perhaps do not produce any "real" value at all. However, I refuse to jettison the need to face and look at value altogether in general and in relation to the arts and theatre and performance. I still think that there is value in thinking about value, and value in value as a practice, and that we have a say in what is valuable and what is not contributing towards the value of all life. Theatre has value beyond portraying value, that is, theatre has value whether it engages with ethical questions or not. In the same way, although I believe that Greig's theatre has value beyond the fact that it potentially elicits ethical responses in the spectator, Greig's theatre's ethical engagement is crucial to its value.

In this article, I have argued about the politico-aesthetic value of Greig's theatre in the context of globalization. I have characterized globalization as a moment in history highly marked by the ideology of the "individual", of categories, and of separateness, which not only impacts the way we see ourselves and the world but also the mode in which we think, feel, and do, preventing connectedness and complexity from fundamentally occurring. Categories pigeon-hole reality, disarticulating complex/complexity thinking. Greig's theatre has politico-aesthetic value, because it generates aesthetic strategies (one of them is confounding) that in turn respond and question the imperative of the global age: individualism. Value is produced, because through those strategies of confounding a sense of interconnection, interdependence, and co-responsibility is not only conceptually suggested but blown onto the spectator and her outlook on the world. In other words, the value of Greig's theatre lies in the fact that it shatters the compartmentalization of bodies, worlds, and thinking, suggesting a sense of interconnectedness. Although I am aware of how problematic the notion of value might be, I would still insist that looking at practices that aim at seeing ourselves in relation, perhaps connecting us, have value. Greig's tweet about the London Bridge attacks in London on 3 June 2017 "A Romanian baker, a Spanish skateboarder, a Millwall fan, an Australian nurse. All ran

into danger to defend others”⁴⁹ illustrates well that the value of Greig’s theatre “lies” in his theatre attempting to explore that togetherness, interconnectedness, and oneness. Greig’s theatre has value, because it is a theatre that believes and transmits that against the odds we will still run to protect each other.

Translated by the author

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