



Ca' Foscari
University
of Venice

Master's Degree programme

in European, American and
Postcolonial Language and
Literature

Final Thesis

21st Century Liquid Hubris on Stage

a theatrical response to the
2008 financial crisis

Supervisor

Ch. Prof. Loretta Innocenti

Assistant supervisor

Ch. Prof. Marco Fazzini

Graduand

Angela Brisotto

Matriculation Number 847280

Academic Year

2017 / 2018

21st Century Liquid Hubris on Stage

a theatrical response to the 2008 financial crisis

David Hare's *The Power of Yes*

Lucy Prebble's *Enron*

Clare Duffy's *Money. The Game Show*

Dennis Kelly's *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*

*"By the early twentieth century, the master of money had come to believe he was the
master of everything."*

Dan Rebellato
Theatre & Globalization

Abstract

The 2008 financial crisis impacted catastrophically on people's lives on a global basis, leaving the world population a feeling of shock and non-understanding. British theatre has tried to respond to this phenomenon both immediately upon the crisis-related events and also when a few years had passed and people started to make sense of what had happened. This dissertation provides an analysis of four British plays dealing with the theme of the crisis, its causes and its aftermath. Namely, the plays are David Hare's 2009 *The Power of Yes*, Lucy Prebble's 2009 *Enron*, Dennis Kelly's 2012 *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*, and Clare Duffy's 2013 *Money The Game Show*. Whilst broaching issues such as greed, hubris and Zygmunt Bauman's concept of 'liquid modernity', the focus of this dissertation will be that of analyzing the different approaches to the theme of the financial crisis which were chosen by the four playwrights. The body of this dissertation is composed of four chapters – each one

pertaining to the analysis of one of the four plays –, and of a final chapter specifically designed as a comprehensive comparative discussion of the plays analysed. As far as the source material is concerned, apart from academic material, the assessment of the plays finds its basis on the released play scripts and on the video recordings of the performances viewed in theatre archives in the UK, courtesy of the National Theatre Archive, the V&A Museum Archive of Theatre & Performance, and of Unlimited Theatre.

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter 1 - David Hare's <i>The Power of Yes</i>	6
Chapter 2 - Lucy Prebble's <i>Enron</i>	31
Chapter 3 - Dennis Kelly's <i>The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas</i>	56
Chapter 4 - Clare Duffy's <i>MONEY: The Game Show</i>	81
Four different responses to the financial crisis – a comparison of the plays.....	105
Conclusion.....	119
Acknowledgements	122
Bibliography and References.....	123

Introduction

The economic crisis of 2007 and 2008 was a globally shocking experience. This year – 2018 – marks a ten-year timespan since the financial collapse. Even though quite a long time has passed, puzzlement and confusion are still the feelings that many individuals share when trying to understand the crisis-related events. This fact does not seem to be surprising when considering Anheier and Haley’s description of the 2008 financial crisis¹ as “the greatest economic shock since the Great Depression of the 1920–30 and the greatest challenge to social and political systems since the Second World War”. The global effects of this shocking phenomenon affected not only areas such as economics and politics, but it had also direct effects on the lives of ordinary people. These two experts actually report that,

The trauma of the Global Financial Crisis also left lasting scars on the individuals whose lives were adversely affected by unemployment and economic insecurity; and it frayed the social fabric in many countries. The social and political effects of this trauma continue to play out.

The intervention of scholars of economics and field professionals seems necessary to understand what exactly were the causes of the phenomenon and the effects of it on economics and politics. To understand the exact consequences of the financial crisis on ordinary people’s lives a sociologist may be required. Yet, in my opinion, the general aura of confusion, scare, and shock that was generated by the crisis-related events could be perceived also by a non-professional observer. As a person that was born in the late 1990s and raised in the early 2000s – a period of economic prosperity –, I was a kid when the 2008 financial crisis happened. Therefore, I personally experienced the radical change that the 2008 economic crisis brought in the average people’s lives. As an early teenager, I could certainly perceive the feeling of shock that spread across my community, but I could not understand what had really happened. To be honest, even after becoming an adult, the dynamics of the 2008 crisis were still not clear to me. During my Bachelor university course, I developed an interest for British social and political theatre, and namely for contemporary theatre. When searching for a theme for

¹ Anheier, H.K. and Haley, J.A. (2018).

my Master's Degree final dissertation in the field of contemporary theatre, I was suggested to try to explore the theme of the financial crisis. Therefore, I exploited my research in the field of British contemporary theatre as an opportunity to delve into the theme of the financial crisis.

This dissertation will analyse four plays, which were written after the financial crisis of 2008. Namely, the plays are David Hare's 2009 *The Power of Yes*, Lucy Prebble's 2009 *Enron*, Dennis Kelly's 2012 *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*, and Clare Duffy's 2013 *Money: The Game Show*. The aim of this dissertation is to discuss these four plays as theatrical responses to the financial crisis. Namely, this analysis will focus on two crucial themes, which seem to undergo the four plays – the concept of hubris and Zygmunt Bauman's definition of 'liquid modernity'. While doing my research and afterwards while writing my dissertation, I tried to maintain a comprehensive approach to the study of theatrical performances. Namely, I based by research both on video recordings of the shows and on the play scripts of the four performances. Furthermore, the research process behind this dissertation comprises reading reviews of the performances, consulting material regarding critical responses to the four plays, reading newspapers articles, and studying the academic literature written in the field of contemporary British theatre. When I was able to find proper and reliable information, I inserted in my analysis also references to the audience response to the plays. When researching in the field of British contemporary theatre, I had in mind the following words by Cameron and Hoffman,

Criticism that deals with the text is really treating the text as literature and may actually be involved with the communication process of literature, which could be described as: *thing communicated*, meaning of text; *means of communication*, audience reading of text; *thing received*, audience's version of meaning of text. If we want to describe criticism that is good theatre study, we must use a theatre concept of communication: *thing communicated*, performers' production of text; *means of communication*,

conditions of performance; *thing received*, audience response to its perception (the meaning an audience finds in performance).²

The approach that I tried to maintain in this analysis is thus communication-oriented. As regards the structure of the text, the body of the dissertation is divided into four chapters, each one analyzing one of the four plays. Every chapter has been designed in order to provide a rounded view of the play it analyses. When present, connections between different chapters have been properly signaled. The final chapter instead was designed with the purpose of providing a comparison of the four works in relation to the theme of the financial crisis.

² Cameron, K.M., Hoffman, T.J.C. (1974), p.6.

Chapter 1 - David Hare's *The Power of Yes*

*“This isn't a story about bankers fooling you.
It's a story about bankers fooling themselves.”*

After the financial collapse in 2008, the British playwright David Hare was asked by the National Theatre to write a play about the financial crisis. His 2009 play *The Power of Yes. A dramatist seeks to understand the financial crisis* is the outcome of the research made and the interviews conducted by the playwright in this specific context and his re-elaboration of the gathered material. The play was first staged in September 2009 at the Lyttleton Theatre (National Theatre) in London with Angus Jackson as director of the show.³ Quite relevantly, Dominic Cavendish (*Theatre Voice*, 2005) reports that “a considerable amount of his work has [...] been premiered” at the National Theatre. As the subtitle suggests, in the play *The Power of Yes*, David Hare tries to understand the financial crisis phenomenon. The subtitle phrase is significant because it conveys that the theme dealt with in the play is challenging and puzzling. Probably, this puzzlement is mostly due to the play's closeness to the events it scrutinizes, since the play was staged right after the 2008 crisis happened. This puzzlement can be seen as belonging not only to David Hare himself – who was asked to write a play on an intricate topic of the here and now –, but also to ordinary people in general terms. Indeed, the impact of the 2008 financial crisis was sudden, unexpected, and crucial on a global basis. Moving now to the writing method, David Hare delved into the world of finance and particularly of the financial collapse by interviewing a range of people. As reported in the play script⁴, this group encompassed individuals belonging to the financial field — from experts to investors, from bankers to journalists, from chairmen of institutions to traders, to even include an ex-hedge fund manager and philanthropist, a lawyer, and a financial head-hunter. In order to write the following analysis, I was able to compare the play script with a video recording of the 29th September 2009 performance at the Lyttelton Theatre (National Theatre).⁵ More precisely, the following paragraphs will deal in detail with the most relevant recurring

³ Catalogue.nationaltheatre.ork.uk, (2018).

⁴ Hare, D. (2009).

⁵ Jackson, A. dir. (2009).

themes – with a special regard for the themes of hubris and liquid modernity – and with the techniques used by the playwright and the staff working at the show to stage this theatrical response to the financial crisis.

Quite clearly, both to a theatre critic eye and to the average theatregoer, *The Power of Yes* was created through a highly didactic approach to the theme of the financial crisis. In fact, Hare seems to have made the deliberate choice to trying to clarify the machinations behind the globally-shocking phenomenon of the crisis. This choice could be considered quite logical, since the crisis-related events appear to be obscure to the majority of people involved in it. The very beginning of the play is a good illustration of the direction given to the work by the playwright,

Author This isn't a play. It's a story. Or rather it's only partly a play. It's more properly a story. And what a story! How capitalism came to a grinding halt. Where were you on September 15th 2008? Do you remember? Did you notice? Capitalism ceased to function for about four days.

This summer I set out to find out what had happened. (p.3)

The very first lines, which together form the first scene, contain an extremely condensed amount of information. An actor playing the role of the real author enters and delivers key details about the play's theme and collocation in time, the aim of the work, and the approach chosen by the playwright. Namely, from the very beginning, the audience should therefore be aware that they are going to watch a not entirely fictional play, set during the months of 2008 financial collapse, with the specific aim of clarifying what had been happening. Furthermore, the last line conveys that the following play is the outcome of a period of research. Thus, the audience is also being suggested the genre of the play. The first scene seems to function as a proper introduction to the play, not only because of the content of the words delivered by the character called Author, but also because of the visual impact of the stage at the outset of the story. Namely, the Author steps on a very large stage which, according to a production choice, is completely bare. The light of a spotlight shines on the actor who starts to speak with the audience in a plain, everyday tone. The audience therefore is conveyed another piece of information — the play they are going to watch is very likely to have a realistic approach to the

events. The play's first scene was thereby framed as a powerful didactic device, but this introduction is not the only site in which the clarification strategy takes place.

More broadly, a complex framework undergoes the whole play and further complexity added by the presence of recurring themes both make the play very different from a mere report of the events. *The Power of Yes* can be easily defined a didactic play, but this statement is not meant to imply that the content of the play had been oversimplified. On the contrary, not only does the play include a huge amount of detailed information about finance in general and the 2008 financial crisis in particular, but it also offers a wide variety of interpretations of this recent event. To my viewpoint, the didactic strategies which were observed to have been employed in staging *The Power of Yes* could be listed as follows — the didactic function of characters' discourse and most relevantly of the Author, the realistic depiction of characters, the plot framework and pace of the performance, and the use of visual effects and objects. According to this analysis, the whole play has been built using these devices. What follows in this section is an account of the range of strategies which were chosen to facilitate the assimilation of the play's content and an assessment of the major themes of the play which appear to be interwoven with didactic strategies within the text.

The main themes and didactic strategies in the play

The plot framework and the pace of the performance both feature most relevantly in the playwright's strategies to frame the content of the interviews into a play. Firstly, it should be observed that the chain of events regarding the crisis is narrated mainly in chronological order. Quite logically thus, here emerges one of Hare's creative interventions. He apparently worked to arrange the information included in the interviews in order to create a linear plotline. More specifically, the plotline provides at first a global vision of the crisis with references to the USA mainly, but also to China and Iceland; most relevantly though, the play focuses in depth on the UK's experience during the crisis and on the aftermath following this phenomenon. Secondly, as far as the pace of the performance is concerned, Hare's play presents a slow rhythm. In comparison to other works dealing with the theme of crisis, *The Power of Yes* flows in a

more natural, everyday-conversation-like pace. By way of illustration, the next chapter will analyse Lucy Prebble’s play *Enron* which is a very fast and buzzy kind of performance. Since the theme of the two plays is very similar, the difference lies in the dissimilar aims of the two playwrights. *The Power of Yes*’s slow pace seems to be comprised as well in the clarification strategies the playwright adopted. In my opinion, the slow pace and the unexciting linearity of the plot work together to balance the huge amount of definitions delivered as the story develops. Hare’s aim is not describing the adrenalinic atmosphere of a trading floor – which is one of the features of *Enron* –, but making the audience understand in the best possible way what the causes of the financial collapse were and what has really happened with people’s money.

Turning now to the next strategy, despite the fact that the setting and the use of objects in *The Power of Yes* is very spare, these few elements seem to significantly contribute to framing the plot and highlighting key themes. The playwright made use of various visual strategies in order to support the didactic function of the play. More precisely, this group of strategies comprises the use of objects and of projections. By way of illustration, to signal the passing of time and the most important phases in the crisis phenomenon, the scenes are introduced by white titles projected on the black wall in the background. The following outline shows the positioning of the titles.

Scenes	Titles
Scene One	-
Scene Two	-
Scene Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Author Returns to School</i> (introduction to the scene)
Scene Four	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Let the Good Times Roll</i> (introduction to the scene)
Scene Five	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Years of Slicing and Dicing</i> (introduction to the scene) • <i>Securitised Credit Arrangements</i> (further division in the scene)

Scene Six	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>2007: The Year the System Froze</i> (introduction to the scene)
Scene Seven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>2008. The Year of Meltdown</i> (introduction to the scene)
Scene Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £ 6,000,000,000... • <i>2009: The Year of Reckoning</i>
Scene Nine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Death of an Idea</i> (introduction to the scene)

Moreover, some images and short video footage are projected on the wall to further help the audience's comprehension. For instance, when the characters are talking about institutions such as banks and bureaus, the related logos appear projected on the screen. Thus, for example in Scene Seven – *2008. The Year of Meltdown* –, the audience is visually bombarded with the logos of Goldman Sachs, Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae, Merrill Lynch, and AIG. The projection of pictures is not limited to logos. Pictures and videos appear as well to signal details about individuals' identities, geographical localization of places in the world, and to highlight key concepts. In Scene Five – *Securitized Credit Arrangements* – an American 1 dollar banknote with the engravings 'Exorbitant Privilege' and 'Too Big to Fail' is used to visualize a strong critical line about the USA's arrogant approach to the possibility of a crisis. Other examples are the picture of the Bank of England's coins and the video of the rotating globe focusing on London and New York in Scene Four (*Let the Good Times Roll*). Pictures depicting real events narrated by the characters are shown as well. For example, in Scene Six there is a picture of people queueing in front of the Bank of England, and in Scene Seven a picture of a woman holding a box. Interestingly, the real Alan Greenspan – former Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board – features in the play by appearing uniquely on videos. As regards the use of objects on stage, the most important is a blackboard, which features in more than one scene. In Scene Three – *The Author Returns to School* – the blackboard is brought on scene for the first time by Myron Scholes, who uses it to explain a formula to calculate risk. Afterwards, in Scene Six, Seven and Eight (*2007: The Year the System Froze, 2008. The Year of Meltdown, 2009: The Year of Reckoning*), Howard Davies writes on the same blackboard to explain his acronym to sum up the financial meltdown – S.L.U.M.P.. In both cases, the words written on the blackboard are visible on the screen so that the audience can clearly read them.

Moreover, floating numbers in a trading floor-style font appear on the screen after Scene One and in Scene 9. This visual content – which could be considered a mere decoration – thus opens and closes the story recounted in the play. There is only an epilogue afterwards, which hosts a conversation between David Hare and George Soros. As regards light design and sound effects, *The Power of Yes* does not present a particularly telling framework. Diffuse lights are used in every scene together with spotlights on certain characters. The lighting designer Paul Constable chose soft blue lights to signal the transition between the scenes. In terms of music, simple tunes played on a marimba by Frank Ricotti serve again to signal the passage from a scene to another. Therefore, although the play's setting seems to be quite plain, the few elements which were introduced appear to have been accurately chosen to facilitate the audience's reception of the show.



Picture 1 The projection of a banknote with the writing 'Too Big to Fail' on screen.



Picture 2 Howard Davies (Jonathan Coy) explains the meaning of the acronym S.L.U.M.P..

With regard to characters, this paragraph argues that *The Power of Yes* could be suitably defined as a choral and imaginative play, which still retains strong realistic elements. When using the adjectives choral and imaginative, this analysis takes into consideration the kind of metamorphosis that transformed the interviews' material into *The Power of Yes's* plot. Hare created a privileged and imaginary space where all the interviewees gather together and the Author is actually the fulcrum of the action. There are literally choral scenes for example at the beginning, when all characters appear behind the Author and start to comment on the genre and structure of the play. For the rest of the time, the other characters alternate continuously during the play. At the same time, *The Power of Yes* certainly retains numerous features of realistic plays. Firstly, all the characters in the play stand for real individuals. In order to render their interpretation more realistic, during rehearsals, the actors involved in the play were even trained to imitate different voices and accents by Kate Godfrey and Jeanette Nelson⁶. Furthermore, the costume design plays an important role. As reported in the costume bible of the show, which is kept in the National Theatre Archive, the costumes were accurately created on the basis of photographs of the real interviewees. But still, the whole group of characters is composed by people who are not necessarily interconnected. Certainly, all the interviewees the characters represent have played a certain role in the financial crisis, or have at least some expertise about finance, and this aspect certainly adds to the realistic features of the work. Yet again the space the play provides appears to be imaginary. It is almost certain that it has been specifically designed in order to include as much condensed and significant information as possible. At first glance, maybe this group of characters could appear homogeneous, but in fact it seems likely that this perception is simply based on the first impression characters give to the audience – they wear businessmen suits and their share a general composure in the way they behave. In terms of costumes and confident bearing, there are only a few exceptions. Apart from the Author – whom will be analysed more extensively in the next paragraphs –, a character that briefly stands out for his upset behavior and ordinary clothes is the Journalist, who in actual fact does not belong to the finance field. On the question of characters, the impression that I retain after watching *The Power of Yes* was that they all belonged to a sort of large and amorphous mass of people. To my

⁶ National Theatre Archive (2009a).

viewpoint, this perception could be especially experienced when watching Scene Two and the epilogue to the play in Scene Nine. In both scenes all characters are on stage and their voices sort of overlap. And I think Hare designed these scenes purposely to create this resulting effect, which is emphasized also in the text. For example, it is often highlighted that a great deal of the interviewees share a common lifestyle. The following line is a mere illustration of it –

Masa London School of Economics, Goldman Sachs, *Financial Times* –
that covers just about everyone. (p.14)

There are though some characters who stand out in the crowd of characters. Namely, these characters are the ones who can be identified as the villains or at least the major contributors in the machinations behind the crisis – Alan Greenspan, Fred Goodwin, and George Soros. Significantly, Greenspan and Goodwin appear only as projections on the screen. Soros instead is easily identifiable by his light-shaded suit. Considering both the choral and the realistic dimension of the play, it could be argued that the multitude of voices and the crowded stage actually combine to convey the overwhelming feeling of puzzlement the crisis produced. Probably, the playwright is also suggesting that even for him it was difficult to find out the causes of the events and the individuals on whom responsibility could fall.



Picture 3 Scene Five. The Years of Slicing and Dicing.

With regard to discourse, since *The Power of Yes* is a particularly static play in terms of stage movements and setting, characters' words actually convey the great part of the whole performance's content. Thus, a comparative analysis of characters and discourse seems to be essential in this context. In my opinion, David Hare did expose his rhetorical strategy on purpose. Not only did he frame the play's plot so that it narrates the researching process, but he is also represented by a character who, while on stage, reasons on the structure and on the story of the play he is going to write. The other characters' words also work to reinforce the Author's framing comments. Scene Two seems to be a good illustration of this strategy. All characters join the Author on stage and, arrogantly, they express doubts about the propriety of the content for writing a play, and they give advice about what the genre of the play should be. In this sense, the characters' proposals are varied. According to some of the characters – who often disagree – the play should be either a Greek tragedy, a Shakespearean tragedy, or even a comedy. Moreover, the characters make suggestions about whom the villain in the story should be. They even get to the point where they discuss and make hypotheses about what was that triggered the crisis. In order to take control of the mayhem, the Author assertively states that,

Author Honestly, we're not going to get anywhere if you insist on writing the play for me. You have to give the material, not the play. (p.6)

And when they eventually worry because the playwright's enterprise seems difficult, he closes the scene saying that,

Author I know it's difficult. I'll worry about that. You just tell me the story. (p.7)

It is likely that the real interviewees truly manifested these doubts to the author during the research process. Certainly, the words in this scene imply that the characters – and very likely the people they actually represent – are making speculations on the causes of the crisis and on the individuals that are culpable for it. They appear to be still elaborating what has been going on and they have all different answers. The overlapping voices of all characters in this scene convey a feeling of puzzlement and confusion, which appears to spread all over the play. Whether these words have their

origin in reality or partially in fiction, David Hare's playwrighting skill does emerge in the process of modelling these sentences into a convincing introduction to a play which is based on verbatim material.

A special mention should go to the function of the character called "Author". This character seems to embody a great deal of the playwright's rhetorical strategies. This character – played by Anthony Calf – stands for the real author who is conducting his research in the financial field in order to write a play. The role is literally established from the start in Scene One, as was mentioned before. Not only is this kind of role purposeful in terms of introduction, but it extends throughout the whole play. Interestingly, the presence of the Author on stage is further reinforced by his continuously asking questions, making comments, showing signs of hesitation, and even repeating some concepts as if he was digesting them. To my viewpoint, the playwright created an amplified version of himself during real interviews, in order to highlight specific key words and concepts, and further stimulate the audience's response to certain actions or concepts put forth on stage. This kind of strategy is particularly apparent when the Author is in a dialogue with Masa Serdarevic. The character of Masa stands for the real expert that was hired by the National Theatre in order to lecture Hare about the financial collapse. I used the word dialogue, because in these scenes the Author is constantly intervening during Masa's explanation. Thus, he shows an uncommon and surprising presence of mind when listening to quite complex pieces of information. An example of this strategy is observable in Scene Five when Masa is worried by the Author's reaction to her previous words,

Author Don't worry, I'm not panicking, I'm understanding. It may look like panic, but it's understanding. (p.22)

and thus suggests to slow down her explanation. To which the Author replies,

Author No, no, no, whatever you do, don't take it slowly. (p.22)
[...]

Author Because this is my area of expertise. You know about money, Masa, I know about rhetoric. If you take things slowly, nobody understands.
(p.23)

As far as I am concerned, mentioning rhetoric and revealing glimpses of the playwright's work on scene is quite thought-provoking. Metatheatrical devices such as this are not always common in realistic plays, but are certainly a device that Hare likes to use, and quite effectively I would argue. To my viewpoint this device can enhance curiosity in the audience, who very likely sympathises with this character in the play. In an interview for *Theatre Voice*, director Richard Eyre notes that David Hare is "an absolute master of dialectic"⁷, and this analysis proves that this skill emerges quite clearly in *The Power of Yes*.



Picture 4 The Author (Anthony Calf) and Masa Serdarevic (Jemima Rooper).

Returning to the Author's role, the character shows this same approach during the whole play. Interestingly, the Author appears as an external observer who holds a clearer view on the events surrounding the crisis. Namely, he sometimes intervenes with a question or a statement – which McDowell describes as "seemingly naïve"⁸ –, he sometimes listens for a longer period of time, he often makes use of rhetorical questions, he repeats words and phrases, and towards the end of the play he starts

⁷ Theatre Voice (2005).

⁸ McDowell, L. (2011), p.197.

levelling accusations against some of the individuals involved in the financial collapse. The Author's leaning can be said to be far from neutral. He is clearly suspicious of the interviewees, apart from Masa. He especially despises the individuals who tend to delegate responsibility or pretend naïvety regarding the crisis. He certainly shows curiosity when he is told of something new, but still his stigma on the financial crisis's protagonists does not fade. Thus, this character stands out for his interested, but very sceptical and critical approach to the information he receives. Towards the end of the play he shifts from being irritated and indignant

Author [...] Does nobody think, 'Stinking fish!' [...] (p.29)

to being really angry.

Author [...] I've tried for three months, I've really tried, not to get angry. [...] (p.60)

As far as I am concerned, this is one of the points in which the audience can have a glimpse of what Michael Billington⁹ defines "a talent for irony, mockery, scorn and opposition" recurring in the playwright's work. Ultimately, independently of the kind of sentence, his generally brief interventions are almost certainly a means to signal key turning points in the plot. Every sentence uttered by the Author is accurately crafted in order to help the audience understand what is going on. As was mentioned before, even in the first scenes of the play, the Author does show some knowledge of the field. The interpretation of this feature appears to be thorny. Of course, David Hare could well be aware of some key concepts in finance before he started his research. If this was true, making the Author knowledgeable about some financial vocabulary could be interpreted as boasting. Instead, I would argue that this show of expertise could be another more subtle strategy to make some concepts more clear to the audience. By way of illustration, this behavior of the character who stands for the real author can be noticed also in other plays by Hare, such as *The Permanent Way*, in which characters echo the presence of the author by inserting his name as if they were answering his questions, or *Via Dolorosa*, a one-man show starred by David Hare himself.¹⁰ I do not exclude though, that this attitude could hide a subtle pleasure in boasting, which is maybe a side

⁹ Theatre Voice (2005).

¹⁰ Theatre Voice (2005).

of the playwright's personality, or even a way to play with his own persona. It would be intriguing to try to answer the same questions Fortier raises in his book *Theory/Theatre* while analysing Spalding Gray's theatrical monologues. He raises some interesting queries about the interlacing of the three dimensions of playwright, actor, and character,

The playwright is Spalding Gray, the character is Spalding Gray, the actor is Spalding Gray. Are these three one and the same? Is the actor who speaks the lines at one with the voice of the author?¹¹

The playwright, the character, and David Hare's public persona seem to overlap, thus creating a blurred perception of the character in the play. The description Richard Eyre made of the young Hare "as being preternaturally assured" and knowing his own mind¹² could be an explanation of this feature of the character in the play. Even though Eyre then explains that "actually he's incredibly thin-skinned and he gives this impression of total assurance, which of course is a mask because he's a welter of anxiety"¹³, self-assurance seems to be a key characteristic of Hare's public persona and, most importantly, of himself in the context of his artistic production. Most crucially, to my view point, it should be highlighted that this overlapping of reality and fiction seems to be a peculiarity in Hare's writing. According to Michael Mangan, "Most of Hare's plays reflect on their own artistic dimensions, or explore the relationship between the real world and its representation in word and images. [...] The theme of the relationship between art and reality is a constant one in Hare's writing"¹⁴. To conclude, even if we leave aside the connection between the playwright David Hare and the Author in *The Power of Yes*, the character in the play still works as a key to unravel the play's complex content.

As was suggested in the analysis of Scene One, a sense of puzzlement runs through the whole play. In actual fact, not only do characters explain what has happened by listing facts and data to their interviewer, but they also continue expressing their hypotheses and judgements about the causes of the crisis. To my viewpoint, puzzlement

¹¹ Fortier, M. (1997), p.63.

¹² Theatre Voice (2005).

¹³ Theatre Voice (2005).

¹⁴ Boon, R. ed. (2007), p.233.

should be identified as one of the recurring themes in the play because almost every character shares this feeling of bewilderment. Astonishingly, what the play seems to point out is that the causes of the financial crisis do not only seem difficult to grasp by the average people who lost their savings, but they also appear mysterious to the enormous group of individuals working in finance, both during the boom and the crisis's period. In Scene Three, lawyer Henry Lovelock succinctly expresses this concept by saying,

Lovelock What happened in the last twenty years is that banks began to gamble with people's money in ways that nobody really understood. (p.12)

In one sentence, he actually sums up very briefly what has happened during the economic boom. He then continues,

Lovelock It wasn't chance that banking became so complicated. Because the more complicated it becomes, the fewer people understand it. (p.12)

What ultimately emerges from characters' words is that very few people really understood what happened with money and debt during the economic boom. The play depicts this difficulty in understanding what was going on as having multiple causes.

The first cause seems to be identified in the excessive trust which was placed in the new financial methods, and in the self-belief financial personnel showed during the economic boom. The first example appears to be the belief that mathematical models could be used to calculate risk. As Masa Serdarevic explains to the Author,

Masa Banks pretend they are keeping your money, but they're not. They're lending it out, so they can make money for themselves. Now obviously when they lend money they're taking a risk. They take extra risk when they lend it to people who may or may not be able to pay it back – that's called sub-prime lending – (p.8)

Masa's explanation is further reinforced when the academic and investment advisor Myron Scholes enters with a blackboard to explain his formula – the Myron-Scholes formula – for calculating this kind of risk. As the story goes on, it becomes apparent

that people became convinced that they could very precisely predict the future by simply using mathematics. This unworldly trust introduces another crucial element in the play – motiveless belief in some given “truth” and arrogant self-belief. Namely, bankers genuinely believed that this new market based on “gambling on the future” – as the Author states¹⁵ – would work, because the practice of calculating risk was naïvely considered an axiom. But it is not the only point in the play in which belief and self-belief are mentioned. Among the many metaphors employed to depict these concepts, a crude example is provided by Adair Turner who explains to the Author –

Turner [...] This isn't a story about bankers fooling you. It's a story about bankers fooling themselves.

Turner's comparing Alan Greenspan's deluded judgement to faith seems particularly significant in this sense as well –

Turner [..., Greenspan i]s like someone who rides in a Mercedes, he doesn't actually have to understand how the engine works. [...] He has a certain confidence level that the Mercedes will always run well because in his experience it always has. But applied to financial markets that's a very dangerous assumption, because you can test drive a new car, but unfortunately you can't test drive a new financial system. (p.34)

The incessant pounding of the words ‘belief’ and ‘to believe’ throughout the whole play implies that the size of the phenomenon went actually out of control. As already mentioned, belief in mathematical models and in the new liberal deregulated market flows parallel with self-belief in the play. This attitude is represented as belonging to people with power as well as to the average bankers and traders. Thus, the play offers a range of self-deluded characters – from Fred Goodwin who gets upset because markets were “not behaving in what he regards as a rational manner”¹⁶ to defensive bankers who

Financial Journalist [...] genuinely believe they are masters of the universe. [...] Because they're paid fifty times as much as anyone else. So they must be cleverer than anyone else. (p.61)

¹⁵ Hare, D. (2009), p.9.

¹⁶ Hare, D. (2009), p.60.

In order to explain that bankers' self-belief is rooted in their certainty that "However much money they earn, they all believe they deserve it."¹⁷, the Financial Journalist even tries to compare bankers' self-delusion to playwrights' rejection of harsh criticism –

Financial Journalist So? *So?* How are playwrights different from bankers? Isn't this about self-belief? A certain self-belief? Isn't that necessary? To a banker? To a playwright? (p.62)

To which the Author provides a stinging response,

Author Sure. Of course it is. But as far as I know playwrights don't make a living out of fucking up people's lives. (p.62)

signalling thus his resentment and confirming the authority of his judging role in the play.

What this paper identifies as the core of the play *The Power of Yes*, and also the force that triggered self-belief and faith in the new liberal market is human kind's atavistic and irrepressible greed. Faith in mathematical models, the incremental lending and borrowing money, and the general growing culture of debt appear as consequences of extreme human greed in the play. What Ronald Cohen defines "a gargantuan appetite for risk"¹⁸ is revealed to be an insatiable and greedy thirst for money. And, as apparent in Marsh's words, this greed comprised also the average people.

Marsh Everything was possible. Why? Because the bankers had come up with the facility, the *means* for us all to have more money than we earned. (p.26)

The play thus offers a view of the global tendency to live beyond your means during the economic boom. Through characters' words, this human desire of accumulating more and more is compared to a Darwinian struggle in which only the stronger overpowers the weaker in the group.

¹⁷ Hare, D. (2009), p.61.

¹⁸ Hare, D. (2009), p.31.

Lovelock [...] Every quarter, they [fund managers] have to prove they're doing better than other fund managers or else the client will take their money away. [...] (p.35)

Crucially, the requested strength corresponds to the ability of making a lot of money. As David Freud states,

Freud [...] It was Darwinian. The more money you make, the longer you survive. [...] (p.31)

Therefore, the façade of the phenomenon appears to have the motives of a struggle for surviving. Nevertheless, as the play goes on, the deeply rooted reason emerges.

As identified also by the characters in the play, greed is so intense that it comes to reveal its pulsing heart – hubris. The character called Industrialist introduces the theme when talking about the system of securitised credit arrangements –

Industrialist These securitised credit arrangements were a new invention, and they engendered a new level of hubris. They were so profitable that they made people believe, 'Oh, we've found a new answer to risk.' But they hadn't. Interesting, actually. The very opposite. They'd made risk worse. (p.26)

But actually the play then presents a constellation of examples of hubris. One of the most striking section in this sense is in Scene Five. David Marsh explains which role hubris had in the USA economic collapse.

Marsh 'Exorbitant privilege.' George Bush was happy to run up bigger and bigger national debts. Because it was understood that the US was a kind of historical exception. (p.27)

As far as hubris is concerned, a mention in the play goes to Iceland going bankrupt because a considerable number of individuals bought investment banks to make money.

And then another example is that provided by the disastrous transformation of the UK Building Societies into banks in order to obtain a “regular incremental growth”¹⁹.

Hubris and greed seem to enlarge progressively while the story develops, until this entity literally reaches the point of no return – the economic bubble. David Freud statement “when a bubble happens, you don’t look at the whole picture”²⁰ further provokes the Author’s bewilderment. It has again to deal with the fact that nobody actually saw the problem, or better, nobody wanted to see the problem. An issue that *The Power of Yes* shares with the other plays analysed in this dissertation is the fact that human discernment becomes ineffective in an economic bubble.

Freud [...] And that’s it, you see, when a bubble happens, you don’t look at the whole picture, you just look at the person next you, the man on the same fjord, and you think, ‘He’s making money, why can’t I?’ (p.29)

In stark contrast with the general puzzled attitude of the characters, George Soros’s self-assurance stands out in an interesting way. His comment on the phenomenon of the bubble appears to be a good supporting example –

Soros [...] When I see a bubble coming, I’m thrilled. I participate. I buy the stock. You buy the stock when you see the bubble. I don’t call that irrational, I call it highly rational. It’s how I made my money. (p.30)

It seems proper to state that George Soros is actually a key character in the play, because he is the only character who seems to have understood everything about the crisis even before it took place. In his words,

George Soros I didn’t believe them when they told me they could predict the future. (p.11)

Soros claims that his ability to understand the events and to survive crises – as a child he experienced the invasion of Budapest by the Nazis – derives from what his father

¹⁹ P.35.

²⁰ Hare, D. (2009), p.29.

taught him about the Russian revolution²¹. Interestingly, other individuals seem to share similar experiences. In the epilogue to the play, the Young Man utters,

Young Man One of the things I've noticed was the people who didn't believe in the bubble – look at their names – Nouriel Roubini, Nassim Taleb – they come from societies with periodical collapse. Iran, Lebanon.

In the epilogue as well, Masa Serdarevic reveals that as a child she escaped the war and the siege in Sarajevo, thus showing a life experience similar to Soros's. Since these lines by Masa seem to be disconnected from the other interventions in the epilogue and considering her knowledge of the crisis, it seems proper to include Masa in this group of characters. Eventually, *The Power of Yes* includes only a few characters who actually prove to understand the financial crisis.

Significantly, turning to discuss the end of the work, the epilogue confirms both Masa Serdarevic and George Soros's important role in the play. First, while finally discussing with the Author at the outset of Scene Nine, Masa actually sums up what the moral of the story is –

Masa You haven't been listening. If the story has a moral it's that you come to grief when you try to predict the future. (p.66)

Interestingly, this feature of Masa seems to collocate her properly in one of Hare's recurring theatrical motifs. Michael Mangan²² argues that – as revealed by the playwright himself – female characters in Hare's plays often “carry the moral weight of the play”. Masa Serdarevic certainly occupies an important position in the play. In fact, apart from telling the moral, she appears to be the personal guide to David Hare towards the whole process of research. Another example of this can be found in the same conversation between Masa and the playwright in the epilogue,

Masa [...] Do you know what the story is about?

²¹ Hare, D. (2009), p.11.

²² Boon, R. ed. (2007), p.220.

Author [...] It's about the death of an idea, isn't it? [...] Markets are not decent and they're most certainly not wise. [...] (p.67)

Masa's role seems to be again that of stimulating the response of the Author during his creative process. Therefore, I would argue that this character could be easily proven to belong to the group of female characters identified by Mangan. Instead, George Soros occupies the final part of Scene Nine. The conversation between Hare and Soros that closes the play appears to be the last site in which Soros' self-assurance is staged. To conclude, if the Author is the fulcrum around which the majority of characters revolve, as indicated previously, then it could be argued that Masa Serdarevic and George Soros should be considered two important exceptions.

The Power of Yes and Zygmunt Bauman's 'liquid modernity'

It seems that *The Power of Yes* shares connections with Zygmunt Bauman's concept of 'fluid' or 'liquid modernity'. In his 2000 essay literally entitled *Liquid Modernity*, this acclaimed sociologist analysed in depth the most crucial features of modern society. It is staggering to observe how many of interviewees' words in *The Power of Yes* are saturated with Bauman's intuitions, which were written down on paper almost a decade before. The key aspects of this interconnection can be listed as follows: the disinterest for the past, the avoidance of responsibility, and the liquid form of money and debt.

As was mentioned before in this analysis, characters' speculations on the causes of the crisis are spread throughout the play. It emerges that there was a general disinterest for the past economic history. In Scene Three, a leading Industrialist points out the careless inability of contemporary people to look at the past to find strategies to manage risk in financial procedures. Quoting his words,

Industrialist You have to understand this is a world in which there is no past. People don't think about the past. (p.12)

In this specific case, Bauman's following argument seems to be proper to discuss the lack of interest about the past mentioned by the Industrialist.

The solids whose has come to be thrown into the melting pot and which are in the process of being melted at the present time, the time of fluid modernity, are the bonds which interlock individual choices in collective projects and actions – the patterns of communication and co-ordination between individually conducted life policies on the one hand and political actions of human collectivities on the other. (p.6)²³

In a liquid modern society, what happened in the past is considered irrelevant for the present time. Past experience is considered an outdated and heavy solid which – in a liquid modern perspective – should be melted to give space to a liberal future. The Industrialist's argumentation does not stop here. When he explains the measures taken during Thatcher's government to deregulate the economy by separating the Bank from government, he introduces the theme of responsibility.

Industrialist Things always go wrong, don't they? When you divide responsibility. If you split responsibility, it's only human nature to imagine the other person must have done it. You think, 'Oh, I'm not sure who's meant to be watching out for this, but I'm sure it's not me. (p.16)

And this appears to be another point of connection between the reality depicted in *The Power of Yes* and Bauman's study of modern society. When discussing the nature of power in modern societies, Bauman observes that,

The prime technique of power is now escape, slippage, elision and avoidance, the effective rejection of any territorial confinement with its cumbersome corollaries of order-building, order-maintenance and the responsibility for the consequences of it all as well as of the necessity to bear their costs. (p.11)

According to this sociologist, responsibility becomes liquid because it is divided – or better spread like a liquid – between various institutions. This concept seems to apply

²³ Bauman, Z. (2000).

very properly to the theme of responsibility in this specific play. Yet, responsibility is not the only thing that is represented as fluid in *The Power of Yes*. Characters' words help the audience form a perception of money as an entity that is no more material and flows easily across the world. But more crucially, debt is shown to be a liquid entity as well. Scene Five is dedicated to explain the process of selling out debt, which is called 'slicing and dicing'. Basically, through the characters' words the audience can understand that at a certain point banks started selling debts as if they were assets. Banker David Marsh's words appear to be self-explanatory in this sense,

Marsh Yes. But once the originator and the holder [of the debt] become separated, then the pain moves around, and it moves in disguise, if you like. You stub your toe but it's your elbow which hurts. Another way of putting it: the US exported their problems to the rest of the world. (p.28)

Astonishingly, the play finally points out the consequence to the mentioned changes towards a liquid modern society. David Hare's play ends with the following words uttered once again by George Soros.

Soros [...] the people who end up paying the price are never the people who get the benefits.' (p.72)

Conclusion

As far as the author's oeuvre is concerned, during his career in the theatre field David Hare's work has been – and still is – incredibly multifaceted in terms of genre and content. In this sense, Richard Boon prizes this quality of Hare's work and observes that his most staggering feature is “that he changes and re-changes his mind all the time”²⁴. Nonetheless, for the sake of this dissertation, I will consider the extensive body of work Hare wrote on political and social issues, and especially the documentary plays.

²⁴ Theatre Voice (2005).

Even though his work has involved different approaches and themes, David Hare has written an extensive amount of plays regarding political and social issues. A propos of this, after identifying history as the major subject of Hare's career, Richard Boon (Boon, R. ed., 2007)²⁵ makes an interesting point about Hare's approach to this topic. When discussing Hare's play *Plenty*, Boon points out that Hare wanted his audience to learn from recent British history by trying to elaborate on the causes of the events and on the possible alternate scenarios, instead of merely absorb the story²⁶. As far as I am concerned, this desire to impact on the audience by encouraging them to learn from history is a peculiar feature of numerous Hare's plays, and especially of *The Power of Yes*. Taking into consideration Hare's lifelong career in the theatre, I would argue that his life work has assimilated concerns typical of a Brechtian current of social theatre. My hypothesis finds its basis in Fortier's (Fortier, 1997) explanation in *Theory/Theatre*,

Brecht's theatre is primarily concerned with meaning and understanding. [...]. The purpose of theatre is to put the audience in a better position to understand the world around them, a world which [...] is social and changeable. (p.23)

Evidently, this desire of raising his audience judgement on a given theme could be easily applied to Hare's playwriting. Furthermore, David Hare seems to conserve, as Richard Eyre observes²⁷, "the belief in the possibility of radical change, of revolution" of his first years as a socialist playwright and, as Peter Ansorge reports²⁸, the skill of "consistently anticipat[ing] and report[ing] on the changes taking place on the top rung of British society as well as the bottom".

Not only is the interest for recent history a perennial fascination for David Hare, but also the playwright is not new to the kind of working approach he experienced concerning *The Power of Yes*. In recent times, the playwright has often been engaged with the theatrical practice which has been defined 'verbatim theatre' or 'documentary theatre'. Just to produce some recent examples, for instance, he wrote a play about four

²⁵ P.44.

²⁶ P.46.

²⁷ Boon, R. ed. (2007), p.146.

²⁸ Boon, R. ed. (2007), p.98.

train crashes in the UK entitled *The Permanent Way*, and a play about the Iraq war entitled *Stuff Happens* – which were respectively staged for the first time in 2003 and in 2004. The first play could be considered a piece of verbatim theatre, while the second is more properly defined as partly a documentary play and partly a fictional re-elaboration. In order to write his verbatim plays he organized interviews with people that had had a role in the field he was approaching, or that had witnessed the event he was trying to elaborate on. The whole staff of actors and the director usually went through this process together with the playwright. Another example that is worth mentioning in this context is Hare's 'State of the Nation' plays trilogy, and namely *Racing Demon* (1990), *Murmuring Judges* (1991), and *The Absence of War* (1993), respectively putting on stage the Church of England, the Justice System, and the Labour Party. The three plays were creative re-elaborations based on five years of interviews made by the playwright.²⁹ David Hare recalls his working method in his book *Asking Around. Background to the David Hare Trilogy*,

“Over that period I made it my practice to transcribe my notes each evening, while that day's conversations were still fresh in my mind. I have certainly not been tempted to include everyone I spoke to, nor have I sat down everything they said. I have tried instead to edit their conversations into some sort of narrative [...]” (p.2)

Even though there is not a similar memoir of the author concerning *The Power of Yes*, I think that, after the analysis provided in this chapter, this play too can be included in David Hare's verbatim plays.

In terms of the general impact and response of the play, *The Power of Yes* generated an interesting reaction. According to the geographers Linda McDowell (McDowell, 2011) the play actually was quite successful in the UK. More interesting though is the surprising reaction of the financial field to the play. On 17th January 2010, an article entitled “Why David Hare is wrong about business” appeared in the *Financial Times*. The tone of this article seems to be lodging a complaint against the side taken by David Hare in his play. It seems that the purpose of journalist Richard Lambert, the author of

²⁹ Hare, D. (1993), p.2.

the article, was that of contradicting every single claim put forth by the playwright in the play. In fact, I would claim that the defence provided by this article is weak because of poor supporting points. Apart from this, the relevant point is that this artistic theatrical production was so impactful to appear in a newspaper specialized in finance. To conclude, to my viewpoint *The Power of Yes* confirms Michael Billington's³⁰ words – “what he [David Hare]'s done is made the theatre oh, debatable, discussable, newsworthy”.

³⁰ Theatre Voice (2005).

Chapter 2 - Lucy Prebble's *Enron*

"Let's. Fucking. Play."

Lucy Prebble's play *Enron* is the third play in her career as a playwright and a writer for television. This play narrates the story of the rise and fall of the big American corporation Enron, which declared bankruptcy on 2nd December 2001³¹. The play was born out of a collaboration of Prebble with Headlong Theatre Company and especially with Rupert Goold. As Goold reports in an interview, it was the young Lucy Prebble who approached the company because she had come up with the idea of creating a musical out of the story of Enron's collapse. Significantly, not only Headlong Theatre Company seems to be a supporter of emergent playwrights and to be famous for highly theatrical representations, but also interestingly, Goold's background includes the direction of some musical operas. He then explains that they modified the play script several times, and they substituted their original idea of creating a musical with "the classical six songs" with a more theatrical piece, including more narrative scenes. Nonetheless, the final play preserves a great deal of Prebble's original intuitions, and especially her peculiar ability of creating powerful metaphors. Goold again reports that he particularly encouraged Prebble to cultivate this ability³², and I think that the result does emerge from the final theatrical outcome. *Enron* cannot thus be defined as a musical, but it still maintains some features of this genre, such as the use of music and dance, even if it is based on documentary material. In terms of the play's content, as can be noticed, the story actually precedes the 2008 financial crisis. Nevertheless, the analysis of *Enron* seems particularly relevant for this dissertation. The story it narrates appear to anticipate the machinations that, applied on an even larger scale, caused the financial crisis. As Rachel Clements (Prebble, 2012) points out in her introduction to the play script, the story of "the company's collapse, with hindsight, looks like an early warning sign, making the play feel both timely and urgent when it first opened" (p.12). The play – a co-production of Headlong company and Royal Court Theatre³³ – was first

³¹ Prebble, L. (2012), p.13.

³² Goold, R. dir. (2010).

³³ Prebble, L. (2012), p.1.

staged in 2009 at the Minerva Theatre in Chichester when the financial crisis was a recent issue, and interestingly in the same year of Hare's *The Power of Yes*. In order to write this analysis, I was able to compare the play script with a video recording shot between 16th January and 14th August 2010 at Noël Coward Theatre in London.³⁴ This chapter will provide an analysis of the play in terms of the most important themes and the powerful strategies used to stage this original response to the theme of bankruptcy and crisis. The analysis will also refer to hubris and 'liquid modernity, which have both been identified as key recurring concepts in this dissertation.

Music, dance, special effects, and visual metaphors

Lucy Prebble fascinatingly created an adrenaline-fuelled, colourful and energetic play out of the story of the rise and fall of a corporation. After carrying out her research in the field for two years, she designed an original response to the Enron crisis scandal. The playwright did not limit herself to put literally on stage what happened to the corporation. What seems to emerge after a careful analysis of both the performance and the play script is that Prebble, thanks to a long period of study and evaluation, managed to synthesize the most interesting motifs in Enron's story as well as contriving powerful visual metaphors to convey the play's content. The play is divided into three acts and the events are narrated in chronological order. More precisely, the play covers a timespan of almost a decade – from 1992 to the early 2000s – and is set in Houston Texas, where the company called Enron had its headquarters.

The most striking characteristic of this play is its visual and loud impact on the audience. Prebble's and Headlong Theatre Company's visual strategies for staging Enron appear to include a range of different techniques. These techniques include a significant use of music and a focused use of lights and projections as narrating supporting tools, the use of choreographies and songs to create a specific atmosphere, and the visual metaphors that were used to enhance important themes and even to frame

³⁴ Goold, R. dir. (2010).

some of the characters. The director of the play reports³⁵ that part of these ideas were already present in Prebble's script while other solutions emerged during rehearsals. The way in which the play *Enron* recounts the events it deals with do not only comprise the already mentioned staging strategies, but also extensive narrative sections and monologues. As suggested by Angelaki in her book entitled *Social and Political Theatre in 21st-century Britain*, when dealing with the theme of visual metaphors it would be interesting to mention Prebble's life-long passion for videogames.

Prebble's fascination with video games [...] is relevant here: it comes with an understanding of structure, gradual build-up and visuality. (p.231)

The importance of videogames in Prebble's life is not to be underestimated. In an article written for *The Guardian*, she even compared the process of video gaming with the creative process of writing.

I think it's linked to writing. Like writing, gaming is essentially private and individual (although it really doesn't have to be). It is creative, in comparison to the passivity of watching a film or reading a book. You are making choices and, often, are even designing the world yourself. And, perhaps most crucially, it is controlling. The writer has a bizarre and ridiculous response to struggling with their environment. [...] The writer, thwarted and disappointed by their existence, storms upstairs, slams the door and seethes: "If that's what the world's like, I'm going to create my own..."

Nonetheless, for the sake of this analysis, the visual dimension of videogames will be taken into particular consideration.

³⁵ Goold, R., *Theatre Voice* (2009).



Picture 5 The first choreography in the play. Employees dance and sing the national anthem.

Some of *Enron*'s visual metaphors appear to be an amplification of real elements, or to recall real events taking place in the period of time when the story is set. Firstly, the projection of Enron's logo – a capital 'E' including the writing 'Enron' – not only features at the beginning of the play as an introductory title, but is actually a recurring element which serves to strongly depict the growing power of the company. For example, in Act II Scene Six, a traders' choreography involving light sabers ends with them composing Enron logo with these luminous swords. Secondly, Enron's commercials have been used with the purpose of creating both visual and sound effects. In the play script, the following stage direction indicates how the plays opens, "*The eerie, mechanical sound of singing. It is the word 'WHY' from Enron commercials.*" (p.51) The same tune from Enron commercial was exploited also to introduce Act II in such a way that conveys an uncanny effect. Furthermore, the word 'WHY' itself seems to have been used as well as a recurring tool in the play. Thirdly, another example of this technique of recalling real events is the projection of video footage to signal key historical moments. Among the videos, there is footage showing the election of President Bush in Scene Five and the Twin Towers collapsing during the 11 September attack. Other videos convey for example the exciting atmosphere of the 1990s economic boom featuring for example "*Bill Clinton, the break up of the Soviet Union, Microsoft, the Internet and the rise of the home computer and Intel, 'Friends', Nelson Mandela's election, images of Arnie in 'Terminator 2'*" (p.57).

As far as visual characters' framing is concerned, there appear to be a number of characters who are represented in a realistic way, while another group is interestingly characterized by an eccentric and highly metaphoric outward appearance. The latter group seems to be particularly interesting when speaking of visual strategies. An example of metaphorical characters – again deriving from Enron commercial – are the Mice-men who feature at the beginning of the play, when the “WHY” tune is played. By way of clarification, Enron Online commercial pictures three blind mice guided by dogs who stand for “the dark blind system that existed” which Enron claims to replace with “an open transparent marketplace”³⁶. These three blind mice are pictured in a similar way in the play. They appear as mice-headed “*suited individuals [...] finding their way with white sticks*”. The blind Mice-men's silhouettes are exploited also in Act I Scene Eight to personify the lawyers' board. Prebble framed also other metaphorical characters. As a matter of fact, a strategy of personification has been adopted to give a body to abstract entities such as agencies and firms. The fictional law firm Ramsay and Hewitt is represented by a man and a woman appearing like “*‘justice’ with one blindfolded with sword, the other carrying the scale of justice*” (p.98). The real accounting firm Arthur Andersen is represented as a ventriloquist with his dummy, who seems to have the role of his voice of conscience. The notorious global financial services firm Lehman Brothers appears on stage as a couple of clumsy Siamese twins. A propos of Lehman Brothers, while talking about returning to gut instincts after a long period of research in the field, Prebble revealed,³⁷

[...] you could do as much research about the Lehman Brothers as possible, but the important thing was that I had this child-like idea of them as Siamese twins. It's those original, slightly infantile responses to business that are worth clinging on to – because they're the things audiences can relate to.

Prebble seems to have used the same instinctive reasoning when she decided to introduce dinosaur-like characters in the plays – the Raptors. These entities do not stand for an association as the characters mentioned before, but they still represent an abstract financial model that could be difficult to grasp for the audience. More precisely, Lucy

³⁶ AcesFullofSeven (2006). Enron Commercial – Change.

³⁷ Cavendish, D. with Prebble, L. (2009).

Prebble designed the Raptors in order to visualize the method through which toxic debt was eliminated at Enron. The dinosaur-headed characters – pictured as Andy Fastow’s pets – are shown while literally eating pieces of paper and banknotes symbolizing Enron’s huge debts.³⁸ To my viewpoint, it is thanks to this return to gut instinct that Lucy Prebble’s managed to create such visually powerful characters.

The setting design too is included among the strategies of visualization employed in this play. The setting presents two most apparent features. First, the acting area is composed of more levels. Apart from the stage zone, there are two areas positioned behind a screen for projections. Namely, a space on the same stage level, and a sort of balcony above. These two areas are occasionally visible beyond the screen. This kind of setting gives the possibility to stage different scenes simultaneously, therefore adding to the play even more dynamicity. Secondly, cylinder-shaped lights hanging from the ceiling were used both as tools to create a transition effect between the scenes, and as tools to frame specific areas on the stage in order to create various locations. The lighting system – and especially the use of flashing lights – worked to emphasize the adrenaline-fuelled mood of the characters on stage. Furthermore, as regards the lighting system, a red led sign – showing the company’s worth in figures – features most of the scenes after Act I Scene Three when the new Enron is created. It could be argued that the use of objects contributes too to the visualization strategy of the play. A range of cubes was used to construct objects for the setting such as running machines, a ladder, Andy Fastow’s office, and stands that were used during choreographies. Moreover, characters actually use objects to make clear certain financial concepts to the audience indirectly, while talking with other characters. One of the key scene in this sense is in Act I Scene Eight. In this scene, Andy Fastow explains to Jeffrey Skilling his resolution for hiding the company’s debt. By using a range of Russian dolls boxes, he clarifies his idea to create a shadow company to be used for storing Enron’s debt. Interestingly, inside this system of boxes Fastow positions a small red glowing box, which represents the beating heart of Enron debt and significantly remains visible as a red light on screen for the rest of the play.

³⁸ This passage of the interview is included in Angelaki, V. (2017), p.229.

Moving on now to consider music and dance, they both feature consistently in the mis-en-scene of *Enron*, together with a choreographic use of gesticulation. Music was used consistently throughout the play not only in terms of the Enron commercial tune, but also as a narrative device to signal and emphasize key moments in the play while conveying a specific atmosphere. For example, in Act I Scene One the joyful 90s atmosphere is conveyed by R.E.M.'s 1991 music track "Shynty Happy People". Interestingly, the play did not only include pre-recorded music tracks, but also live music. In fact, stock analysts are represented as a singing white-coat-clad barbershop quartet appearing twice on stage. In Act I Scene Five, in order to celebrate Jeffrey Skilling's success, they sing a cappella,

Analysts (*singing*) ENRON, ENRON, ENRON, ENRON. If your company bank accounts need filling! He's available and willing. To see to it that you make a killing! Skilling, Skilling, Skilling, Skilling, Skilling, Be boo doo wop wop ba doo!



Picture 6 The barber shop quartet of Analysts.

The same group appear also in Act II Scene Nine, this time delivering a "*sore, tuneless*"³⁹ version of the same song. Including this example, the play's dynamicity is expressed through a combination of sound and choreographic effects. Not only some dance moves accompany the quartet's exhibition, but also characters' overlapping voices are used multiple times together with dance and gesticulation to visualize

³⁹ Prebble, L. (2012), p.138.

specific narrative turns in the play. There are various choreographies, which apparently have this function. A symmetrically arranged dance on the USA national anthem starring Enron's employees opens Act I and leads the audience in the place where the play is set. A long dancing sequence was used in Act I Scene 4 to depict most significantly the metamorphosis of Enron into a trading center. The performance starts with a harmonious music and a matching choreography symbolizing the commodities traded by the renovated company. Then, characters dance and move objects around while the picture of a huge glass building appears on the screen. Right afterwards, while white and green financial figures are projected onto them, employees engage in an energetic choreography representing the action of trading. The characters' dance moves are interestingly accompanied by the typical gestures used by traders to communicate – technically called 'arbing'⁴⁰. The caption below captured a similar dance in Act I Scene 6, which shows the company at work.



Picture 7 A dance representing the company's employees at work.

A really interesting choreography in terms of visual power is a Star Wars-like martial training in Act II Scene Six. While traders, who wear sunglasses, perform a series of martial moves with their green light sabers, Skilling joins the dance too by entering with his red light saber, as if to prove his role of alpha male among his pack. This dance is used as a tool to visualize the manipulation of deregulated Californian electricity. Moreover, dances are often exploited to change the arrangement of objects on stage. By way of illustration, Act I Scene Nine begins with one of this purposeful dances which

⁴⁰ Prebble, L. (2012), p.41.

than turns into a party-like media event represented by a cowboy-style choreography. Apart from accompanying dances, music is often blasted on stage to create an adrenaline-fuelled mood.

The play's narrative framing and key themes

Lucy Prebble's *Enron* appears to be a particularly interesting play because it is an amalgamation of reality and fiction. More precisely, the play narrates a true story, which has been transformed into a metaphorical theatrical rendition. This feature is apparent when analyzing the characters. As already mentioned before, some of the characters were framed as visual metaphors, even in the case they stand for real entities. The rest of the group, which is more realistic in its representation, hosts characters who relate to real individuals together with characters who are partly fictional. To this realistic range of characters belong Enron's employees and traders, news reporters, a congresswoman, a senator, and Jeffrey Skilling's daughter. Most importantly, to this group belong the central characters who seems to be four – Jeffrey Skilling, Claudia Roe, Andy Fastow, and Kenneth Lay. As Clements reports in the introduction to the play, Jeffrey Skilling actually belongs to the group of characters based on reality, as he represents the man who was Enron's president during its boom. The same applies to the character of Andy Fastow and to Kenneth Lay. The character called Claudia Roe instead is fictional, although it has been inspired by a combination of real individuals too.⁴¹

From the characters' behaviour and words, there emerges a representation of Enron's social climate as dominated by a general macho attitude and a Darwinian struggle to survive. Numerous other elements do contribute to communicate this atmosphere, such as the pace of the performance, music, dance, and gesticulation, which were mentioned before. Focusing now on the characters' attitude and words, the play reverberates with male chauvinist expressions. Skilling himself shows this attitude when speaking with Roe for the first time in Act I Scene 1. When mentioning an article in

⁴¹ Prebble, L. (2012), pp.13-18.

which she appears in the list of the fifty most powerful women in the world, he comments,

Skilling Most powerful *women*?

Roe Number fourteen.

Skilling I remember. There was a great bit on Oprah and her dogs. (p.55)

Yet, Skilling is not the only character who proves to be male chauvinist. After Enron's renovation, Enron's traders show the same attitude, even to a greater extent. Enron's trading floor – the traders' environment – and in general, the scenes in which traders gather can be easily identified because they include all sort of vulgarities. In Act I Scene Four – significantly entitled 'An Orgy of Speculation' – traders shout to communicate while trading and at the same time make some comments about Skilling. An incredible range of swearwords accompanies everything they say. By way of illustration, here is a small section of the long sequence acted by traders in this scene,

Trader 5 There goes your bonus.

Trader 1 Bonus ain't shit. I just don't want Jeff Skilling up my ass.

Trader 6 Chill, dude. Skilling gets it. He's a fucking trader, man. (pp. 69-70)

This macho behaviour reaches its apex in the same scene when a group of traders actually assault Andy Fastow. As a note in the script also emphasizes, while one of the traders shoves Fastow, the others "*mock and physically berate him. One shows him his penis*" (p.73). Skilling himself seems to encourage strongly this kind of atmosphere by organising male-only retreats exclusively for some employees. As one of the traders describes them,

Trader 2 [...] Skilling's death weekends, man! Rolling jeeps and motorcycles and wotnot. Someone's gonna fucking die / (p.71)

Furthermore, Skilling appears to be an advocate of Darwinian principles as far as his idea of company management is concerned. This adds to the employees' macho mood a competition for survival. Skilling's Darwinian strategy is particularly apparent in Act I

Scene Five, when he challenges Fastow to run on a running machine. He exploits the gym location to give Fastow a lesson on the survival of the strongest.

Skilling Charles Darwin showed how an idea can change the world. Now we understand our own nature. And we can use that.

Fastow Use it for what?

Skilling For business. Business *is* nature.

Fastow Like self-interest and competition?

Skilling Exactly, Money and sex motivate people, Andy. And money's the one that gets their hands off their dick and into work. (p.76)

Thus, apart from reinforcing the macho atmosphere, by identifying money and sex as the primal triggers for human action, this scene offers one of the most powerful metaphors of the play.

As regards the narration framing, it seems that the play rests on a dispute between two fronts. Claudia Roe and Kenneth Lay represent the front of the industry of the past, based on the trade of material goods. On the opposite side, Jeffrey Skilling and his partner in crime Andy Fastow stand for the front of the industry of the future, based on the trade of virtual goods, speed, and fluidity. Skilling's report of the Enron Online commercial text in the prologue to the play actually introduces this conflict,

Jeffrey Skilling (V.O.) Enron Online will change the market. It is creating an open, transparent market place that replaces the dark, blind system that existed. It is real simple. If you want to do business, you push the button. We're trying to change the world. (p.51)

Jeffrey Skilling is the protagonist of the story and the leader of the front of modernity, while the character Claudia Roe apart from being the leader of the front of past industry, seems to have been framed by Prebble as a sort of nemesis for Skilling. To my viewpoint, Fastow and Lay instead could be properly considered supporting characters. The frequent contrasts between Skilling and Roe and both characters' development

provide significant narrative tension in the play. The narration begins with the company celebrating the introduction of a new accounting system called 'Mark to Market'. It slowly becomes clear that it was Jeffrey Skilling who suggested adopting the new system. Although Skilling's contribution is provoking an important change in his company, Enron's founder Kenneth Lay does not seem to show much consideration for this character. The confident, good-looking, successful Claudia Roe is actually his favourite, and thus seems to have an advantage over her colleague. Although he is shy and ill at ease, Jeffrey Skilling is revealed to be a clever, arrogant, and extremely ambitious man. As mentioned before, even though he is a shy man, Skilling shares the same male-chauvinist attitude of his colleagues. Very interestingly, Claudia Roe too seems to have a bullying attitude. This tendency emerges from her words and actions especially in two scenes. In Act I Scene 2, after they had quick sex, Roe says to Skilling,

Roe You know, I read that it's better to hire people who were bullied at school. Cos they want it more. They've got in built competition. (p.59)

In addition, when they get to discuss how many times they had sex before, a disdainful Roe utters,

Roe [...] four if you wanna be a school girl about it [...] (p.62)

Roe's scornful and derisive attitude towards Skilling could be at first considered as a sign of her difficulty to strive in a male-dominated company but, in fact, this attitude was designed especially to confirm her dominant personality and her career-related ambition. As Clements reports⁴², Prebble did not mean to create a morally genuine character when creating Claudia Roe. As she revealed in an interview for Broadway's Best Shows,

I don't think she's in any way a sort of paradigm of ethical behaviour, and I place her very much amongst the executives, even if she's an executive with a different world-view from the men.

To my viewpoint, Claudia Roe's aggressive behaviour seems to collocate her properly as the leader of the old industry front. The actual confrontation of the two characters

⁴² Prebble, L. (2012), p.15.

though takes place in Act I Scene Three, when they contend for the Company's leadership. Their personalities are indicated also by their look – Skilling wears bold glasses and gray ill-fitting clothes, while the blond-haired Claudia wears a red flattering dress and matching lipstick. Both characters offer their resolutions for the company's future. As mentioned before, Skilling envisions a bright and fluid online and virtual future for the company, while Roe proposes to build a new power plant in India. While trying to manipulate Kenneth Lay in order to gain the post he is offering, both characters initially try to find effective arguments. Nonetheless, they eventually fall back on an aggressive attitude, starting insulting each other. In the end, Skilling manages to overcome Roe by discrediting her business approach relating to material possessions such as power plants. Moreover, he does so by invoking the intangible quality of faith.

Skilling [...] There's a dignity to holding something, Ken. But your daddy was a Baptist preacher. There's a dignity to giving people something they *can't* touch. (p.66)

This strategy of using religious references that Skilling employs to convince Lay will be further discussed in the next section. Returning to the narration frame, when Lay gives him the post, the transformation of Enron takes place. Together with Enron, Jeff Skilling undergoes a transformation – from a nerdy aspect, he gains the look of a confident-looking man by wearing a right size black elegant suit and eliminating glasses, not to mention the fact that he becomes more self-assured. While Roe is relegated to a minor division of the company, Skilling takes control of Enron, loyally followed by Fastow.



Picture 8 Act I Scene Three. Skilling (Samuel West), Lay and Roe discussing about the post of President. Skilling before the metamorphosis.

In the meantime, Claudia Roe continues to take care of her own business. Even after her demotion, Roe exploits Ken Lay's favour by repetitively trying to convince him to build the power plant in India. At the same time, she maintains her antagonistic role as the story goes on. In fact, she is the only person who is suspicious about Skilling's scheme. In Act I Scene Seven she reveals to Skilling that,

Roe I said to people, wait, just wait, the shine'll wear off, get ready for the dip folks. And...a year goes by, two. But I keep saying it because, if I stop, it's bound to happen and the worst thing would be to not being able to say I told you so. (p.83)

In a last outburst of rage against Skilling, Roe even states that,

Roe [...] You need me around to disagree with you. (p.85)

Yet, in the end, even Roe resigns to Skilling's powerful appeal when faced with the company's share price.

Roe [...] Hey, we're announcing profits all the time, and you seem to know where that money's coming from. Everyone's behind you! And I'm just saying it includes me. (p.87)

Nonetheless, as his empire grows exponentially, Skilling acts in order to undermine Roe's role in the company, to the point of getting rid of her. In actual fact, Skilling

gives Roe a final slap in the face in Act II Scene Three by asking Lay to fire her, and thus confirming the enormous power he has gained. Roe does not appear until the epilogue of the play, in which she both confirms her disdain for Skilling's actions and her desire to take care of her interest.

Skilling Can I walk with you?

Roe I got to take care of myself here. (p.149)

Returning now to the metamorphosis that Skilling undergoes as the story goes on, this character outward transformation seems to emphasise the exponential growth of his thirst for money and power, and in more metaphorical terms his hubris. The next section will explore in detail how Skilling's rise and fall have been represented in the play.



Picture 9 Jeffrey Skilling after his transformation. Andy Fastow in the background.

Enron draws attention to the way in which faith, belief, deceiving and an attitude to business as if it was a game concurred to shape a distorted reality. An overview of these themes is provided by a Lawyer's words at the beginning of Act I. This introduction both recalls the introductory role of the chorus in Shakespeare's *Henry V* – who asks the audience to fill what they see on stage with their imagination –, and the threatening introduction of the protagonist in *Richard III* – who anticipates his evil scheme to the

audience. The Lawyer's introduction to the play includes a great deal of important information. First, the Lawyer defines the time he is talking about as a time of crisis,

Lawyer (*to us*) [...] When businesses fail, when unemployment rises, marriage breaks down and men jump to their deaths. Somebody. Divides up. The money. [...] But, when things get desperate, we find ourselves 'A Great Man', look up to him and demand he change things. (p.51)

While he introduces Skilling's aim to change the world, the Lawyer explains that,

[...] Within every great man there's a buried risk. The guy I know tried to change the world was the man behind the corporate crime that defined the end of the twentieth century, and cast a shadow over this one. Now as a lawyer I choose my words carefully. So when we tell you his story, you should know it could never be *exactly* what happened. But we're gonna put it together and sell it to you as the truth. [...] (p.51).

Jeffrey Skilling – the 'Great Man' the Lawyer refers to in the first part of his monologue – is not only represented as a messiah whom people follow blindly. When he actually reaches the apex of his success, Skilling seems to be depicted as a god. The religious metaphor used by the Lawyer is only the first one of a series of recurring references to faith and religion in the play. Furthermore, the Lawyer's warning about the truth of the reported events not only does refer to the theatrical re-elaboration of the facts, but also to the theme of distortion of reality in the play, which will be discussed in detail in the next paragraphs.

On the question of faith and belief, Enron presents numerous references to the sphere of religion to represent the key theme of hubris. The choice to represent hubris and naïve belief through reference to religion appears to be a peculiarity of Prebble, as emerges from this analysis. Lucy Prebble represented Jeffrey Skilling's hubris by framing his character with god-like features. From the very beginning of the play, it becomes clear that Skilling has a vision for the future of the company. Most interestingly, in Act I Scene Two he manifests his ideas to Roe in what I think could be considered a sort of epiphany,

Skilling [...] I've been thinking. Waking up at night with all these ideas.
Ideas for here. [...] (p.61)

As the play goes on, it becomes clear that Skilling considers himself an enlightened man with great ideas that the majority of other people do not seem to grasp. His self-esteem and self-assurance grow exponentially together with his aggressiveness and arrogance as the story develops. In her analysis, Angelaki properly defines Skilling's actions as an attempt "to instill a cult of faith into trading so that he may widen his corporate influence."⁴³ Some scenes seem to have been specifically designed in order to emphasise Skilling's godlike aspect. In Act I Scene 9 Skilling is on a platform in the centre of a mass of journalists and photographers. As written in the script, "*The Photographer is beneath him to make him look impressive, god-like*". In Act II Scene Nine, another religious metaphor takes place as Skilling acts as he was crucified for the crime committed at Enron. Elaborating on Goold and Prebble's conception of Skilling as a tragic hero or anti-hero,⁴⁴ Angelaki⁴⁵ again observes that the crucifixion scene

[...] is Skilling's moment of ultimate humiliation as he sustains penance for his hubris: [...] In that moment, like any other tragic hero in radical crisis whose world is collapsing, he is reminded of those he neglected to pursue his blind ambition.

Nevertheless, although recognizing the religiously powerful quality of this scene, I would suggest that this scene does not really represent a punishment for Skilling's hubris. As a matter of fact, he steps out of the company before the actual collapse, and his crucifixion seems to be a masquerade to publicly cover up his responsibilities. While he maintains this outward appearance even after Enron's collapse, he uniquely reveals his inward moments of crisis to Andy Fastow.

Fastow Have a little faith.

Skilling Faith?! Andy, you gotta understand. I don't have any cash. I can't operate. I have no money. (p.118)

⁴³ Angelaki, V. (2017), p.230.

⁴⁴ Goold, R., Theatre Voice (2009).

⁴⁵ Angelaki, V. (2017), pp. 230-231.

As can be observed, even when Skilling confides his worries to Fastow, there is a reference to faith. Other characters too make often reference to religion, and this is especially true for the character of Kenneth Lay. As emerges from the speech he delivers to announce the vacancy for the post of president, religion plays an important role in Lay's cultural background.

Lay What is Enron? In the past, folks thought that the basic unit of society would be the state, or the church or lord helps us, the political party. But we now know it's The Company. And the family. And those two things should be the same. A place where a group of like-minded individuals work for the betterment of themselves and for those they love. I believe in God, I believe in democracy and I believe in the Company. [...] (p.63)

As mentioned before, Skilling does exploit religion as an expedient to convince Kenneth Lay to give him the post of president. Further in the play, Skilling also takes part to a prayer with Lay, which apparently serves to confirm Lay's trust in him. Ultimately, the god-like representation of this character is included also in the character's consideration of himself. When the company eventually collapses, his omnipotence is revealed to be the result of both people's naïve trust and of his personal auto-persuasion.

Skilling IT'S ME! Everything will be fine, don't be idiotic! (p.138)

The recurring mentioning of the word 'belief' in Enron does not only refer to the sphere of religion. It also refers to the intention that the majority of characters share to deceive and to distort reality. As Megson concisely suggests,

The play is important because it casts belief as the key alchemical agent within the citadels of global capital.⁴⁶

This is a kind of representation that this play shares with the other three plays analysed in this dissertation. The play is full of references to the perception of reality. For example, Skilling manages to obtain the switch to the 'Mark to Market' accounting

⁴⁶ Megson, C. (2013), p.43

system by using misleading words in order to alter the perception of reality. When discussing the new system at the very beginning, he says,

Fastow Mark to market is the accounting system for all the big investments banks / on Wall Street.

Roe Yes. But *we* are a gas and oil company.

[...]

Skilling We're an *energy* company. You say 'gas and oil' people think...farts and Arabs. (p.56)

The emphasis he puts on the word 'energy' reveals his intent to manipulate people in order to reach his objective. Together with Skilling, other characters such as Kenneth Lay share the same tendency to play with people's perception of reality through words especially when trying to hide Enron's losses and criminal schemes. Nevertheless, when considering the practice of deceiving, I think that the character called Andy Fastow is the most interesting to analyse. He sets out as being Skilling's shadow and then becomes the one who ideates the system to hide Enron's debts. He is actually the creator of the shadowy framework on which Enron's success stands. To my viewpoint, Fastow's insecure personality and his retiring attitude could be considered as revelatory details of his function in the play. For almost the entire duration of the play, Fastow is shut down in his office away from people trying to manage the activity of the shadow company LJM and literally taking care of his Raptors, who consume the debt. Interestingly, Fastow concludes his monologue about the procedure called 'hedging' by saying,

Fastow [...] When I write down everything that can possibly go wrong, as a formula. A formula I control. Nothing seems scary anymore. (p.88)

His words manifest that the solution taken to try to manage risk was actually self-deception. In my opinion, Act I Scene Eight – entitled 'An Unholy Partnership' – could be considered the most telling scene in the play in terms of reference to reality and its perception.

Skilling [...] We've got the best business plan, the highest share price, the smartest graduates. Trouble is. Right now. We're not making any money.

[...]

Fastow Wait, you got a perception here, a reality here. You just need something for this to lean on while we bring this up. (p.92)

In Act II Scene One, Fastow makes another reference to the difference between reality and its perception when he explains to Skilling that the company's debt is being consumed by the Raptors.

Fastow [...] All money is debt. It's just how you present it. (p.109)

The concept is further reinforced by Claudia Roe's monologue right afterwards, in which she explains to the audience that,

Roe (*to us*) Something is happening to business. At the beginning of this century. Things have started to get divorced from the underlying realities. [...]
[...] (p.110)

Another metaphor used to explain the importance of belief and self-deception in the story is Sloman's speech regarding aeroplanes in Act III Scene One.

Sloman (*to us*) There's a strange thing goes on inside a bubble. It's hard to describe. People who are in it can't see outside of it, don't believe there is an outside. You get glazed over. I believed in Enron. Everybody did. [...] You get on a plane, you don't understand exactly how it works, but you believe it'll fly. [...] Imagine if the *belief* that the plane could fly was all that was keeping it in the air. It'd be fine. If everybody believed. [...] (p.140)

Strikingly, this is actually a very similar metaphor to that used by David Hare in *The Power of Yes*, which was analysed in the previous chapter. Yet, Prebble here is suggesting something. It seems that the point the play tries to make is that all financial procedures done at Enron and the reputation the company and its president acquired during its economic boom were rooted on groundless belief and unjustified trust, which were generated by an action of deceiving. This is the reason why Skilling's reputation remains intact even after the revelation of the company's crime. Sloman's response when Skilling resigns as Enron's president is telling,

Skilling I'm doing this for the company. It'll go up when I announce. The market's decided. It wants me out.

Sloman But that's not true. People say all over, I'm not long Enron, but I'm long Jeff Skilling. (p.139)

Moving on now to consider one of the other aspects of Skilling's way of doing business, in the play the action of trading is often represented as a game. I think that the comparison to a game is particularly significant for multiple reasons. First, the action of trading and the action of playing actually share the same strong sense of competitiveness. Among the numerous references to the sphere of playing, in Act I Scene Four one of the traders states,

Trader 1 [...] We don't just play the game, we are the game. [...] There's something...primal. Closest thing there is to hunting. Closest thing there is to sex. For a man, that is. (p.74)

This aspect seems therefore to combine with the themes of machismo and Darwinism – that were discussed in the previous paragraphs – to depict the specific mood of this play. Secondly, the metaphor of the game is exploited to convey some key concepts in the play. The two scenes featuring Skilling's daughter are particularly relevant in this sense. In Act I Scene Six, Skilling actually counts money as a game with his daughter. Apart from the disquieting fact that it is his daughter who asks him to show her the money,⁴⁷ this scene provides a means for visualizing the huge quantities of money that flow in the trading world. Skilling asks his daughter,

Skilling One dollar bill a second. No stopping, how long before I counted a million dollars? – guess.

[...]

Skilling It would take daddy at one dollar a second, eleven days to count out a million dollars. Eleven days! No sleeping. (p.82)

⁴⁷ Prebble, L. (2012), p.81

Afterwards, he repeats the same game, this time realizing that it would take a timespan of thirty-two years in order to count a billion dollars. Game proves to be used to make concepts clear also in Act II Scene Three, when Skilling's daughter is shown while blowing bubbles on the balcony above the stage. The action of inflating bubbles appears to be a metaphor to depict the creation of a financial bubble. Another interesting feature of this scene is the daughter's repetition of the word 'why' that recalls quite clearly the slogan of Enron commercial. Games are therefore part of the strategies used for explaining certain difficult concepts to the audience. Thirdly, returning to the theme dealt with in the previous paragraph, it seems to me that characters are not really understanding what is going on also because they are acting in a fake reality which resembles the reality of games. Consequently, I think that in the play business maintains also the pretence aspect of playing.

Enron and Zygmunt Bauman 'liquid modernity'

To my view point, Lucy Prebble's *Enron* not only makes use of metaphors that recall Zygmunt Bauman's idea of 'liquid modernity', but its characters also show specific attitudes that are included in this sociologist's study of modernity. A visual example of liquid-modern-oriented ideas is the transformation Enron undergoes, which is significantly described in the play script as '*a physical liberation; a clearing of clutter*' (p.67). When inspecting more in depth this theme, I think that Jeffrey Skilling could be considered as the representative of the ideas linked to Bauman's concept of liquid modernity. Let's take into consideration the following passage taken from *Liquid Modernity*, in which Bauman outlines some key characteristics of modernity that

sets [it] apart from all other historical forms of human cohabitation: the compulsive and obsessive, continuous, unstoppable, forever incomplete *modernization*; the overwhelming and ineradicable, unquenchable thirst for creative destruction (or of destructive creativity, as the case might be: of 'clearing the site' in the name of a 'new and improved' design; of 'dismantling', 'cutting out', 'phasing out', 'merging' or 'downsizing', all for

the sake of a greater capacity for doing more of the same in the future – enhancing productivity and competitiveness). (p.28)

It would be interesting to compare this passage with the following lines uttered by Skilling in Act I Scene Three,

Skilling [...] We should be coming up with new ideas. About everything. Employ the smartest people we can find. Have ‘em free to look at whatever they want – less structure, less routine, let people’s minds work, free from the old assumptions about this company is. (p.66)

From this comparison, there emerges the fact that Skilling actually seems to personify Bauman’s ideas. His vision appears to be rooted in the idea of changing the world and completely revolutionizing the system for doing business. Moreover, Skilling’s plan does not only imply a brutal conversion of business strategy, but also a radical change in the quality of the goods to trade. In actual fact, from a gas and oil seller Enron turns into a company that trades energy only virtually. Interestingly, the virtual quality of the new commodities traded by the company goes along with the convenience quality of it in terms of selling them quickly and profitably. These features furthermore seem to trigger characters’ greed and hubris, as discussed in the previous paragraphs.

Conclusion

Lucy Prebble’s work in the arts appears to be interestingly multifaceted. Young Prebble developed an interest in theatre during her university years and since then she has been writing plays. Moreover, she has been writing also screenplays for TV series such as *Secret Diary of a Call Girl*. After winning the PMA Most Promising Playwright Award with her first play *Liquid*,⁴⁸ she continued writing for the theatre. Among her plays, a mention should go certainly to her 2003 play *The Sugar Syndrome* – a work that explores the psychology of a pedophile in the contest of online chats –, and the more recent 2012 play *The Effect* – which investigates the impact of medicines on the feeling

⁴⁸ Prebble, L. (2012), p.vii.

of love. *Enron* seems to be one of her most successful plays, and this final section will try to understand the reasons behind this success.

As regards the reception of the play, both Clements⁴⁹ and Angelaki (Angelaki, 2017)⁵⁰ report that *Enron* toured the UK for a long period and was nationally acclaimed. Namely, *Enron* won the TMA Award for Best Play in 2009, and was nominated for Best New Play at the 2010 Olivier Awards. Furthermore, the director Rupert Goold won the Evening Standard Theatre Award for Best Director in 2009, and the Olivier Award for Best Director in 2010.⁵¹ After the success in the UK, the play transferred to Broadway, where on the contrary it was a flop. This seems to confirm the doubts expressed by Aleks Sierz when he interviewed director Rupert Goold for *Theatre Voice* before the play was staged in Broadway.⁵² Sierz suggested that the American audience's response to the 9/11 attacks scene could have been very different from the Brits' reaction. Writing after the play's flop in the USA, Angelaki suggests that probably the American audience was not ready to interpret the play with the same satirical spirit shown by the British audience.⁵³ Therefore, it could be stated that the impact of the play – both in a positive and in a negative perspective – was notable. The impact on the public seems to be further reinforced by the fact that – like Hare's *The Power of Yes* – *Enron* was discussed also in columns of financial newspapers.⁵⁴

As already mentioned, the most striking characteristic of this play seems to be the effective result it obtained by combining a theme of the here-and-now with a highly imaginative approach. Lucy Prebble's playwriting project held specific characteristics already in her original idea. As she revealed to a journalist of the *New York Times*, when proposing to embark in the project together with director Rupert Goold, she said to him,

⁴⁹ Prebble, L. (2012), p.42.

⁵⁰ P.223.

⁵¹ Prebble, L. (2012), pp. vii-viii.

⁵² Goold, R., *Theatre Voice* (2009).

⁵³ Angelaki, V. (2017), p.242.

⁵⁴ Angelaki, V. (2017), p.226.

I have got this one thing. I'd love to do a really big, musical, kind of spectacular show about the fall of Enron.⁵⁵

What these words reveal is not only an interest on the scandal produced by Enron's collapse as a theme, but also the intention of applying a specific representational approach. In my opinion, the play was successful for various reasons. First, as mentioned before, Prebble spent a long time doing research to write her play. It could be argued that this large timespan helped her to digest the theme in such a way that permitted her to frame a convincing artistic response to the events. It seems interesting to consider this feature of *Enron*'s writing process along with what Angelaki defines "the investigative and methodical element of Prebble's writing"⁵⁶. With *Enron* Prebble seems to provide both a detailed insight into the scandal, and also a universal depiction of human greed. The fact that *Enron* implies such a great deal of metaphors that are not necessarily connected to the present moment gives the play a timeless quality. As emerges from *Theatre Voice*'s interview to Rupert Goold⁵⁷, the "slightly mythical side" of the roles characters such as Skilling, Fastow, Lay, and Roe occupy in the narration seems to have fascinated the playwright. Furthermore, I think that the play's fast pace and its entertaining staging strategies seem to resonate with nowadays fast-paced, loud, and visually thirsty contemporary society. What seems to give the play an interesting twist though is its open ending. When Angelaki says that "whatever the crime committed, Prebble's playwriting refuses to punish"⁵⁸, she actually refers to the choice that the playwright left to the audience in terms of judging the events the play recounted. Ultimately thus, *Enron* – using Jeffrey Skilling's words⁵⁹ – provides an occasion to hold up a mirror up to *human* nature.

⁵⁵ Gee, A. with Prebble, L. (2010).

⁵⁶ Angelaki, V. (2017), p.224.

⁵⁷ Goold, R., *Theatre Voice* (2009).

⁵⁸ Angelaki, V. (2017), p.226.

⁵⁹ Prebble, L. (2012), p.151.

Chapter 3 - Dennis Kelly's *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*

“- Goodness or cowardice, goodness or cowardice, goodness or cowardice...
- You decide.”

In 2012 British playwright Dennis Kelly wrote a play for Staedtische Buehnen Frankfort am main BMBH. The play – whose title was *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* – was afterwards staged for the first time in the UK, namely on 5th September 2013 at the Royal Court Theatre in London.⁶⁰ As regards the content of the work, the play narrates the story of Gorge Mastromas – an ordinary man who, from a certain point in his life, decided that he would take everything he wanted by doing anything. It could be argued that this play's connection to the theme of 2008 financial crisis is not as direct as in the other three plays analysed. With this issue in view, this chapter will discuss the reasons why Dennis Kelly's *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* could be considered as a theatrical response to the financial crisis. To write this analysis, I was able to compare the play script with the video recording of the performance held at the V&A Theatre & Performance Archive. This specific recording was shot between 5th and 19th October 2013, and was directed by Vicky Featherstone.⁶¹ More precisely, this chapter will discuss the most relevant themes in this piece of theatre – broaching the themes of hubris and liquid modernity as in the other chapters. Furthermore, in terms of genre, it will discuss the play as a tragedy, following Gustav Freytag's model for classical tragedies.

What has this play to do with the financial crisis?

Unlike the other plays analysed in this dissertation, *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*'s narration is not specifically about the 2008 financial crisis or based on documentary material relating to specific recent events. Instead, I would argue that the connection with the other three plays does seem to emerge from the analysis of

⁶⁰ Kelly, D. (2013).

⁶¹ Featherstone, V. dir. (2013).

recurring themes such as the manipulation of truth and perception of reality, hubris, and liquid modernity, but especially by the character framing of the protagonist, whose characteristics seems to recur too in many characters of the works analysed. This second argument will be discussed in the conclusion of the dissertation. Interestingly, theatre critics have variously termed and discussed Kelly's work in the theatre field as metaphysical. Kelly's quality of not making direct reference to specific events of contemporaneity is particularly praised by Aleks Sierz in his essay about British new writing from the mid-1990s.⁶² In contrast to a general tendency of young playwrights to literally report events of the here and now – whose group he defines 'the literalists' –, this theatre critic actually identifies Dennis Kelly and Debbie Tucker Green as innovative young playwrights and members of the group he defines as 'the metaphysicals'.⁶³ In his essay, Sierz discusses the presence of metaphysical elements in these two playwrights' and in other playwrights' works. His terminology refers to the fact that these playwrights' plays present a higher metaphorical approach to the themes they deal with.

A couple of younger spirits, such as Dennis Kelly and Debbie Tucker Green, have penned innovative and original dramas. [...] Similarly, Kelly has been able to articulate some of our current preconceptions without being overtly literal. In the provocatively titled *Osama the Hero* (Hampstead, 2005) he showed how the War on Terror could seep into the minds of impoverished people on a council estate and in *Love and Money* (Young Vic, 2007), he described the effects of Britain's debt culture: in each case, the play's structure gave an intriguing slant on its subject matter. In *Taking Care of Baby* (Hampstead, 2007), Kelly also took on verbatim drama with a story which purported to be the real-life case of one Donna McAuliffe, a child killer, told through the testimony of the people involved in the case, but which was actually a satirical fiction. (p.105)

Moving on now to consider another critic's opinion, Angelaki not only describes Kelly's *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* as 'a capitalist fable'⁶⁴, but she also

⁶² Sierz, A. (2008), p.105.

⁶³ P.103.

⁶⁴ Angelaki, V. (2017).

detects a ‘metaphysical twist’ in Kelly’s representation of the main character in this play.⁶⁵ The metaphysical dimension of this work – and thus its way of dealing with themes such as existence and ideas about life – appears to be a crucial characteristic that places this play both in the here and now and in a more universal sphere. With respect to what positions the play in the present time, there exist some time references that help the audience understand more clearly the timespan covered by the story. The audience is told that the protagonist was conceived on the 15th of July 1972, and the encounter between Gorge Mastromas and his brother is said to have taken place on 11th September 2013. Therefore, Gorge’s adulthood and the apex of his power possibly coincide with the period of the financial crisis, or in the aftermath to the crisis-related events. Moreover, the bankruptcy of the firm in which Gorge initially works might be considered as another reference to the period of the economic crisis. As regards the content of the play, *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* recounts the story of a man who discovers how to acquire unlimited money and especially endless power. Therefore, it seems to present a theme, which is certainly a key contemporary issue, but also a universal theme. As regards the outline of the story and characters, the commonalities that this plays share with the other plays analysed in this dissertation will emerge in the following sections.

Dennis Kelly’s language and the narrators’ role in the play

I think that the play can be said to possess two crucial peculiarities, which seem to work together to create the specificity of this work. These are the role of active narrators shared by the majority of characters, and the specific language used by Kelly to deliver the content of the play. As can be observed from the very beginning of the show, this play’s cast comprises a small group of actors. Apart from the actor who interprets the role of Gorge Mastromas, the other actors actually play other important roles in the play, but also alternate with each other to perform the function of narrators. As mentioned before, this feature seems to be particularly interesting. In fact, the group of narrators acts in order to stress turning points in the main character’s life, but also has the function of posing questions to the audience. More precisely, not only do characters

⁶⁵ Angelaki, V. (2017), p.102.

talk to the audience in order to reveal details about Gorge's life, but they also help them understand the psychology of the main character by unveiling his thoughts and his evil schemes for the entire duration of the play. Crucially, it should be noted that the narrators' sentences also provide important moral comments regarding Gorge Mastromas's actions. Dennis Kelly's peculiar use of language in his plays has been studied by Julien Alliot (Alliot, 2014), who has discussed the playwright's linguistic strategies along with the Lacanian definition of symbolic order. Although Alliot's essay does not comprise *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* in his analysis of Kelly's plays, I think that his argumentations could properly apply to this play as well. The first aspect worth noting is the use of repetitions in characters' words. Interestingly, not only do the group of narrators continuously stimulate the audience with repetitive questions and comments, but also Gorge Mastromas's words seem to have been shaped with this strategy in mind. Alliot's point that "[s]tichomythia, or the rhythmical alternation of short, sharp lines, is often employed"⁶⁶ in Kelly's plays seems to be particularly significant when analysing *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*. An extensive use of repetitions can be traced in this work. Focusing on the narrators' comments, there are two question sentences that especially recur in the play. These questions are "Goodness or cowardice?" and "Are you sick, yet? Are you disgusted, yet?". The first question is the one that recurs more often. As will be discussed in the next section, this sentence actually serves to mark turning points in Gorge's life, and most importantly leads the protagonist to discover his life mantra. Instead, the second question is a sentence that recurs in the central part of the play. This second question serves the purpose of slowly revealing Gorge's evil schemes to the audience. More broadly, the strategy of repeating certain sentences characterizes the narrators' speech. Furthermore, it could be argued that repetitions are used also to shape Mastromas's personality. More precisely, during the play Gorge often repeats sentences and entire speeches in an attempt to reinforce the characteristics of the public persona he has created for himself. For example, he often repeats the speech delivered by the character called A in the second act and his three golden rules. The second linguistic aspect that seems to be relevant in the play's analysis is the use of names. Alliot's argumentation in these terms seems particularly interesting.

⁶⁶ Alliot, J. (2014).

Dennis Kelly's theatre appears tormented by the motif of naming, labelling, to the point where disorder often threatens to take over. In the absence of a stable source of enunciation, denomination becomes problematic [...].⁶⁷

He also adds that,

Names are constantly maimed. [...] Instead of sustaining an individual's identity, they are used and recycled in different plays from Kelly's corpus [...] Yet, no clue comes to confirm the hypothesis of a potential network, of a (questionably signifying) chain. At times, characters don't even have a name, and the source of enunciation remains unknown.

As apparent in the graphic aspect of the play script, the characters' names are used in a curious way in this play. Firstly and most apparently from the play's beginning, the narrators have no name and their lines' alternation is actually marked by starting a new line with a dash. Moreover, in the second act the three characters' identities are represented uniquely by initials – A, M, and G. Interestingly, the protagonist's name Gorge too seems to be a misspelling of the traditional name George. The reason behind this choice is not clear, but it could be observed that – as Alliot again states - in his plays Kelly often plays with names and invents new terms by combining words to form new ones. Taking into consideration this tendency of playing with names in the playwright's work, the name Gorge could also be Kelly's way to play with the verb 'to gorge'. The action represented by this verb could in fact describe properly Gorge's rise towards power. To sum up, apart from communicating interesting aspects of the playwright's style, the extensive use of repetitions and the interesting use of names both seem to shape the play's structure and conveys key themes in these work.

⁶⁷ Alliot, J. (2014).



Picture 10 The narrators recounting Gorge's story in the first act.

Gorge Mastromas's psyche and the manipulation of it – hubris, deceit, distortion of reality

The character called Gorge Mastromas is depicted as a champion of ordinariness from the play's very beginning. The play is opened by the group of narrators recounting the story of Gorge's conception. His parents' coitus is described as nothing particularly special or remarkable. Here follows a passage from the initial part of the play,

- The lovemaking was not particularly enjoyable, but neither it was particularly unpleasant
- Gorge's father had not been in the mood...
- Gorge's mother had not been in the mood...
- but it had been some time since they had made love so the act had been instigated by a kind of mutual and unspoken guilt.

[...]

- Gorge's Y chromosomes rushed towards his X chromosomes at a speed that of 0.00004km/hr and as Gorge's mother was in the bathroom the next evening about her nightly toilet, Gorge came into being. (p.7)

Gorge's arrival into the world is described as not particularly relevant either. Therefore, the main character of the play is presented as an ordinary human being from the very beginning of the narration. Very interestingly though, the mentioned description seems

to resemble the famous beginning of Laurence Sterne's novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. To my viewpoint, by doing so Dennis Kelly seems to place his play in a literary tradition of innovation, and thus appears to instill a groundbreaking value in the protagonist of his play and to add a timeless quality to his work. The play's introduction or first act is composed of a tale recounted by the alternating narrators that covers the period of Gorge's childhood and young age. From this narration, there emerge the most significant traumatic events that helped shaping Gorge Mastromas's personality. What these events appear to share is that they all implicated a crucial choice for Gorge. More precisely, in every one of these situations Gorge appears to be faced with a choice, whose result would influence his current relationships but also the rest of his life. In actual fact, the question that recurs in the first act, but which also recurs the most during the play is the following – "Goodness or cowardice?". This question actually appears to trigger every single choice in Gorge Mastromas's life. More broadly, the whole play can be said to be framed upon choices. Returning now to the protagonist's characteristics, as reported by the narrators in the introduction, there are two things that actually seem to distinguish Gorge's personality. The first one is Gorge's ability to perceive the vulnerability of people. The second feature of Gorge personality is that

- [...] whenever Gorge was faced with a decision/opportunity he tended for the moral, despite the fact that generally it would work out the worst for him
- [...]
- Gorge always did the right thing. (p.17)

It is important to bear in mind these two characteristics when analyzing Gorge's response to the traumatic experiences he goes through in the first part of his life. The first life choice Gorge has to face is that of continuing to side with his childhood friend Paul. Namely, Paul went from being a cute and popular child to being an overweight, alienated kid in desperate need of Gorge's attention after having been beaten by another boy in a fight. The following passage illustrates to what extent Gorge's decision to remain on Paul's side seems to be a traumatic passage in his life.

- He wanted Paul to die, he wanted to scream and shout and spit, he knew that everyone was watching and he knew too that going with Paul was

somehow, to some extent the end of everything.

- Just like he knew that the rejection of Paul would be somehow the beginning of everything

[...]

- But he went with him and his fate was sealed. He was a loser. He was nothing. He was at the bottom and he would amount to nothing.

- Now why Gorge made that decision, is difficult to say...

- Morality? Kindness? Goodness? An innate sense of right and wrong?

- Or was it something more complex?

- Was it, in some strange and bizarre way, an act of cowardice?

- Goodness or cowardice? Goodness or cowardice? (p.14)

As can be noticed, the first traumatic experience in Gorge's life is clearly signaled by the question "Goodness or cowardice?". Yet, the question re-emerges in other critical situations. Even though for quite a long time nothing special seems to happen in Gorge's life, the first serious consequences of his choices for the good become to emerge. Gorge falls in love for the first time with a girl called Vanessa, but he is actually in a relationship with another girl called Sarah, whom he does not particularly like. When he finally finds himself in a romantic situation with Vanessa in which they discuss about dreams for the future, Gorge does not take advantage of the situation. Instead of starting a new love relationship with the girl he loves, he encourages Vanessa to follow her dream of travelling and does not follow her. He therefore chooses to continue his insignificant relationship with Sarah, which would prove to be neither happy nor durable. The third traumatic experience in Gorge's life happens when he reaches the age of twenty-six and he falls in love with a girl called Tanya. Their relationship seems to flourish to the point that the girl is described by the narrator as the love of Gorge's life. Nonetheless, once again the protagonist's life is challenged by another problem – while he was drunk, Gorge got a girl pregnant. This girl, unfortunately for Gorge, does not want to have an abortion. Gorge, once again faced with a situation signaled by the question "Goodness or cowardice?", does not try to convince the girl to change her decision, even though it would have helped to preserve his relationship with Tanya. Crucially, in each of these situations, Gorge actually seems to perceive the inner feelings and to sense the vulnerability of the individuals involved

in it. Namely, when Paul asks him to stand on his side “part of Gorge saw...Paul. Just Paul. His friend.”⁶⁸, and when he meets Vanessa at a party after she broke up with her boyfriend, Gorge can feel that “Inside she was so, so hurt, but no one could see it. Except Gorge.”⁶⁹ Even though Gorge always recognizes the crucial negative effect of these choices, this quality initially makes him empathic. Afterwards though, Gorge starts to see a potentiality behind his ability. When the pregnant girl states that she wants to give birth to the baby, something starts to change in Gorge’s mind.

- And then suddenly Gorge saw something
- a moment, a glimpse, a truth that hovered into view
- Gorge suddenly saw...her fragility. Her pain, her inner disquiet
- [...]
- [...] What he saw now was that she was...vulnerable. (p.28)

Although Gorge eventually chooses not to intervene, this situation shows him that he could use this ability to manipulate people. As will be discussed afterwards, this initial intuition of Gorge’s will transform into a tendency to spot people’s weakness and exploiting it.

A sudden turn changes Gorge Mastromas’s life and transforms this character from an ordinary individual to an incredibly powerful and rich man. The second act of the play comprises the key speech that triggers Gorge to use his empathic qualities to manipulate people. In the second act, Gorge finds himself in a difficult situation when he is asked by his panicked bankrupting boss what to do with his firm. A society represented by a woman called A wants to buy the majority share of the company. It is the character called A, when she is left alone in the room with Gorge, that delivers a speech that changes Gorge’s life.

A: [...] Existence is not what you have up until this moment thought it is. It is not fair, it is not kind, it is not just – the majority of the universe is in fact so cold that it would freeze the water in your eyes in an instant. The rest;

⁶⁸ P.14.

⁶⁹ P.20.

great big balls of fire surrounded by clumps of matter. Matter doesn't care. Most of the world are ignorant of this, they believe in god, or daddy or Marx or the unseen hand of the market or honesty or goodness. They swim through life, eyes closed, taking it on the chin and getting fucked. He's like that. You're like that.

But a tiny, tiny handful of us, a small fraction, let's call us the resistance, let's be romantic, a minuscule fraction of the population know the real nature of life. And to those people is given the world. They are rich and powerful and have everything because they will do anything. The rest of the world will always be meat to them, cattle, animals to be herded and sometimes hunted. We are a secret society: we don't have handshakes, we don't have meetings, we don't wear silly costumes on full moons but we exist and we know each other and when we see each other we smile and inside we say to each other 'look at those idiots. Look at these food. Why are they so stupid? Why do they not just take what they want like we do? [...] (pp. 46-47)

Another interesting aspect highlighted in A's words is that she is convinced to be so powerful that she can even control time and predict the future. The ability of controlling time seems to be a particularly interesting metaphor to represent power. Clock ticking sounds and digital clocks were also used in the performance setting to further expand this metaphor throughout the play.



Picture 11 A (on the left) makes her speech to Gorge Mastromas (on the right). The clock on the wall is a telling detail.

As regards A's alleged ability of predicting the future, it seems interesting to note that Gorge showed to really have this ability. When facing the choice of leaving for a new life with Vanessa or staying home with Sarah, as if at a crossroads, Gorge manages to see the two possible futures (p.22). A's words seem to awake the intuitions which were provoked by the previous traumatic events lived by Gorge. The speech reveals to Gorge that he can actually exploit his abilities to manipulate other individuals and achieve everything he wants. The moment in which Gorge – following A's suggestion – suggest his boss M to sell the firm is actually a crucial turning point in the play. The protagonist exploits the vulnerable state in which his boss is.

- And in that moment Gorge understood everything.
- In that moment Gorge understood his life.
- Goodness or cowardice, goodness or cowardice
[...]
- You see Gorge understood in that moment that those two things
[...]
- Are in fact the same thing. (p.49)

Therefore, Gorge Mastromas's crucial intuition consists in identifying goodness with cowardice and inaction. Consequently, Gorge understands that in order to change his life he needs to do what he never did in the traumatic choices he went through – he needs to take action selfishly and recklessly. The protagonist's transformation is physically signaled through a scene in which the other characters change Gorge's outfit. The ordinary brown suit he wore in the previous scene is substituted with a new smart custom-made suit. Previously, Gorge's metamorphosis is signaled by his creation of his three golden rules thanks to which he shapes his new life.

- One: whenever you want something – take it.
- Two: all that is required to take everything you want is absolute will and an ability to lie to the depths of your heart.
- Three: The effectiveness of a lie is compromised only by your attachment to the outcome of the lie. Therefore never think of the outcome, always assume discovery, embrace each second as if it were your last. Never, ever, ever regret. (pp. 49-50)

As mentioned before, these three rules are part as well of the system of repetitions used in the play. Interestingly, Gorge Mastromas's metamorphosis and the dynamic of his rise towards power as they are narrated in *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*, seem to have incorporated some aspects of Bauman's concept of 'liquid modernity'. The concept expressed in the following passage seems to be particularly key when discussing the psychology of the play's protagonist.

We move and are bound to keep moving not so much because of the 'delay of gratification', as Max Weber suggested, as because of the *impossibility* of ever being gratified: the horizon of satisfaction, the finishing line of effort and the moment of restful self-congratulation move faster than the fastest of the runners. (p.28)⁷⁰

This passage – depicting a tendency that according to Bauman is typical of modern society – may properly be used to describe Gorge's hubris and growing thirst for power in the play. The following section will further analyse the character's psychology and important themes in the play.

A discussion of Gorge's method to acquire power seems to be useful in order to understand the key themes of the play, which appear to be partly peculiarities of Kelly's work and partially issues recurring also in the other plays analysed. Namely, in *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* the themes of truth, lying, belief, and perception of reality are conveyed in a very powerful way. By the way, playwright Dennis Kelly revealed in an interview an idea that possibly triggered the creation of this play –

It occurred to me one day that if I just lied, I could get everything I wanted," Kelly explains. "I thought maybe if you cut free of morality you'd have power over people." My next thought was you'd become a monster.⁷¹

Gorge starts to manipulate people and the results are immediately apparent. As reported by the narrators, after the revelation Gorge Mastromas realizes that,

⁷⁰ Bauman, Z. (2000).

⁷¹ Cavendish, D. with Featherstone, V. and Kelly, D. (2013).

- [...] Truth, as he understood it just simply ceased to exist, for what was truth but the shades of his earlier life clinging to a past that just didn't, in real terms, exist? [...] (p.51)

At the same time he is astonished by the fact that, for the majority of time, people tend to believe what they are told.

- People never suspected.
- At first this surprised Gorge, but he soon came to the conclusion that in fact people actually wanted to be lied to
- they would rather believe something nice than something terrible, even if that thing could not be remotely true. (p.53)

With his three golden rules in mind, Mastromas acquires growing power by lying, deceiving, and only thinking about his interests. Initially helped by the lady called A, he eventually becomes more powerful than her and decides to get rid of her. This specific action might be said to recall what Jeff Skilling does with his colleague Claudia Roe in Prebble's *Enron*. Yet, the first astonishing example of the unbelievable size of Mastromas's greed and thirst for power seems to be his plan to deceive a girl he has fallen in love with. After many failed attempts to catch the attention of Louisa, Gorge decides to exploit her childhood psychological traumas to conquer her. Interestingly, the audience is not initially aware of Gorge's evil schemes. They are actually revealed with the help of the narrators during the scene. As far as the performance is concerned, this scene is interestingly composed of the main scene starring Gorge and Louisa, which is interrupted many times by the narrators' comment on the events. While narrators speak, the main scene is at a standstill. Returning to Gorge's scheme, by investigating Louisa's past, he discovers which situations cause in Louisa a feeling of empathy. Namely, Louisa appears to suffer from the consequences of having been sexually abused by her father as a child. She actually appears to have the tendency of falling into destructive relationships. As explained by the narrators, Louisa's first catalyst of destructive behaviour consists in "being shown a love so apparently profound that it [is] life threatening" (p.73). The girl's second trigger is said to be "empathy with the victim" (p.80). Astonishingly, Gorge manages to exploit both these weak points to achieve his goal. He conjures up a perfectly convincing scene by performing a sort of false panic

attack during a work meeting. Afterwards, he injures his head in order to pretend a self-destructive behaviour. His evil plan seems to be quite effectual on Louisa, who tellingly shows to have a certain knowledge of psychological issues.

LOUISA: I mean is this some sort of death-wish, are you trying to close this company down or are you just on self-destruct? (p.62)

Furthermore, Gorge adds to his pretence a series of psychologically telling details that serve to reinforce his strategy to deceive Louisa. Namely, apart from repeating a strange mouth movement in crucial moments, he continuously shows he is annoyed by men with a beard. It is also revealed that, previously to this scene, Gorge even dispatched one of his employees – who had a beard – uniquely in order to convince Louisa. The beard motif recurs also during the scene, when Gorge refuses to accept the help of the bearded hotel porter. After confessing his love for Louisa and therefore after breaking her first defence, Gorge says,

GORGE MASTROMAS: I don't know what's happening to me.

I'm not like this. I'm never like this.

I'm destroying my own company.

I'm never like this, I'm falling to pieces. I'm broken.

I'm a broken person.

It's you.

[...] (p.65)

Gorge manages to provoke a feeling of empathy in Louisa by pretending that he was a victim of sexual abuse like her. By slowly adding details to his psychotic outburst, Gorge gradually suggests to Louisa that he was abused too by his father. In my opinion, Alliot's (Alliot, 2014) suggestion that Dennis Kelly "toys with hints and signs, appealing to the spectator's ability (and desire?) to reconstruct some meaning" can be properly applied to *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*. It is certainly true that the narrators give the audience some help, but this happens only towards the end of the scene. For the rest of the time spectators are given the possibility to guess whether the

protagonist is telling the truth or is lying. Ultimately though, this scene is identified by the narrators as “the greatest test so far” for Gorge’s new way of living,

- Is that love? You call that love?
- I don’t know, who knows, but he wanted her so bad and isn’t love possession or something, I don’t know, and hadn’t he dedicated his life to a creed? And wasn’t this his greatest test so far? (p.74)



Picture 12 The scene in which Gorge deceived Louisa. Act three.

From this scene on, the protagonist’s ability to lie expands to an extreme extent. Significantly, one of the narrators’ comment at this point seems to outline the play’s most important themes quite straightforwardly.

- [...] what is the difference between made up and real? (p.80)

The difference between reality and lies becomes really blurred as the protagonist goes on to live the fake past he has created for himself by “embrac[ing it] like it was real” (p.81). His ability of manipulating reality is so convincing that it leads him to write a bestseller on his false experience of sexual abuse as a child. The protagonist’s hubris actually seems to make him underestimate the possibility of being discovered.

- [...] He actually begins to think that he will never be discovered.
- the idiot
- the fucking idiot
- for isn’t that breaking the third rule? Always assume discovery?

[...]

- And then. On the 11th of September, 2013...the push came. (p.85)

Nevertheless, Gorge's empire of lies appears to be threatened by a person who knows about his real past. In actual fact, Gorge could succeed in his evil schemes because both his parents died many years before, and his only brother was missing for a long time. Gorge's scheme is discovered by his brother Gel, who was contacted by a journalist. In my opinion, it is worth noting that Gel changed his name at a certain point in his life. This fact could suggest that like Gorge he wanted too to turn his life into something different. Or else, the change of names could also relate to Dennis Kelly's peculiar use of names in his play. Anyway, Gorge's brother is depicted as an outcast with a life characterized by a series of failures, and thus he could be considered as an opposing character to Gorge. Gel's threat to reveal Gorge's secret to the journalist place Gorge in great danger for the first time. In this scene with Gel, there emerges again Gorge's ability to manipulate other individuals. Yet, this time Gorge is faced with some difficulties when trying to convince Gel that his perception of childhood memories could be different from Gorge's.

MASTROMAS: Okay. Okay, I know what this is about. You're angry and you have every right. There are things in the book that you probably don't recognize, things that happened to me, bad things, but because you didn't see it, does not mean it did not happen. [...] (p.93)

Gorge's scare emerges also from the words he uses when in a dialogue with his brother. He actually continues repeating that he had been searching for him for a long time, and that he would like him to come and live in his beautiful property together with him and Louisa. It seems quite apparent that Gorge had been rehearsing this moment for a long time. By offering to the outcast Gel an entire luxurious abode, Gorge Mastromas is trying to limit the destructive effect that his brother's revelations would have on his reputation. Nevertheless, when he realizes that his offers are not making Gel changing his mind, Mastromas flaunts his power by saying that,

MASTROMAS: [...] No one will believe you. I will make sure no one believes you, you think I can't do that? I can do that, I can do that as easy as shitting. [...] (p.97)

Backed by the strong personal motivation of demanding his past back, Gel is the first character in the play that confronts Gorge Mastromas. Furthermore, he is also the first character that discloses Gorge's evil actions. Both these functions seem to emerge in the following passage,

GEL: I want you to suffer. That's what I want. I want you to pay for what you've done. Look at me; I've got nothing now, my life is over, you offer me things, what good is that to me? I'm already me, I'm not gonna be not me am I? I'm not going to start being someone else. The one thing I had was my past and you stole that. You stole it and broke it and perverted it. You destroyed Dad, you destroyed Mum, you destroyed me as a child, the only me that was ever worth anything.

You're disgusting. You are evil. (p.98)

Gel actually holds his memories and proofs as powerful weapons against Gorge Mastromas. Yet, Gel's life is not the only one that has been strongly affected by Gorge's behaviour. Louisa too has been suffering for years for reasons that she does not understand. While Gel appears later in the story and is actually eliminated very fast because Gorge kills him, Louisa spends long years as Gorge's partner. Kelly created a telling metaphor for describing Louisa's suspicions – a growing inward darkness. Focusing the attention on this image, the metaphor of darkness was used also in the first act to describe Gorge's feeling when hiding the accidental pregnancy to Tanya.

- And a slight feeling of devastation grew inside him as the stupidity of what he had done settled in.
- [...] he was acting strange and he knew it. But he could not stop himself as the kernel of darkness, a tiny void, a singularity of nothing that had taken root in his soul that night with that girl had grown and grown and grown until Gorge felt overwhelmed by the rising blackness inside. (p.27)

In my opinion, this metaphor is particularly significant because it provides a way to compare respectively Gorge's and Louisa's psychology. The kernel of darkness growing inside Gorge in the first act represents his suffering for his thoughtless actions. Therefore, darkness seems paradoxically to represent a trace of young Gorge's morality.

In Louisa's case, the metaphor – depicting thirst for power almost as a spreading disease – is used to represent Gorge Mastromas's growing hubris and its devastating effect on Louisa's psyche. The second use of this metaphor appears to be particularly powerful, because Kelly seems to have framed the character of Louisa as a sort of silent indicator of Gorge Mastromas's exponentially growing power. While Gorge is distracted by his success and does not notice her distress,

- [...] his wife, Louisa... Here is the strange thing, the strange thing, the strange thing, here is, this is the strange thing.
- Louisa felt bad.
- All the time.
- Didn't know why: she just felt bad.

[...]

- and all the time Louisa diminishes. And all the time Gorge grows (pp. 83-84)

The epilogue to the story provides the outburst of Louisa's suffering by again exploiting the metaphor of darkness.

LOUISA: Sometimes you live with –
Sometimes you live with a darkness so profound that you absolutely cannot breathe, and yet you cover it up and pretend it's not there, you make yourself believe that it's not there, but it is. And if it's there, then...well, it gets you.

[...]

LOUISA: [...] I'm talking about a worse darkness.
I'm talking about the worse darkness in the world.
I'm talking about you.
You're the darkness. (pp. 103-104)

In the epilogue the protagonist ability of lying seems to collapse. Gorge actually lies without any problem for the great part of the story, but in the epilogue, it becomes clear that he is no more able to tell the truth. As mentioned before, in the scene with Gel he continues repeating the same sentences as if he rehearsed his speech. In the scene in which Louisa leaves him, Gorge does not seem to be able to tell the truth either.

Namely, Louisa asks him to tell her only one true thing (p.104), and Gorge's attempt to answer results in another lie. Gorge's plea to Louisa reveals that his life is completely based on pretence.

MASTROMAS: [...] Tell me what to do. Tell me what to say, what to be, what you want me to be, I'll be that, please, tell me what I've done, tell me, Louisa. Don't leave me, I can't, not without you, I can't. Please. (p.103)

When considering these two scenes and the play's last act, there could be observed that Gorge's reactions seem to follow a pattern. At first he uses a range of lies to try to persuade the individual who is threatening him, but afterwards he explodes by intimidating the person in front of him. Gorge shows his most threatening powerful side to Gel, and in a similar way he does that too with Louisa,

MASTROMAS: [...] You cannot hurt me. You cannot touch me. The things I have done. The things I am capable of. I have changed the inevitable, I have superpowers, super abilities, I can stop time and I have the power of prophesy. You think you can do something to me, I am beyond what you can –

Nonetheless, Louisa has already gone, leaving Gorge slaughtered as the play's title suggests. The very last act of the play, which presents the old Gorge in the future, provides the last of Gorge's attempt to manipulate an individual. This time Gorge has to face Pete – a young man that is revealed to be the son to the girl Gorge got pregnant when he was young. Initially, Pete seems to be quite a mysterious character because his intentions are not clear from the beginning. In a way that recalls his action to investigate Louisa's past and to protect himself against his brother, Gorge tries in every way possible to discover which kind of danger the young man represents. Maybe because of Pete's young age, Gorge tries to persuade Pete by repeating the same life-changing speech uttered by the woman called A when he was young. Referring to Pete's friend and to the small amount of details Pete shared about his life, Gorge says,

GORGE: [...] So. Here's the question – what's stopping you, Pete? He's going to drag you down, he's going to destroy your big idea and you know it, so what is stopping you from hacking him away? Is it...goodness?

Or is it cowardice?

Goodness or cowardice?

Power is doing. And you're going to fail. (p.11)

But Pete does not surrender to Gorge's offer, and instead continues acting a role that I think could be defined as the voice of conscience in the play. Although Pete is equipped with a weapon for killing Gorge, his main interest seems to be that of understanding the reasons that prompted Gorge to live in a lie.

PETE: Because you have more than anyone I have ever met. And I want to understand if there is some small chance of that being remotely fair.

GORGE: Fair?

Did you say fair? Are you out of your fucking mind?

Fair is fictitious. Fair is god, Allah, Scorpio with Leo rising, fair is elves and pixies, why are you talking about fair? You're a grown lad, you can't be this much of an idiot, are you this much of an idiot? [...] (p.112)

Gorge's answer contains another testimony of his hubris. Gorge Mastromas thinks he is pulling the strings of the world, but it turns out that he has not the power to do so. After Gel and Louisa, Pete is actually the third character that enacts Gorge Mastromas's moral slaughter.

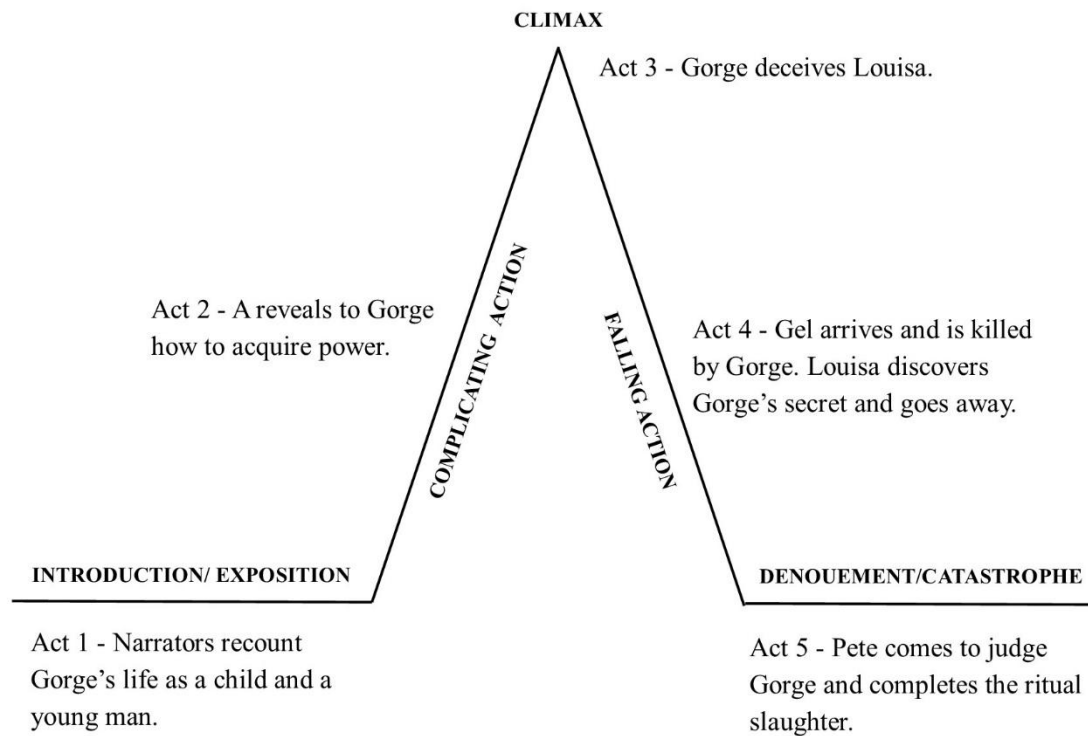
PETE: [...] When I look at you I don't see a monster. It's much worse than that. I see a sacrifice. You've been sacrificed. Your entire life has been a sort of sacrifice to something...stupid, wrong. And I know that inside you is a human being screaming, begging, wailing and wondering just how the fuck he ever let himself get trapped inside you. [...] (p.117)

Eventually, the play's title becomes clear. Gorge is not punished in a physical way for his evil schemes. Gorge Mastromas's slaughter is ritual, because he remains alone with the power and money that he has been accumulating during his life. Every person related to him abandons him, either because he got rid of them – his brother Gel –, or because he distanced them because of his inability of telling the truth and showing his

genuine self. To conclude, this section showed in depth a great amount of commonalities that this specific play shares with the other plays analysed in this dissertation. Furthermore, it discussed the most important peculiarities of Dennis Kelly's artistic voice, which can be found in this play.

Why the play can be considered a tragedy

In my opinion, *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* could be considered a modern version of a classical or Shakespearean tragedy in terms of narrative structure. The following schematic analysis of the play's structure is based on the model for the analysis of tragedies created by Gustav Freytag in the late XIX century. This model offers a general classification of both classical and Shakespearean tragedies in terms of structure and key turning points in the plot. Apart from resembling a Shakespearean tragedy in terms of length – the play is about two hours and forty-five minute long –, the play recalls the structure of tragedies because it is divided into five sections. The play script does not comprise titles that separate the sections, but still the division in five parts is signaled by a line of asterisks. When analyzing more in depth the content of the sections, there could be observed that the events follow the pattern outlined by Freytag. The following image represents my adaptation of Freytag's pyramid model for analyzing the play's structure.



Picture 13 The plot of *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* in an adaptation of Freytag's model for the analysis of tragedies.

Even in the previous sections of this chapter, I used the term ‘acts’ to define the five different sections of the play. As the image shows, I compared the content of each act to Freytag’s outline – his terminology is reported in capital letters. I found out that Freytag’s outline could be properly applied to Kelly’s *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*. The first act can be considered an ‘introduction’ (or ‘exposition’) to the story, since the narrators recount events taken from Gorge’s childhood and young age. The sudden change happening to Gorge’s mindset in the second act provides a key turning point in the plot. Therefore, I think that the second act provides a ‘complicating action in the narrative’. As highlighted in the previous sections of this chapter, the story’s climax – and thus the maximum apex of Gorge’s rise towards power - can be quite certainly identified in Gorge’s strategy to deceive Louisa. Then, Gorge’s world gradually disintegrates in act four when he kills his brother Gel and Louisa leaves him, after discovering that he manipulated her. Act four thus seems to provide the ‘falling action’ in the story. The epilogue of the story is comprised in act 5. Finally, Pete’s words provide the ritual death blow to old Gorge Mastromas, and seem thus to represent

the ‘denouement’ or ‘catastrophe’ at the end of tragedies. In the epilogue, the plot’s phase called ‘final catastrophe’ is literally apparent in the setting through the projection of a graph. This graph – which significantly recalls the linear graphs used in finance to represent periods of economic boom and crisis – pictures Gorge Mastromas’s collapse with a line that suddenly decreases.



Picture 14 Gorge Mastromas (Tim Brooke) in the play’s epilogue.

Conclusion

The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas is a play that narrates the tragedy of a man who sacrificed his entire life on the altar of hubris and greed. What seems to emerge from this chapter’s analysis is in fact the way in which this play delves into its characters’ psyche. It seems that this tendency to explore the psychological sphere of characters and investigating various kind of psychological traumas is a peculiar feature of Kelly’s writing. This chapter has discussed extensively the way in which traumas are exploited by the protagonist to reach his objectives. Dealing with such themes seems to be a constant in Kelly’s work. As Alliot (Alliot, 2014) reports in his essay, “Dennis Kelly regularly stages characters who talk about their childhoods or their parents.” Furthermore, in a broader sense, Angelaki points out that in Dennis Kelly’s plays emanate

[...] the feeling that the structure of the text is inhabited by the unseen, or unspoken. Characters' lives forever revolve around a missing element, the stabilizing ingredient that might give them a moral compass were it not slightly out of reach. Kelly's personas strike us as disorientated, misguided by their own intentions, always vulnerable in the extremity of their experience. They are not naïve but aware of the options available to them and yet they gravitate away from these, seduced by danger and transgression, drawn to the darker side of humanity, bringing to Kelly's theatre an element of the dystopian.⁷²

The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas presents other motifs that seem to be recurring in Dennis Kelly's oeuvre. The theme of violence and conspiracy is another motif that Kelly seems to use when dealing with what Angelaki defines "the darker side of humanity". Kelly's tv series entitled *Utopia* actually deals with these two themes. The plot actually revolves around a secret conspiracy action organized by the government in order to limit the population's rise. Returning to our play, *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* discusses the theme of violence not only in psychological terms, but also in physical terms – Gorge's actually kills his own brother. The motif of conspiracy too is clearly present in the play, as it emerges from A's words,

A: [...] We are a secret society: we don't have handshakes, we don't have meetings, we don't wear silly costumes on full moons but we exist and we know each other and when we see each other we smile and inside we say to each other 'look at those idiots. Look at these food. Why are they so stupid? Why do they just not take what they want like we do?' [...] (p.47)

Although the image of a conspiracy appears to have been used by A as a metaphor to describe very powerful people, the use of the secret society motif still seems to be relevant. The theme of truth seems to fascinate Kelly as well. As a matter of fact, with his play *Taking Care of Baby*, he inserted the question of truth also in the genre of the play, since the play is a fake verbatim play. As regards the theme of money instead, Dennis Kelly interestingly wrote a play about the problems created by debt in ordinary people's life in the period before the financial crisis. As Rachael Clements states,

⁷² Angelaki, V. (2017), p.81.

Even before the crash [the financial crisis of 2007 and 2008], Dennis Kelly's 2006 play *Love and Money* [...] drew attention to the coruscating effect of debt, easy credit, and high-interest loans.⁷³

In my opinion, having written a play about the impact of debt on ordinary people could possibly have sparked in this playwright an interest to discuss also the other side of the coin – the theme of greed as far as the most powerful people in the higher spheres are concerned. To conclude, this chapter has analysed Kelly's play elaborating on its most important themes, but with a special focus on why I think this play can be considered as a response to the financial crisis. Ultimately, I agree with Angelaki when she states that “with this play, too, Kelly remained highly attuned to the crisis of individualism at the face of radical financial challenge.”⁷⁴

⁷³ Prebble, L. (2012), p.9.

⁷⁴ Angelaki, V. (2017), p.99.

Chapter 4 - Clare Duffy's *MONEY: The Game Show*

“Money is a game. A great game! Intimately, heart poundingly. Hand in hand with life and death, skin and bone, war and peace. But still a game!”

Not only is Clare Duffy's play *MONEY: the Game Show* an original theatrical response to the financial crisis, but it seems to be a very original play in general. The play was framed as an entertaining, audience-involving game show with the aim of explaining what happened during the financial crisis, and the special focus of exploring the value of money as a basic part of human beings' lives. As regards the production history, the play started as a theatre project in a programme supported by The Arches Theatre in Glasgow, Traverse Theatre, and National Theatre of Scotland. On that occasion, *MONEY: the Game Show* won the Platform 18 New Directions Award together with a sum of money to be invested in the project.⁷⁵ The final show was created thanks to a collaboration between the company Unlimited Theatre, which is based in Leeds and namely at the Yorkshire Playhouse, and Bush Theatre, a theatre in West London. Notably, both Unlimited Theatre and Bush Theatre work in order to either create or promote new works in the theatre.⁷⁶ In the writer's note to the play script,⁷⁷ playwright Clare Duffy reports that the ideation of *MONEY: the Game Show* started with the creation of another play written previously. Namely, in 2010 Duffy both wrote and directed a play in which for the first time she understood the huge potential of showing real money to an audience.

The play was for a small audience sat around a long dining table covered with 500 real pound coins. I could see using 'real' pound coins as part of a fictional drama was exciting and even hypnotizing for an audience. [...] This led me to think about how, when we spend money in everyday life, we use the same processes of imagination and belief (and suspension of disbelief) as we do in theatre.

⁷⁵ Duffy, C. (2013) and Unlimited.org.uk, (2018).

⁷⁶ Duffy, C. (2013).

⁷⁷ Duffy, C. (2013).

The huge impact that real money made on that small audience was replicated on a greater scale in her new play *MONEY: The Game Show*. As will be discussed in this chapter, the use of real coins on stage seems to play a key metaphoric role in the exploration of the value of money in this play. Moreover, Duffy's words reveal the relevance of the dimension of belief that characterizes money's value. In order to write this analysis, I was able to compare the play script with a video recording of the performance shot on 13th April 2013 at the West Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds. This specific performance was directed by Clare Duffy and starred Lucy Ellinson in the role of Queenie, and Brian Ferguson as Casino.⁷⁸ Notably, there exists also another version of the show, which was co-directed by Jenna Watt and performed by Suzanne Robertson and Stuart Ryan, respectively as Queenie and Casino.⁷⁹ This chapter will provide an analysis of the most important themes dealt with in this play, together with an assessment of the theatrical strategies which were employed to explain the financial collapse-related events.



Picture 15 Pauline Lockhart as Queenie and Brian Ferguson as Casino in the play's first production at The Arches.

⁷⁸ Details about the production can be found partly in Duffy, C. (2013). The rest of the information was kindly given to me by Unlimited Theatre.

⁷⁹ Unlimited.org.uk, (2018).



Picture 16 Suzanne Robertson as Queenie and Stuart Ryan as Casino.

Queenie and Casino's show – From hedge fund managers to performance artists

When compared to the plays analysed in the previous chapters, this play offers yet another point of view in terms of what happened during the financial crisis and the period before it. The story is narrated by two characters who claim to be ex hedge fund managers, and therefore two professionals in the field of finance who bet on the value of things as a living. They state that after the crisis they actually decided to become performance artists to offer their point of view on the collapse-related events. The audience enters into the world of the show called *MONEY: The Game Show*, as soon as they enter the playhouse. More precisely, the show starts with a welcoming scene – literally entitled 'WELCOME' – in the foyer, where the two performers introduce their performance. Interestingly, the two actors at first explain briefly to the audience the production details about the origin of the show. Notably, they tell they have been previously performing a show in which they used real money on stage. They particularly highlight the fact that, in order to realise this specific show, they were given a total sum of 10,000 pounds by their investors Unlimited Theatre and Bush Theatre, which will be used to play games during the performance. After revealing this important characteristic of the show, they go on saying,

CASINO: OK. This is our play on the value of money. Based on our lives.

QUEENIE: Which for legal reasons are completely fictionalized.

CASINO: If you have an even number on your ticket you are my clients.

QUEENIE: And if you are odd you're in my team. Come on.

BOTH: Let's make money! (p.22)

As can be observed, this introduction conveys some key information about the show. Firstly, the audience will be asked to play games using real money. Secondly, the play will explore the concept of the value of money. Thirdly, the declared fictionalization of the two performers' lives seems to describe the narrative structure of the play. As they talk, it is revealed that these two characters – the woman is called Queenie and the man is called Casino – are two ex hedge fund managers who have decided to turn into two performance artists to explain what were the machinations behind the financial collapse. They announce that they will do so by offering their life experience as professionals in the field of finance. As regards the setting and costumes, the set was designed in order to create an area that to my viewpoint resembles the studio of a television show. The four light-flashing columns on the right and left side of the acting area, and the two large led light signs on the back wall featuring the names of the two characters, both serve to shape a perfect space for an entertaining performance that resembles a typical television show. As regards objects, as mentioned before, a pile of coins is laid on the right side of the stage as part of the prop. Other objects that will be used for the games and that are always on stage are two suitcases and some buckets and shovels. Queenie and Casino's clothes perfectly represent their identity of ex hedge fund managers now become performance artists. Namely, they wear colourful and shimmering clothes, which recall the circus artists' style, but at the same time resemble elegant suites in terms of shape. The function of music in this play is very important. Apart from having being used extensively, songs have actually been used to signal turning points in the play and to convey a specific atmosphere. By way of illustration, one scene features Scissor Sisters' song entitled "I don't feel like dancing" to signal that the scene represents what happened in 2006 (p.44). Furthermore, since the play imitates a game show, there also a theme song has been created and used to emphasise some phases of the games. As this analysis will show, the audience's participation and response appears

to be a key element of this work. Consequently, every detail of this performance seems to have been shaped to enhance the involvement of the audience in the play.



Picture 17 Queenie (Lucy Allinson) and Casino (Brian Ferguson). One of the led writing is visible in the background.

The value of money – money as belief and a game

The theme of belief seem to be a key theme in Clare Duffy’s play. In this sense, the peculiarity of this play seems to be that it discusses this theme especially when exploring the intrinsic value of money. As clarified by the two performers’ words from the very beginning of their show, the entire play was framed to convey the idea that the value of money is based only on belief. The fact that the play is presented as a performance implies that money itself holds a performative quality. By making references to Karl Marx, Henri Lefebvre, and George Simmel’s argumentations about the contradiction between the material and the abstract quality of money, in his analysis of *MONEY: The Game Show*, Watkinson (Watkinson, 2018) observes that “money today has value only because we (the public, financial institutions, government bodies) believe it has and act accordingly”.⁸⁰ He identifies this belief-based quality of money as a feature that this basic tool in human society’s life shares with theatre. He points out that, “money is thus theatrical, both in the sense that it performs for others and because

⁸⁰ Watkinson, P. (2018), p.195.

it stands in for something else through its lack of intrinsic value and use as a tool of exchange”.⁸¹ Clare Duffy herself actually stressed that the value of money appears to be based on a collective belief, and she furthermore reinforced her thesis by comparing the belief-dimension of money to the belief requested from an audience when going to the theatre. In an interview released to *Theatre Voice*⁸², she explains,

[...] when you go to the theatre and someone delivers a fantastic soliloquy and you think wow they are really feeling that thing, not because you really believe they are feeling, you always know that that’s an actor on stage performing that belief, but you believe in the belief of the actor, and I suppose with money it’s a very similar process, we believe in our faith in money.

Considering this argumentation, the connection between the performative feature of money and theatre seems to emerge quite clearly in a theoretical way. Nevertheless, this play’s achievement seems to be that of managing to render this connection apparent also practically. Various theatrical strategies appear to have been employed in order to lead the audience’s members in their exploration of the performative value of money. After the introduction to the show, Queenie and Casino split the audience into two teams and continue their speeches separately with their group. The two performers repetitively gamble with their group by tossing a £1 coin and uttering “Heads or tails?”. In the meantime, they further involve the audience by asking what goods can be bought with such a coin. Therefore, by directing the audience’s attention on the coin they are playing with, the two performers begin to assess the value of money.

Being a hedge fund manager is all about being really good at gambling. I love gambling because it reminds me that money isn’t as ‘real’ as it seems. Money is a game. A great game! Intimately, heart poundingly. Hand in hand with life and death, skin and bone, war and peace. But still a game! (p.24)

This passage comprises both the theme of the performative aspect of money and also the game dimension of financial procedures, which will be explored via the use of games, as will be discussed afterwards. Queenie and Casino reinforce their explanation

⁸¹ Watkinson, P. (2018), p.196.

⁸² Theatre Voice (2013a). The transcription of the recording was made by me.

by reflecting on the material quality of the coin, and by conveying some information about the changes in the value of money throughout history. For example, the two characters exploit the motto “Decus et Tutamen”, written on a coin, to make considerations about the value of that coin. Given the fact that a possible translation of this motto could be “an ornament and a safeguard”, the two characters asks their teams

[...] is this coin something to look at or something that will keep you safe?
Looking at it, it obviously *isn't* real gold. It doesn't even *represent* real gold. [...] This pound doesn't represent any essential or finite value, but it feels right it's the colour of gold, doesn't it?" (pp. 24-25)

Queenie and Casino's explanations makes clear that the value of the coin does not relate to the value of its material. Nevertheless, the coin significantly maintains the precious material look of gold. Therefore, it emerges that the look of money participates in the process of belief, which serves to attribute money a certain value. Moreover, Queenie and Casino explain that money does not have an intrinsic value, but it is used merely as a tool to exchange things.

A coin is an icon. A symbolic place where meanings and world meet...exchange. A place between price and value. Between citizen and nation, between belief and the material world...that is...between what you think and what you touch. You could say it's two sides of the same coin. Well. It actually doesn't matter whether it's written on a piece of paper, or a clay brick, in binary code, lights on a screen or blood. Money is faith, belief...what you credit...written on something. [...] (p.25)

The two performers' words work to demystify the value of the coin they hold in their hand. Nonetheless, at this point, the audience's reactions appear to be stimulated in a very interesting way. On one level, the two performers' words emptied the coins of their value. On another level, when Casino and Queenie lead their team inside the theatre house, the audience is able to see the huge pile of coins that lies on the stage. The view of such a huge amount of money – let us recall that there are 10,000 £1 pound coins on stage – seems to cause an atavistic feeling of attraction in the audience. As Lucy Ellinson – who plays Queenie in the recording I watched – revealed in an interview for *Theatre Voice*, “everyone falls in a spell when you see the very very shiny money on

stage”. Ellinson describes this shift in perception as happening really fast, and she adds that she was surprised not only by the audience’s reaction at the view of real money, but also by her own feeling of excitement in that moment. She reports to have been impressed by the fact that “the function of money on stage had so much meaning and no meaning at the same time”⁸³. Therefore, the audience at the same time gets involved in the games that follow in the show because the possibility to handle a huge quantity of money leads to a feeling of excitement but, as the story goes on, they also become more aware of the arbitrary value of money.



Picture 18 A picture of the pile of £1 pound coins which was used as a prop in the play.

After some members of the audience properly checked that the money on stage is real, Queenie and Casino start thus to introduce the games which, as will be discussed in the next section, are used to explain how people made money before and during the crisis. Apart from games, there are other theatrical tools that have been employed in order to understand the aleatory value of money. A crucial example can be found in Scene Eleven, which is actually entitled “Hedging”. Queenie and Casino explain how banknotes get printed in the UK.

QUEENIE: Yes. Let’s be the Bank of England and create lots of money.

[...]

⁸³ Theatre Voice (2013a). The transcription is mine.

CASINO: Other than the Bank of England there are seven commercial banks in Scotland and Northern Ireland issuing notes. These notes are guaranteed by the Bank of England with other special notes, called ‘giants’ and ‘titans’.

[...]

CASINO: [...] These special notes, which are never let out of the Bank of England, like all money, are valuable because we all agree to believe they are.

The belief-based quality of money seems to emerge particularly in this scene, because it depicts the process of assigning a certain value to an object, in this specific case to banknotes. In order to explain in a more practical way this process, the two performers ask the audience to grab a golden note that is hidden under their seats. Queenie actually guides the audience in the process by saying,

QUEENIE: So. We’re going to be like a National Bank. We’re going to quantitatively ease this financial situation. Put your hand on the gold sheet and repeat after me, I believe, (*Audience repeat ‘I believe’*) that this gold sheet (*‘that this gold sheet’*) is worth a bucket (*‘is worth a bucket’*). (p.63)

A very similar scene can be found in the final part of the play. The final winner of the game – in this case Queenie – tries to rescue the loser, who has tried to commit suicide. In order to do so she makes up a surreal story about people coming to rescue Casino.

WINNER: [...] That was Alistair and Gordon Brown, they’re with Bush and Paulson. They’ve just arrived in the Oval Office right now. They’re just about to get into the Millennium Falcon and pick up Legarde, Sarkozy and Merkel on the way. They’re coming to rescue you.

If I wasn’t a hedgie, if I was a real performance artist, I could construct a great story about how I brought you back from the brink. It would be so great.

And if everyone believed in it, then it would be true. Wouldn’t it? [...]
(p.79)

This time Queenie asks the audience to repeat the ritual sentence “I believe” in order to make her story become real. A further tool that has been employed to discuss the value of money in the play are recurring references to the reassuring solid quality of gold. This process of juxtaposing ordinary money such as coins and banknotes to gold, apart from picturing events as they happened, seems to recall Zygmunt Bauman’s concept of “liquid modernity”. More precisely, in my opinion, the representation of money as a volatile and changeable entity as opposed to the solid and durable quality of gold seems to recall Bauman’s definition of modernity as a destructive force that tends to eliminate a solid and seemingly bulky past. Nevertheless, in this case, the solidity of gold appears to represent a sort of anchor that guarantees a feeling of security. Casino’s definition of gold in Scene Twelve – entitled “Pitching” – seems particularly significant in this sense

—

CASINO: Gold...that slow tick from another time. Before the first banks, or Babylonian tablets. Before pterodactyls, or trees or even the sea, there was gold. (p.69)

Casino’s words are included in a speech that describes the procedure of going long on gold, which was employed by gamblers to provide some sort of backing to their short bets on the financial collapse. Quite significantly, Queenie – the winner of the game in this performance – in the end uses the money of the deal to buy gold and then she hides it in her mother’s canteen. Thus, in *MONEY: The Game Show*, gold appears to be used as a metaphor to represent what was the atavistic perception of the value of money – a solid reality to which characters seemingly want to return to after the shock caused by the financial collapse.

The roadrunner syndrome and other metaphors for belief, self-deception, and naïvety

The theme of belief in the play is discussed not only when analyzing the nature of money. The question of belief in the functioning of the market was conveyed by using the metaphor of the roadrunner syndrome. Queenie and Casino use this metaphor to explain visually how the market remained unaware of the crisis of sub-prime market for

a certain timespan. As the Winner – Queenie or Casino, depending on the result of the games – explains,

WINNER: Roadrunner syndrome is when you run off a cliff so fast that you keep on going on just thin air. It's only when you notice that the ground isn't there anymore that you fall (p.71)

The roadrunner syndrome metaphor seems therefore to symbolize self-deception. As appears from the Loser's description of the first moments after the collapse of the housing market, the situation seems to be stable, but in fact this perception is only based on people's self-deception.

LOSER: [...] We've made three billion pounds and still nobody thinks anything is happening. Watch the news, walk in the streets, it's like we're in a parallel universe. They don't believe it could crash, so even though it is actually crashing...it isn't...because no one believes it can. But that doesn't mean it won't. (p.72)

Another theme that seems to recur in this play is the difficulty of people to understand the financial jargon. From the two performers' introduction to the show there emerges that the financial jargon was specifically "designed to make you feel outside" (p.26). After having a discussion on the upcoming crisis with her Boss, Queenie states,

QUEENIE: (*To audience.*) [...] He (*Boss.*) doesn't know what any of the jargon means. [...] No one does. For some reason no one is asking. [...] (p.58)

MONEY: The Game Show too therefore seems to point out that the financial crisis was caused also by the excessive naïvety of both professionals and ordinary people.

Strategies used to clarify the content– Using games to explain finance

Clare Duffy's play seems to be a really powerful theatrical response to the financial crisis in terms of a work that explains to people what had been happening. To my viewpoint, this is because the metaphors employed are easily relatable for the audience.

These metaphors include the strategy of putting real money on stage, which was previously discussed, the strategy of using games to explain financial procedures, and other comparisons that seem quite easily understandable by the audience.

As regards the metaphors relating to the area of game, the fact that the play is framed as a game show reveals the playful and competitive quality of financial procedures. Very interestingly, from this play there emerges clearly that financial procedures mainly consist in gambling, as declared by the two performers at the beginning of the show. The first encounter of the two characters seems particularly telling in this sense because it takes place in a casino. Thus, Queenie and Casino's gambling activity out of their workplace actually reveals how much fun and thrill they feel when they are engaged in this activity. The most apparent and original strategy which was employed in the play to explain how finance works, is in fact the use of games. Namely, Queenie and Casino invite the audience to take part in six different games. These six activities – which are all very basic, not complicated games – appear as metaphors to describe every step that the two hedge fund managers took in order to make the deal of their life when the financial crisis happened. Queenie and Casino's show in this sense is crafted as a role-play in which the audience physically experiences the excitement generated by financial actions. It should be first observed that the pile of coins on the left side of the stage symbolizes the money given by the investors – Unlimited Theatre and Bush Theatre – to the performers. The first game was designed to explain the action of putting money into a fund. In preparation for this game, both Queenie and Casino previously asked to the members of their teams if they had some special abilities. Thus, in Scene Three – entitled “I\$ it r€al?” –, the two performers introduce a game in which the purpose for each team is to win money by betting on the abilities of the competitors. Two empty suitcases on the right of the stage stand for the two teams' funds. In the version that I watched the competitor of Queenie's team can perform a bedazzling trick with a biro, while the competitor of Casino's team can quite convincingly cry like a baby.

QUEENIE: First off. We need to get some cash in our funds. (*Producing a colourful kid's plastic bucket*) I bet you a bucket of pounds that no one in

your team can ([perform the trick with the biro]). Where's our champion ([the one who can perform the trick])? Please take to the stage.

Theme music.

CASINO: (*To audience*) OK. My team. Anyone able to ([perform the same trick])? You can?! Brilliant.

(Or establish that no one is taking the challenge)

We'll be taking that bet Queenie and you are going to lose! (*Or.*) No. No one here can. But you can't have that bucket until you do it. (p.31)

In this case, Casino's team wins and puts the content of the bucket in his team's fund, which is represented by the empty suitcase. Afterwards, Casino's team places its bet. Queenie's team wins and takes the pounds in the bucket. The second game seems to be designed to make the audience visualize the huge amount of money that started to flow when deregulation measures were approved.

WINNER: I won. I'm going first. I'm going to blow a bubble. While I'm blowing it we can put money in our fund. That case, there, right?

While I'm blowing the bubble there will be music. During that time you can put money in the fund. But only using your hands. If you are moving when the bubble bursts, and the music stops, you have to put the coins in your hands back in the pile. Clear? (p.33)

The purpose of this game is again that of putting money into the funds, but this time a larger amount. Notably, this game makes use of bubbles. This strategy seems to serve to make the audience visualize the creation of a speculative bubble. Furthermore, the teams are asked to play the game until the music stops. To my viewpoint, this could be Duffy's way to visualize the notorious sentence uttered by CEO Chuck Prince during the financial collapse - "We've just gonna have to keep dancing till the music stops". Actually, in an interview for *Theatre Voice*⁸⁴ Duffy makes reference to this sentence. Even if this hypothesis is wrong, the use of music certainly maintains the function of depicting the atmosphere of frenzy caused by deregulation before the crisis. In my

⁸⁴ Theatre Voice (2013a). The words reported are taken from my transcription of the recorded interview.

opinion, the fact that the two teams are asked to take the money only using their hands seems quite significant too. Actually, I think this is a metaphor employed to represent financial professionals' greed when putting such huge amounts of money into their funds. The third game describes the creation of riskier bubbles. Once again, Casino and Queenie involve the audience into a game that serves to put money into the two teams' funds.

QUEENIE: One more chance to get money into each of our funds. We're going to introduce a bit more risk and therefore potential reward into the game. This time if you're moving with money when the bubble bursts and the music stops then you have to put it into the other team's fund. Ooooh!

CASINO: (*Trying to ignore the irritating oooh!*) But now you can also use these (*Hold up buckets and spades.*) and even the golden shovel to move the coins. (p.43)

This game is very similar to the previous. Nevertheless, the use of tools that allows the competitors to grab an even greater amount of money every time they use them, seems to have been used to convey the fact that riskier speculative bubbles need more money to be created. The fourth game instead regard the procedure called 'betting long'.

CASINO: Now we've got money into our funds, we're going to bet with it. First we're going to bet 'long'. We're going to take a 'long position'. Betting that value will rise.

So. I bet we can blow this balloon bigger than you can blow your balloon in 30 seconds! (p.52)

This time the game is exploited to explain how to make a specific kind of bet. Interestingly, balloons are used also in this game. In order to explain the action of betting long, thus the procedure of betting on the rising value of something, the competitors could have been asked to perform also an action that did not include bubbles. To my viewpoint, the recurring use of bubbles in the play is relevant, because it seems to serve to visualize the creation of speculative bubbles in general. I think the purpose is to make the concept very clear – at least visually – to the audience. The fifth

game was created to explain what is a short bet. Making a short bet means that you bet that something will go wrong.

QUEENIE: So. Now. The much-feared short. Nothing to it. You bet on a negative, that something bad will happen, and make lots and lots. In this case we're going to bet on which team's balloon will burst first. Because it's a short, it takes less time and has more bang for your buck. (p.60)

The short bet is the most important between the two types of bet, because if it is right it makes the gambler earn a lot of money. This is the most important point in Casino and Queenie's scheme to make the deal of their life. As a matter of fact, Casino senses that the US housing market would become a bubble, and Queenie supports his hypothesis. They therefore decide to bet short on the burst of this bubble. The sixth game represent the financial procedure called 'hedging'. The procedure called 'hedging' actually serves to limit losses if a bet does not succeed.

QUEENIE: So we're going to hedge. That is we're going to place two bets at the same time...long and short together. One bet on which of these two balloons will burst first. Another one on which of these other two balloons will be the biggest when that happens. And this time you don't have to bet on your own team. (p.63)

[...]

CASINO: [...] To place our short bet we need an extra volunteer to the stage. To place your short bet you stand beside the balloon you think is going to burst first. The difference is that you can change your mind at any time until it bursts.

This last detail – the fact that you can change your mind on your short bet at any time before the bubble bursts – is significant. This last game actually represents the key procedure that was followed by those who speculated on the financial crisis of 2008.



Picture 19 Queenie (Lucy Ellinson) blowing a bubble in the second game.



Picture 20 Queenie (played by Lucy Ellinson) and a competitor chosen among the audience during one of the games in the play.

Scene Twelve – which is entitled ‘Pitching’ – seems particularly interesting because it represents the manipulation of investors by the two hedge fund managers. In this scene too the audience is directly involved. A person from the audience is actually asked to go up on stage in order to be part of the scene. After the chosen person has taken a sit on a chair at the centre of the stage, Queenie and Casino actually explain to the audience how they found new investors by persuading individuals to lend them their money. When analysing some of the two characters’ words in this scene, it becomes

apparent how many metaphors actually recall the theme of deceit and manipulation of reality.

QUEENIE: [...] Pitching a trade to a potential investor, I was taught, is like pitching a film to Hollywood...you've got to tell a good story.

CASINO: Your client is the hero, like Luke Skywalker.

Luke is good. But you must fight Darth, who is bad.

QUEENIE: You've got to explain that something is wrong right now. For example...you don't have enough money. Bad.

CASINO: No client ever has enough money.

QUEENIE: But we can make you rich. Also something is really wrong, there are tremors in the force...the bubble is about to burst, if you can bet the right way you'll make the most extraordinary amount of money. (pp. 67-68)

In my opinion, this scene is particularly interesting because it seems framed as a *mise en abîme*. More precisely, Queenie and Casino's create a performance inside a performance. They actually frame a metaphoric scene of deceit as a part of a play that is itself structured as a metaphoric performance.

The history of finance and references to real people and events

In *MONEY: The Game Show*, scenes involving games actually alternate with more narrative scenes. Not only does this latter type of scene appear to have been employed to provide key concepts in the history of finance, but also to convey more detailed information about the crisis-related events, and about the people who were involved in it. Moreover, these scenes comprise also details about Casino and Queenie's scheme. Interestingly, Duffy's *MONEY: The Game Show* is the play that tells more details about the history of money and finance among the four plays analysed in this dissertation. For example, as mentioned in the previous sections, at the beginning of the play Queenie and Casino expand on the history of the coins they are playing with in that moment.

Moreover, in Scene Five and Scene Seven, by narrating the story of their close family and ancestors, the two characters explain key events and concepts in the history of finance. More precisely, Casino explains that he was raised in a poor community where people were obliged to lend money from loan sharks.

CASINO: [...] Where I come from the value of a loan default could be your mum...or your little brother, not their actual lives maybe, but the price of a week's housing benefit might be valued with a bone, a rape, perhaps a lifelong dance with the devil. Loan sharks are never cynical, they know the value of things and price accordingly. But where I come from...if you're hungry...there isn't anywhere else to go. Everyone else has the banking system. (p.41)

To my view point, in his description of the loan shark to whom his mother asked money, Casino uses a metaphor that reminds me of the images used by Bauman to describe the concept of "liquid modernity". He actually says that,

CASINO: [...] 'Mr Smith' didn't look that sharp, but he glided through the estate like it wasn't really there, like his feet left no print. Dull-eyed and damp-browed, his world was liquidity itself. Impossible to get hold of. (p.41)

Casino's description of loan sharks then expands to contemporary period, as he explains that loan sharks did not vanish after 2008.

[...] Sharks are much more visible since 2008. [...] the demand for credit didn't go away just because the banks won't lend. (p.42)

Queenie's family history was instead framed with the aim of listing important dates in the history of finance. It is actually not a chance that one of Queenie's ancestors

QUEENIE: [...] was one of the traders who loaned 1.2 million to William III, in 1664, for his war in France. That loan launched the Bank of England and first genuine paper money! Oh. Yes. (p.45)

Having its roots in the origin of finance, Queenie's family tree comprises also two Wall Street workers – her grandfather and his brother, who committed suicide after the 1929

financial crisis, which is another crucial date in the history of finance (p.45). Queenie's father too belonged to the financial world as is described by Queenie as "an old-fashioned conservative banker" (p.46). Moving on now to consider the references to the crisis-related events and individuals, after having listed all her relatives who were part of the financial world, Queenie declares that her hero is George Soros. Soros is revealed as the model for traders and speculators. The two performers' words, but also the words of Queenie's boss, actually resonate with Soros's mottos. The references to George Soros – who is a recurring persona in the plays analysed – will be discussed in the final comparison of the plays. There are many other direct references to the financial crisis and to the period before. By way of illustration, Queenie and Casino discuss the Royal Bank of Scotland's lies about their leverage. Another scene which is rich of references in Scene Nine, which is entitled "I quit". In this scene, the dialogue that Queenie has with her Boss appears to be a dramatic strategy not only for explaining financial technical jargon – concepts such as AAA, ninja loans, Credit Default Swaps, sub-prime mortgages, CDS, CDOs and many others –, but also for making the various stages leading to the crisis more understandable for the audience. To conclude, Duffy's play is actually full of direct references to events and real individuals. Yet, I think that the dramatic choice of alternating these scenes with games proved to be particularly effective in facilitating the audience's comprehension of all these data.



Picture 21 Queenie (Lucy Ellinson) explains her discovery to her boss (Brian Ferguson).

The consequences of the financial crisis – personal and emotional involvement and the two characters’ approach to risk

MONEY: The Game Show does not only focus on the machinations behind the crisis itself, but it also deals extensively with the consequences suffered from people on a personal level. At the beginning of their show, Queenie and Casino explain that the whole performance is based on their lives. Indeed, the two performers’ lives appear to be deeply involved in the financial strategies that they use in order to make the deal of their lives. Interestingly, Queenie and Casino have a different approach to risk. Queenie in fact trusts her instincts when she has to decide if taking a risk or not. Casino instead tries to calculate the risk, and when he has made his calculations his fear seems to disappear.

QUEENIE: Risk is a fact of life. My gut tells me when and how far to push it.

CASINO: But I prefer to calculate the odds. (p.31)

Nonetheless, what emerges from the two characters' words is that neither of the two approaches seems to be always effective. They define market as a volatile entity, in which anything really can happen and turn your predictions upside down. To my viewpoint, this description of the market holds features of Bauman's concept of 'liquid modernity', in terms of an era in which the solidity security of the past tends to be replaced by a modernity which is based on speed and immaterial flowing entities, such as the market. The two characters in the end decide to take a huge risk and involve their families in their schemes. They ask their relatives to become investors in order to put more money into their funds. Apart from putting all their savings in their fund, Queenie asks her mother to contribute, and Casino – who has recently become a father to a child – decides too to risk it all. In my opinion, their personal involvement emerges particularly when Queenie wants to bet on Casino's actual heart.

CASINO: All or nothing...for you to do the rest of the show naked.

QUEENIE: Alright. I'll take that bet, but not for the money, for your heart, and not your love...your actual heart.

CASINO: Don't be ridiculous.

QUEENIE: Why?

CASINO: Because there are some things...some things don't have a price for fuck's sake.

QUEENIE: Perhaps they shouldn't have a price. But sometimes you've got to get skin in the game. (p.32)

Apart from seemingly being a reference to Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, I think that the references to the actual heart and to get skin in the game, are particularly significant when analyzing Queenie and Casino's personal involvement in the crisis-related events and their approach to risk. As a matter of fact, not only do the characters put their loved ones' skin in the game, but they also put their own skin in the game. Also from the performance's structure itself, there emerges that Queenie and Casino are involved on a very personal level. From the very beginning of the play, they both make clear to their team that if they lose the game they will kill themselves. Scene Fourteen and Scene Fifteen – respectively entitled 'I said I would kill myself' and 'The five

stages of grief denial/anger/bargaining/depression/acceptance/ in no particular order' seem to be particularly interesting in this sense. In an interview for *Theatre Voice*, Brian Ferguson – the actor that played Casino in the performance I watched – interestingly revealed one of his friends' comment on the two performers after watching the show –

[...] she said that a lot of it feels kind of like you are watching a long shot, you are watching these people in long shot [...] their lives don't touch you, these characters stories weren't touching harsh, she wasn't feeling like an emotional engagement with these characters and their personal story until she said "If I lose I would kill myself"...she felt there was a sudden close-up when the loser goes through what they have to go through ...it took her by surprise..."Oh, god...yeah."⁸⁵

Scene Fourteen coincides with the moment when the final loser of the game commits suicide. Scene Fifteen instead – as can be understood also by the title – pictures the stages of grief the winner and the loser of the game go through. In the performance I watched, Queenie is the winner and Casino is the loser. The winner is shown while taking care of the loser who is in a coma. The loser's grief and the motivations that prompted him to try to commit suicide are represented in a peculiar way. The loser actually wakes up from the coma and is depicted as a zombie that continuously repeats that he wants to be killed.

LOSER: Hungry.

Bad deal.

Must die. (p.82)

The depiction of the loser as a zombie seems to serve to represent the two characters' remorse, but it appears to be also a metaphor to explain what happened to the economy after the financial collapse.

WINNER: [...] The recession in Japan led to what the West called 'Japanese zombie banks'. Frozen by debt. (Debts too big to write off.) For the sake of the creditors they stagger on. Feeding on tax payers' cash that

⁸⁵ Theatre Voice (2013a). The transcription of the recorded podcast is my transcription.

will never be lent. Ever. For what? For the story. For the lie. We can't pay our debt unless we grow, we can't grow unless we pay the debt...We know that our money is dead, but it can't be, so it must be undead. (pp. 83-84)

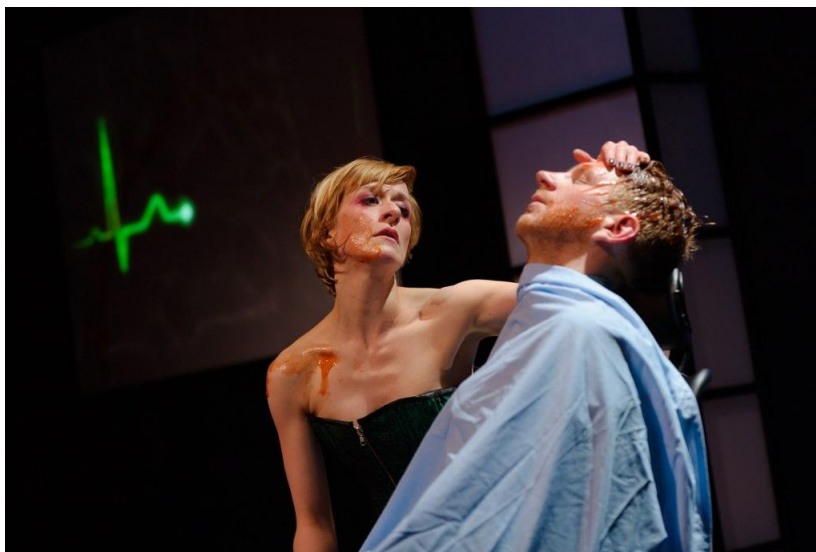
In the final part, *MONEY: The Game Show* interestingly provides a metaphorical description of what happened to economy and politics after the financial crisis, along with the crisis aftermath as regards the social consequences of the shocking event. In the epilogue to the play, Queenie – the winner of this performance – provides a broad global picture of the crisis aftermath.

WINNER: [...] In 2011 I take a trip around the world. How small it is, how uniform. Everyone looks the same: hungry, needy, weak, tired, scared.

[...]

2013. Four and a half years since Lehman Brothers went bankrupt and the chain reaction is still unfolding. [...] (pp. 87-88)

Ultimately, this play seems to deal with the emotional and personal impact of the 2008 financial crisis both as regards the period before the crisis and also the aftermath to it. To my viewpoint, Queenie and Casino accompany the audience in an exploration of the human effects of the whole phenomenon by using powerful tools to involve the audience in a very effective way.



Picture 22 Queenie (Lucy Ellinson) speaking to Casino (Brian Ferguson) while he is in a coma.

Conclusion

In my opinion, Clare Duffy's *MONEY: the Game Show* seems a very significant theatrical response to the crisis, because it combines an original way of explaining the machinations behind the event with an unusual point of view on the crisis-related events. The analysis of the play in this chapter focused in a detailed way on the use of games to explain and render more comprehensible the world of finance. In my opinion, games – together with easily relatable metaphors such as the references to *Star Wars* and famous hits of the years it describes – work as effective strategies to make the audience digest quite complicated pieces of information about financial notions and procedures. Nonetheless, it should be observed that the process of creating game adaptations of financial concepts did not result in an over-simplification of the information. Furthermore, as discussed in the chapter, narrative scenes provide accurate and more elaborate information on the 2008 financial crisis and the period that preceded it. As regards the unusual point of view on the events, the point of view in the play is that of two ex hedge fund managers, who predicted the financial collapse and tried to profit on their intuition. Duffy's words in relation to her two characters seem particularly interesting,

[...] if people would listen to people such as Queenie and Casino, then maybe the crisis wouldn't have happened, the bubble would have been let down before it actually came to the point of crisis [...]⁸⁶

The unusual feature of the play's point of view on the crisis-related events consists in the fact that Queenie and Casino actually stand out as individuals who were able to understand that a crisis was coming. In my opinion, Clare Duffy's aim when creating her play was not only that of describing to the audience what happened during the financial crisis. The scene in the epilogue in which the winning team is asked to bet on the possible futures actually seem to support the idea that this play's aim is also that of offering an occasion to reflect on the events and on the possibility of changing things for the future.

⁸⁶ Theatre Voice (2013a).

Four different responses to the financial crisis – a comparison of the plays

The four preceding chapters attempted to provide an analysis focused on each single play. This was done in order to discuss each work in a detailed way in terms of performance and performance text. This final chapter will try instead to provide a comparative analysis of the four plays. It will do so by explaining how these four plays seem to be very different in terms of approach to the theme of the financial crisis, but at the same time appear to share a range of commonalities.

Four different approaches

The first difference that exists between the plays is the period when they were staged. It should be observed that Lucy Prebble's *Enron* and David Hare's *The Power of Yes* were both staged in 2009, while Dennis Kelly's *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* and Clare Duffy's *MONEY: The Game Show* were staged respectively in 2012 and 2013. The staging period thus identifies an aspect that differentiates the approaches of the dramatists to the common theme their plays deal with. Prebble's play and Hare's play were staged very closely to the period of the financial crisis, while Kelly's play and Duffy's play were staged after quite a long period of time had passed after the same events. It could be argued that the first two plays could be two first attempts to approach the theme of the crisis, while the latter two plays could be considered as more digested re-elaborations on the same issues. Nevertheless, in my opinion, this argumentation is not valid for each play. *The Power of Yes* could be properly considered as a play written on the spur of the moment. David Hare has for sure conducted research in the field of finance by interviewing a range of professionals in order to understand what were the causes of the collapse, and who were the individuals involved in it. Nevertheless, the timespan between the happening of the events and the staging of the play appears to have been very short. To my viewpoint, the short timespan that was given to the playwright for writing his play, and to the company to stage the show, strongly affected the outcome of the performance. *The Power of Yes*

appears to be a very interesting play in terms of the content it conveys. The play delves into the crisis-related events in a very detailed way and furthermore provides a sceptical point of view of the issues it deals with. Nevertheless, in my opinion, as regards the performance on its whole, *The Power of Yes*'s staging resulted in a quite flat performance. Though I do not exclude that the audience could have felt involved by the characters' words, in my opinion the theatrical techniques employed did not work very well to enhance the content and the key themes of the performance. The visual impression I got when watching the play was that of being the witness of a series of interviews, with all the characters entering, talking to the author, and exiting afterwards. Nonetheless, *The Power of Yes* remains a very interesting play that provides relevant insights on the crisis-related events that helped the audience better understand what was going on. Instead, Lucy Prebble's *Enron* proved to be a very entertaining, fun, and dynamic play, even though it was staged in the same year. The reason why the final rendition of this play is completely different from the previous, is that playwright Lucy Prebble, together with Headlong Theatre Company, actually worked on the play for years, while David Hare's research took a summer. Moreover, it should be noted that Prebble's play deals with the story of Enron's company collapse, and therefore with specific events that happened before the 2008 financial crisis. This is actually the reason why Prebble had the possibility to work on the play for a longer period of time, and to create with Headlong a final performance that proves to be at the same time very entertaining and thought-provoking. Returning to the statement at the beginning of this paragraph, Kelly's play and Duffy's play actually seem to confirm the fact that a longer timespan between the events and the period of writing and staging of the two plays, helped both dramatists to elaborate the events in a more digested way. *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*, written by Dennis Kelly and staged in 2012 in Germany for the first time, is the most metaphorical and less financial-crisis-related of the four plays analysed. As discussed in the third chapter, to my viewpoint this play could be considered as a response to the 2008 financial crisis because of the themes it deals with. Duffy's *MONEY: The Game Show* is a play that both involved its audience to a very significant extent in the performance, and also recalls the most important phases of the crisis-related events. In my opinion, as two later theatrical responses to the financial crisis, Kelly's play and Duffy's play share a more metaphorical approach to the crisis-

related events. The reason why these two works can be compared is because some aspects of the phenomenon of the financial collapse were more clearly understandable after they had been studied for years, and the crisis had been partially digested by society when the two plays were written. Thus, I think that these two playwrights tried to explore even more deeply the themes dealt with by Prebble and Hare in their plays. Namely, *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* analyses in depth the atavistic human thirst for power, while *MONEY: The Game Show* provides an insightful exploration of the value of money.

Secondly, another issue which seems interesting to explore is the reason why these playwrights decided to write these plays. Significantly, both David Hare's *The Power of Yes* and Lucy Prebble's *Enron* were commissioned. Nonetheless, even though these two playwrights were asked to write a play on a specific theme, they still manifested some sort of interest in or fascination for the issue they were asked to explore. The same applies to Clare Duffy and Dennis Kelly, even though their plays were not written under commission. To be more precise, as mentioned before, David Hare's oeuvre is very much orientated to the exploration of socially and politically concerning issues. As Richard Boon (Boon, 2007) points out in *The Cambridge Companion to David Hare*,

[...] much of Hare's subsequent reputation has developed on the perception that his plays, more than anyone else's, succeed in capturing the zeitgeist of their particular historical moment. (p.40)

In an interview⁸⁷, Lucy Prebble reports that, having a family background in business, she was acquainted with the world pictured in her play *Enron*, and she therefore felt more confident than others may have felt to deal with such a theme as Enron collapse. In the same interview, she also reports that,

Mostly what you write is an exploration of something that you're interested in but can't quite articulate in any other way [...] It doesn't necessarily mean that it's born of some great psychological trauma, but there's some little wound that you're picking at.

⁸⁷ Gee, A. with Prebble, L. (2010).

This point made by Lucy Prebble could be interestingly compared with a similar argumentation that Dennis Kelly produced in an interview⁸⁸,

Your job is to write what you believe is the truth. Good writing in a way is an attempt to tell a secret about yourself that you wouldn't say in front of people. It could be the smallest thing in the world. 'In my dark and brooding heart, I feel like this... Is that OK? Is that all right?'

As discussed also in the fourth chapter of this dissertation, Clare Duffy's interest in the theme of the financial crisis was sparked by the performative power that she recognized in money after she produced a play in which real money was used on stage.

Thirdly, the four plays seem to be very different in terms of genre. David Hare's *The Power of Yes* is a play that appears to be strongly based on the interviews conducted by the playwright while he was doing his research on the theme of the financial crisis. Therefore, as was explained in the first chapter, I think that this play could be considered a piece of verbatim theatre. The research process behind both Prebble's *Enron* and Duffy's *MONEY: The Game Show* seems to maintain aspects similar to the process behind Hare's play. The apparent specificity of both plays' plots confirms the fact that both Prebble and Duffy – Duffy specifically reported it in the writer's acknowledgement in the play script⁸⁹ – worked to gather a lot of materials respectively on Enron's collapse and on the 2008 financial crisis, including interviews. Nonetheless, both Prebble's play and Duffy's play appear to be more metaphorical and also more theatrical re-elaborations of the materials they worked on. As regards *Enron*, in the introduction to the play script,⁹⁰ Rachael Clements points out that “we might think of *Enron* as a ‘docudrama’. However, its mixture of styles and genres, evident in the discussion of the play's visual language, also sets *Enron* somewhat apart” (p. 24). In terms of the writing process behind the play, Dennis Kelly's *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* does not seem to be based on a research done by the playwright on a specific field. When analysing more precisely the genre of the plays, in my analysis I

⁸⁸ Cavendish, D. with Featherstone, V. and Kelly, D. (2013).

⁸⁹ Duffy, C. (2013).

⁹⁰ Prebble, L. (2012).

discussed *Enron* as a theatrical performance that retained many characteristics of a musical and *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* as a tragedy. The genre of *MONEY: The Game Show* appears to be very difficult to define. Certainly, from this analysis there emerges that this play seems a kind of hybrid between a traditional theatrical performance and a show held by two performance artists who involve the audience to a great extent.

The four plays appear to be very different also in terms of performance. As mentioned in the first chapter, *The Power of Yes* is a very static performance, which does not stand out for a peculiar use of staging strategies. *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas's* performance is not particularly dynamic as well. Nonetheless, I think that the slow pace of the play actually reflects the psychological approach that Kelly employed in order to deal with the theme of hubris. Moreover, the gloomy atmosphere of the setting and the spare use of an uncanny, disquieting violin theme, both seemed to work to reinforce the psychologically-oriented study of human hubris written by Kelly. *MONEY: The Game Show* and *Enron* instead are two very dynamic plays. As described in the second chapter of this dissertation, *Enron's* performance includes a variety of dances and songs. *MONEY: The Game Show*, as analysed in the fourth chapter, is framed as an exuberant show of two performance artists, which includes audience-involving games. The use of music holds a significant narrative role in both these performances. Another aspect that deserves mentioning is the use of video footage. Namely, in *The Power of Yes* and in *Enron* to a greater extent, videos were used with a narrative purpose to signal specific events in the plot. Furthermore, it should be noted that dance is used in a metaphorical way in *Enron*, *MONEY: The Game Show*, and also in *The Power of Yes*. The metaphorical use of dance in these plays makes reference to the notorious words uttered by Chuck Prince speaking about the financial crisis. The metaphor is literally reported in Hare's play in Cohen's words,

Cohen Chuck Prince was Head of Citibank. He said, 'As long as the music is playing, you've got to get up and dance.' Wonderful, isn't it? The banks were all in a dancing marathon. You couldn't take a break, you had to keep dancing, and your only hope was that you'd be nearest the exit when

the music stopped. You don't dare stop, because then your clients will remove their money and take it to another bank which is still dancing. And meanwhile the building is falling down, the roof is open to the sky, the hall's slipping off the pier and no one has the wit to stop in the marathon. (p.38)

In Prebble's play, the extensive use of dance seems actually to depict the adrenalinic atmosphere described by Cohen in Hare's play. In Duffy's play, Queenie and Casino dance the Argentinian tango in Scene Thirteen – entitled "Roadrunner Syndrome". The metaphor therefore is literally put on stage in *MONEY: The Game Show*.

As regards direct references to reality, it should be observed that these can be found in Hare's *The Power of Yes*, in Prebble's *Enron*, and in Duffy's *MONEY: The Game Show*. These three plays abound with details about individuals who were directly involved in the machinations behind the financial crisis – such as George Soros, Alan Greenspan, Fred Goodwin, Alistair Darling –, names of societies and entities who collapsed – such as Lehman Brothers, Wall Street, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, the AIG –, and references to financial procedures and technical jargon – phrases such as deregulation, light-touch regulation, assets, ninja loans, and zombie banks. As mentioned before, Kelly's play does not make direct reference to the crisis-related events. Nevertheless, I agree with Angelaki (Angelaki, 2017) when she points out that,

[...] *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* merits our attention [...] because it invests in the anonymous individual, who, ironically, is given a distinctive name and surname that are even foregrounded to the play's title. This technique emphasizes the individual's role in maintaining or questioning capitalist structures, not a name or a face in a crowd, but an active agent. (p.100)

Having discussed how different the approaches of the four playwrights were in exploring the theme of crisis, the next sections of this final chapter will analyse the great deal of commonalities that the four plays retain. More precisely, the focus of the following analysis will be on recurring themes, characters, and metaphors.

Recurring themes, characters and metaphors

An aspect that the four plays share is the fact that they all deal in some way with the theme of money, greed, and the action of acting unethically for the sake of profit. Money could be said to be the fundamental element around which the four plays' plots actually revolve. Whether they deal with individual greed as *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* does, corporate greed as *Enron* does, or with greed that is shared by a great deal of members of society as in *The Power of Yes* and *MONEY: The Game Show*, each one of these plays holds money as a core theme of their content. The four plays are all different explorations of the action of putting aside morality in order to achieve more profit. In his *Theatre & Globalization*, playwright and academic Dan Rebellato interestingly discusses contemporary society's complete disregard for ethics when it comes to the process of making a profit. He points out that,

Some advocates of global capitalism claim that a properly functioning free market will generate good, moral behaviour. [...] But what if all is not well? If the primary motive is profit, in any circumstance where acting unethically is more profitable than acting ethically, the logical thing to do is to lie, cheat or steal. And this is indeed what many businesses do, as the spectacular scandals in 2002 at Enron, WorldCom, Global Crossing, Tyco, and other showed (and these are the only ones we know about). The credit crunch that triggered a global recession in 2008 was produced by an amazingly small number of US lenders offering mortgages to people who were very unlikely to pay the loan back and then bundling up the 'toxic debt' in complex ways and selling it on. The motive at each point was money, the end-of-year bonus. The longer-term consequences were ignored. (pp. 35-36)

Rebellato takes into consideration and analyses the scandals before the 2008 financial crisis and the financial collapse itself. Therefore, to my viewpoint, it could be argued that Lucy Prebble's play – which narrates the Enron scandal –, Hare's *The Power of Yes* and Duffy's *MONEY: The Game Show* – which both depict the 2008 crisis events – are ultimately dealing with the same theme. Kelly's *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* too appears to be a powerful exploration of the action of putting aside

morality in order to make a profit and, as will be discussed in the next section, to obtain power.

As regards the theme of belief, this quite complex concept was explored in depth in all four plays. Both in *Enron* and *The Power of Yes*, this concept is taken into consideration when discussing people's belief and trust that the new financial methods will work. As mentioned before, these two plays present two very similar metaphors to describe the trust in the new market. In *The Power of Yes*, Alan Greenspan is said to trust the functioning of the market, as he trusts the functioning of a Mercedes engine, even though he does not know how it works. In *Enron*, a very similar metaphor is provided by Sloman who, in order to explain that market procedures are based on belief, makes a comparison with the belief that people have in the fact that planes will fly, even though they do not know how they actually manage to do so. Both Hare's play and Duffy's play discuss the value of trust in the field of finance. *The Power of Yes* identifies the origin of the word 'credit' in the concept of trust, and *MONEY: The Game Show* discusses the same theme when Casino explains who loan sharks are. Another kind of belief is the one that characters in *The Power of Yes*, Casino in *MONEY: The Game Show*, and Andy Fastow in *Enron* put in the alleged power of mathematical models to calculate risk. These characters' fears interestingly seem to disappear as soon as they write everything down in a formula.

Moving on now to consider the recurring motif of lying and deceiving, these are techniques shared by characters in all four plays. The protagonist of *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* actually builds his whole existence on a lie. In order to achieve his objectives he lies and deceives people without thinking of the outcome, as one of his golden rules states. As discussed before, he actually exploits people's vulnerability and their traumas to deceive and overcome them. Moreover, in the end, Gorge Mastromas is shocked by a lie – the girl he made pregnant when he was young did not have an abortion as she said to him. In *MONEY: The Game Show*, Queenie and Casino actually discover that The Royal Bank of Scotland and other entities are lying about their capitalization, and therefore decide to exploit their discovery to make a

profit. Furthermore, the same play analyses the theme of deceiving in a scene in which the two protagonists show how to convince new investors to give you their money. Bankers' self-deception emerges as a key theme in *The Power of Yes*, which the Author's words in the play describes as "a story about bankers fooling themselves". The action of deceiving and distorting reality are recurring also in Prebble's play. From a specific use of words to distort the perception of reality in order to build a good reputation for the company and its leader, to Fastow's schemes to create a shadow company, and his belief that his Raptors will eat all the company's debt, *Enron* included an array of references to deceit, belief, and distortion of reality.

As regards the key theme of hubris, there are a couple of metaphors that appear to be recurring in the plays analysed. The plays share a tendency of using faith-related metaphors. As discussed in the second chapter, metaphors connected with faith are used extensively in *Enron* but, notably, Lucy Prebble's framed the character of Jeff Skilling as a god-like figure in order to represent his growing power in the story. Similarly, Gorge Mastromas is depicted as a man who acquires an incredible power from a specific moment in his life. Kelly interestingly uses a metaphor connected to religion in this particular point,

- Gorge Mastromas leapt into the second phase of his life with all the energy of a bullet tearing into the soft fleshy parts of a human's guts.
- Without wanting to get too biblical it was as if he had been given the keys to the kingdom. (p.50)

Even though there are not many faith-related metaphor in *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*, this particular reference seems to be particularly telling. Gorge is anyway depicted as the member of "a minuscule fraction of the population [who] know the real nature of life [and to whom] is given the world" (p.46). He is thus depicted as a very powerful person, whose power allows him to manipulate the world as he likes. Another metaphor that recurs in the plays is the 'masters of the universe' metaphor. This metaphor was used by David Hare in *The Power of Yes* to describe bankers. In the Financial Journalist's words,

Financial Journalist [...] These people genuinely believe they are masters of the universe. [...] Because they're paid fifty times as much as anyone else. So they must be cleverer than anyone else. (pp.60-61)

As can be observed, the 'master of the universe' metaphor and the representation of one character as a god are in fact the same thing. The same description applies to the bankers in Hare's play, to Jeffrey Skilling in *Enron*, and to Gorge Mastromas in Kelly's play. As mentioned before, Jeff Skilling's and Gorge Mastromas's desire to achieve power, and the change in their behaviour or personality is curiously rendered also visually by a makeover of their look. Another characteristic that Skilling and Mastromas share is the way they get rid of people, whom they consider as obstacles in their rise towards power. Ultimately, Jeffrey Skilling and Gorge Mastromas appear to be the most visible representative of the theme of hubris in the four plays analysed.

A peculiar image that appears to recur in a significant way in the plays analysed is the metaphor of the bubble. More precisely, this metaphor describes the phenomenon called 'speculative bubble'. This metaphor appears to be recurring in *Enron*, *The Power of Yes*, and *MONEY: The Game Show*. As discussed in the fourth chapter, Duffy's play seems to depict visually the concept of speculative bubble because the two characters use soap bubbles and balloons in their games. The same strategy appears to be used, although in a subtler way, in Prebble's play, when Skilling's daughter blows some soap bubbles as a game. As regards rendition of this metaphor in the discourse, the characters, in both Hare's play and Duffy's play, recurrently mention the concept of being inside or looking at a bubble from outside. As emerges from the characters' words in the plays, this way of describing the bubble appears to be a direct reference of notorious business magnate and philanthropist George Soros's financial principles. An example of this metaphor in *The Power of Yes* can be found in Rudmann's words,

Rudmann You don't get it! Once you are in a bubble, it needs nerves of steel to stay out. Can you imagine the pressure? On any trader? Everyone around you is making money, and they do it with securitised credit

arrangements. And you are the one who says ‘I don’t believe in securitised credit arrangements’? *Get out of here!* (p.30)

Rudmann’s words in the play are then followed by Soros’s intervention. As mentioned in the first chapter, Soros – who is a character in *The Power of Yes* – actually explains that he managed to make a lot of money because he was able to understand that a speculative bubble was forming (p.30). In *MONEY: The Game Show*, an example of this metaphor is included in Boss’s words to Queenie,

BOSS: [...] That’s reflexivity isn’t it? That’s the ‘quantum’ effect right? Looking at it, being in it, changes it? Right?

Oh yes. I read my Soros too. [...] (p.59)

Hare’s play, Prebble’s play, and Duffy’s play all describe the fact of being inside a bubble as a situation in which nobody understands what exactly is going on. Even though it does not literally deal with the theme of the financial crisis, *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* too includes a metaphor which seems to have a meaning similar to the metaphor of the bubble. Namely, Gorge Mastromas’s perception of the reality around him, and especially of Louisa’s feelings, is described as being blurred when he finds himself in the maelstrom of his success.

A commonality that all four plays seem to maintain lies in the fact that, in each of these plays, there are some characters who think they are cleverer than others. More precisely, a first group of these characters includes Gorge Mastromas, Jeffrey Skilling, Fastow, and a range of characters in *The Power of Yes*. These characters actually exploit their cleverness to overpower other people. In Duffy’s play, Casino and Queenie too stand out as two individuals who have had an intuition on the upcoming financial crisis, which the majority of people did not suspect. Significantly, the majority of these characters seem to identify George Soros as their idol and model. References to Soros abound in *The Power of Yes*, *Enron*, and *MONEY: The Game Show*. For example, when they introduce themselves to the audience, Queenie and Casino’s words echo Soros’s mantra that if you can make enough money you can change the world.

We're maverick. We're free. And we're here to change the world! (p. 26)

Ultimately, to my viewpoint, George Soros could be considered as a living example of hubris on which the four playwrights can have been working to shape some of their characters.

The sense of superiority shared by many characters in the four plays appears to be linked to other recurring themes. The atmosphere of the trading world during the economic boom that preceded the financial collapse seems to emerge in these plays thanks to a system of recurring metaphors regarding games, hunting, Darwinism, and the character of the trader. More precisely, these metaphors appears to have been used to describe a social climate characterised by adrenaline energy and aggressiveness. The use of games as metaphors has been particularly employed in *MONEY: The Game Show* and in *Enron*, as was explained respectively in the forth and the second chapter. Namely, this metaphor was used in these two plays not only to make the audience better visualize what happened during the crisis, but also to picture the general atmosphere of the world they talk about. By way of illustration, some examples of the metaphors describing aggressiveness and adrenaline energy include the description of traders as testosterone-fuelled character in *Enron*, recurring references to aggressive behaviour of financial professionals in *MONEY: The Game Show*, references to Darwinian principles in terms of the survival of the strongest in both Prebble's play and Hare's play. As regards hunting, phrases regarding this particular activity were observed to be recurrent in the colloquial jargon in the financial world before the crisis. Interestingly, the playwrights appear to have exploited this aspect to reinforce their description of this world in their plays. Lexical references to hunting can be found in *Enron*, *MONEY: The Game Show*, and also in *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*. Reference to bears and bulls as symbols of aggressiveness, and expressions such as 'following your instinct', 'make a killing', 'eating what you kill', and 'pulling triggers' seems to be recurring in the plays analysed. As examined in the third chapter, the character called A in Kelly's play makes use of the metaphor of hunt when she releases her notorious speech to the protagonist. Furthermore, the character of the trader seems to personify these metaphors regarding the atmosphere of the financial world. Interestingly,

geographer Linda McDowell analyses the trader's persona as almost a typical social type in modern society. She actually describes the stockbroker as a "young, powerful, aggressive alpha male, living on champagne and cocaine and the adrenaline rush of greed" (p.28)⁹¹. This specific type of character has been discussed extensively also in the cinema, in films such as Martin Scorsese's 2013 *The Wolf of Wall Street*. Although this character appears to be present in all four plays – even Gorge Mastromas seems to share some of this character's features –, Prebble's *Enron* especially presents a variety of characters to whom this description seems to apply.

Ultimately, what seems to emerge from the analysis of these four plays is the need of understanding not only a historical moment, but also a society which is continuously changing. As was discussed in the body of this dissertation, in my opinion, many of the metaphors used by the characters in this plays appear to recall sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's concept of 'liquid modernity', which he discussed in his 2000 book entitled *Liquid Modernity*. In this book, this sociologist analyses the features of modern society. The key concepts that, to my viewpoint, seem to recall Bauman's idea of 'liquid modernity' in the plays, can be grouped into three points. The first point regards the modern disinterest for the past, neoliberalism and the deriving practice of deregulation, and more broadly the modern tendency which Bauman defines "creative destruction" or "destructive creativity". These issues appear to have been assessed in the three plays that deal more directly with the theme of financial collapse, and namely, David Hare's *The Power of Yes*, Lucy Prebble's *Enron*, and Clare Duffy's *MONEY: The Game Show*. The second point includes the modern nature of power, the impossibility of ever being gratified, avoidance of responsibility, and the split between the people who get the benefits and the individuals that suffer the consequence of their actions. The theme of responsibility was discussed in Duffy's play and in Hare's play. The issues regarding the nature of power can be particularly traced in the analysis of Kelly's *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*, but also in the other plays when analyzing the theme of hubris. The third point takes into consideration the volatile feature of market, the liquid form of money and debt, the action of trading virtual goods, the juxtaposition of today's

⁹¹ McDowell, L. (2011).

money to gold in the past. These thematics were dealt with in *Enron* and *MONEY: The Game Show*.

To sum up, from my research there emerges that the four plays analysed present four significantly different approaches to the theme of the crisis, and also share a consistent number of commonalities, in terms of recurring themes, characters, and metaphors. On a superficial level, these four plays could appear to belong to a very specific niche in the range of contemporary British plays, namely that which embraces facts and events belonging to the here and now. Nevertheless, on an insightful level, in the first place, when dealing with the theme of hubris, these works could interestingly be discussed alongside other works of literature and theatre performance, which belong to present and past art heritage. Moreover, the aim of this dissertation was also that of including these four plays in a broader sociological debate on the evolution of modernity in the current period of human history. This is the main reason beyond the choice of discussing specific themes of the plays along with the concept of ‘liquid modernity’.

Conclusion

While doing my research in the field of contemporary British theatre, I realised how many plays are continuously released in the UK, and especially how many of these plays deal with issues linked to problems of contemporary society. In my opinion, theatre could be considered as an important part of the public sphere in the UK. As the entry of Oxford Bibliographies reports,

The “public sphere” is generally conceived as the social space in which different opinions are expressed, problems of general concern are discussed, and collective solutions are developed communicatively. Thus, the public sphere is the central arena for societal communication.⁹²

Theatre seems to hold a key cultural role in the United Kingdom. As regards the theme of this dissertation, contemporary British theatre actually appears to be not only very much concerned with politics, economics, and generally with problems connected to institutions and social issues, but it also seems to react very quickly to these issues. When considering contemporary British theatre’s discussion of the theme of the 2008 financial crisis, this response appears to have been quite extensive. The four works analysed in this dissertation are not the only plays that deal with this theme. Watkinson actually created a list of the most relevant plays that dealt with this socially concerning issue.⁹³ Apart from David Hare’s *The Power of Yes*, and Lucy Prebble’s *Enron*, this list includes Sara Juli’s 2006 *The Money Conversation* (2006), 2009 *Money* by Shunt, Nicholas Pierpan’s 2012 *You Can Still Make a Killing*, Theatre-Rites’s 2013 *Bank on It*, Kaleider’s 2014 *The Money*, and Paula Varjack’s 2016 *Show Me the Money*. Clements⁹⁴ suggests also Steve Thompson’s 2009 play *Roaring Trade* as a play that deals with the theme of the financial crisis. Interestingly, Middeke, Schnierer, and Sierz point out that,

⁹² Wessler, H. and Freudenthaler, R. (2018).

⁹³ Watkinson, P. (2018), p. 198.

⁹⁴ Prebble, L. (2012).

British playwriting has [always] had a close affinity [...] with the structures of British society, and especially with a more general discussion of economic, social and political issues.⁹⁵

Many scholars identify Caryl Churchill's 1987 *Serious Money* as a significant example of a play that dealt with the theme of finance some decades before the 2008 financial crisis. For example, Gonnermann observes that,

After the rise of the financial sector in the 1980s and the financial crisis in particular, literature has provided both a medium to discuss the vagaries of finance and a set of structural devices to lend shape to and understand the intricacies of the system and its crisis. Caryl Churchill's satire *Serious Money* (1987), a response to the deregulation of the London Stock Exchange in 1986, provides an early example of how drama can be used to capture the complexities and idiosyncrasies of the financial market. (p.82)⁹⁶

Churchill's play appears very relevant in the context that this dissertation took into consideration, because it was actually re-staged after the 2008 financial collapse, probably as a way of elaborating once again on the theme of the financial crisis. Moreover, it should be noted that British theatre appears to have dealt with the theme of money for centuries. When pointing out that "right from the emergence of forms of agrarian and merchant capitalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, playwrights and theatres have responded to the changing economic contexts of their time", Clements produces the titles of some plays as examples of theatrical works that dealt with the theme of money and finance in British theatre. For example she mentions Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, restoration comedies such as Richard B. Sheridan's *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal*, and more recent examples such as some plays by Bertolt Brecht.⁹⁷ Ultimately, it seems to me that, in the UK, theatre still retains some of the primal characteristics of the art of theatre, which Cameron and Hoffman identifies when

⁹⁵ Gonnermann, A. (2017), p.102. Middeke's, Schnierer's, and Sierz's words are taken from Middeke, M., Schnierer, P.P., Sierz, A. (2011) *The Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary British Playwrights*.

⁹⁶ Gonnermann, A. (2017).

⁹⁷ Prebble, L. (2012), p.5.

describing the role of theatre in the ancient Greece in the book *A guide to theatre study*.⁹⁸

Like other group arts (music and dance, most obviously) the theatre is communal in both its form and its expression. However, the theatre is unique in incorporating into its form and its expression the very substance of human social and communal existence, the mythic stories and emotions that lie at the center of communal life. The theatre does not merely retell these stories; it relives them. (p.12)

As reported by Gonnermann (Gonnermann, 2017), Aragay observes that theatre potential consists in “awaken[ing] the spectator’s capacity for ethical reflection”, and therefore as a medium it “offers a unique platform for debate and discussion, first and foremost for ethical and moral issues.”⁹⁹ In my opinion, Aragay’s observation on the potential of theatre as a medium could be properly applied to the plays analysed in this dissertation. To conclude, I think that David Hare’s *The Power of Yes*, Lucy Prebble’s *Enron*, Dennis Kelly’s *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*, and Clare Duffy’s *MONEY: The Game Show*, all worked as theatrical responses to the financial crisis. The four playwrights managed to work in the very complex context of the aftermath of the crisis phenomenon, both providing further opportunities for the discussion of this theme, and creating a privileged space for the audience to relive their trauma and digest it.

⁹⁸ Cameron, K.M., Hoffman, T.J.C. (1974).

⁹⁹ Gonnermann, A. (2017), p.101. Gonnermann reports Aragay’s words, which are actually taken from Aragay, Mireia. “To Begin to Speculate: Theatre Studies, Ethics and Spectatorship.” *Ethical Speculations in Contemporary British Theatre*, pp. 1-22.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank Professor Loretta Innocenti for her keen insights and for the interest she showed for my research. A special thank should go to Professor Andrea Peghinelli, who suggested I tried to delve into the theme of theatre and finance, and to theatre critic Heather Neill for helping me conducting my research in the field of contemporary British Theatre.

I would like to thank also the staff of Unlimited Theatre, the National Theatre Archive, and the V&A Museum Archive of Theatre & Performance for giving me the opportunity of watching plays' recordings.

This work is dedicated to my loved ones for their encouragement and support, and to those who sparked and fed my love of theatre. Thank you for helping me become the person I am today.

Bibliography and References

Play scripts

- Duffy, C. (2013). *MONEY: The Game Show*. London: Oberon Books.
- Hare, D. (2009). *The Power of Yes. A dramatist seeks to understand the financial crisis*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Kelly, D. (2013). *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*. London: Oberon Books.
- Prebble, L. (2012). *Enron*. Edited by Rachel Clements. London: Bloomsbury.

Live Performances

- Duffy, C. dir. (2013). *MONEY: The Game Show*, by Clare Duffy. [video recording of theatre performance]. 13 April 2013. West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds.
- Featherstone, V. dir. (2013). *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*, by Dennis Kelly. [video recording of theatre performance] 5 September – 19 October 2013. Royal Court Theatre, London. Viewed at the V&A Theatre & Performance Archive on 7th June 2018.
- Goold, R. dir. (2010). *Enron*, by Lucy Prebble. [video recording of theatre performance] 16 January – 14 August 2010. Noël Coward Theatre, London. Viewed at the V&A Theatre & Performance Archive on 7th June 2018.
- Jackson, A. dir. (2009). *The Power of Yes*, by David Hare. [video recording of theatre performance] 29 September, Lyttelton Theatre, National Theatre, London. Viewed at the National Theatre Archive on 6th June 2018.

Archive Materials about Productions

- Catalogue.nationaltheatre.ork.uk, (2018) *The Power of Yes*. [online] National Theatre Archive Catalogue. Available at: <<http://catalogue.nationaltheatre.org.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Performance&id=PERF7228&pos=7>> [Accessed 11 Mar. 2018].
- National Theatre Archive (2009a). Programme of *The Power of Yes*. National Theatre Archive, London.
- National Theatre Archive (2009b). Stage Management Bible Contents of *The Power of Yes*. National Theatre Archive, London.
- National Theatre Archive (2009c). Costume Bible of *The Power of Yes*. National Theatre Archive, London.
- Vam.on.worldcat.org, (2018). *Enron*. [online] V&A Museum Catalogue. Available at: <[123](https://nal-</div><div data-bbox=)

vam.on.worldcat.org/search?databaseList=143%2C199%2C245%2C269%2C239%2C638%2C173%2C283%2C251%2C197%2C285&queryString=enron+lucy+prebble#/oclc/913418389> [Accessed 11 Mar. 2018].

- Vam.on.worldcat.org, (2018). *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*. [online] V&A Museum Catalogue. Available at: <<https://nal-vam.on.worldcat.org/search?databaseList=&queryString=the+ritual+slaughter+of+gorge+mastromas#/oclc/913429516>> [Accessed 11 Mar. 2018].

Other Play Scripts

- Churchill, C. (1996). *Serious Money*. In: C. Churchill, *Plays. 2: Softcops ; Top girls ; Fen ; Serious money*. London: Methuen Drama, pp. 193-309.
- Hare, D. (1990). *Racing Demon*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Hare, D. (1991). *Murmuring Judges*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Hare, D. (1993). *The Absence of War*. London: Faber & Faber.

Books

- Angelaki, V. (2017). *Social and Political Theatre in 21st-Century Britain: Staging Crisis*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity, Malden: Blackwell.
- Boon, R. ed. (2007). *The Cambridge Companion to David Hare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cameron, K.M., Hoffman, T.J.C. (1974). *A guide to theatre study*, 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan.
- Fludernik, M. (2009). *An Introduction to Narratology*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Fortier, M. (1997). *Theory/Theatre. An Introduction*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Hammond, W. and Steward, D. (2008). *Verbatim Verbatim*. London: Oberon Books.
- Hare, D. (1993). *Asking Around: Background to the David Hare Trilogy*. Edited by Lyn Haill. London: Faber & Faber.
- Mortara Garavelli, B. (2012). *Manuale di retorica*. Milano: Bompiani.
- Rebellato, D. (2009). *Theatre & Globalization*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Sussman, C. (2012). *Eighteenth-Century British Literature*. Cambridge: Polity.

Journal Articles

- Alliot, J. (2014). "I Know How that Sounds and I Do Not Mean that as an, but I Mean Christ": The Disturbance in the Symbolic Order in Dennis Kelly's Theatre. *E-rea*, [online], 12.1. Available at:

- <<http://journals.openedition.org/erea/3990> ; DOI : 10.4000/erea.3990>
[Accessed 24 Jan. 2018].
- Anheier, H.K. and Haley, J.A. (2018). Ten Years after the Global Financial Crisis: An Introduction. *Global Policy*, [online], 9 supplement 1. Available at: <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1758-5899.12572>> [Accessed 23 Sep. 2018].
 - Gorton, G. and Metrick, A. (2012). Getting Up to Speed on the Financial Crisis: A One-Weekend-Reader's Guide. *Journal of Economic Literature*, [online], 50.1, pp. 128-150. Available at: <<http://www.aeaweb.org/articles.php?doi=10.1257/jel.50:1.128>> [Accessed 23 Sep. 2018].
 - McDowell, L. (2011). Making a Drama Out of a Crisis: Representing Financial Failure, or a Tragedy in Five Acts. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, [online], 36.2, pp. 193–205. Available at: <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23020812.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ad387c90f3265a4c3ad7261ec56fc22e5>> [Accessed 24 Jan. 2018].
 - Sierz, A. (2005). Beyond Timidity? The State of British New Writing. *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, [online], 27.3, pp.55-61. Available at: <<https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/10.1162/pajj.2005.27.3.55> 24/01/2018> [Accessed 24 Jan. 2018].
 - Sierz, A. (2008). Reality Sucks: The Slump in British New Writing. *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, [online], 30.2, pp.102-107. Available at: <<https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/10.1162/pajj.2008.30.2.102>> [Accessed 24 Jan. 2018].
 - Watkinson, P. (2018). Staging Money: Theatre and Immateriality following the 2008 Financial Crisis. *Theatre Journal*, [online], 70.2, pp. 195-208. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1353/tj.2018.0027>> [Accessed 1 Aug. 2018].

Chapters in Books

- Angelaki, V. (2013). Introduction. In: V. Angelaki, ed., *Contemporary British Theatre: Breaking New Ground*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-8.
- Angelaki, V. (2013). Politics for the Middle Classes: Contemporary Audiences and the Violence of Now. In: V. Angelaki, ed., *Contemporary British Theatre: Breaking New Ground*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 57-78.
- Aston, E. (2013). Feeling the Loss of Feminism: Sarah Kane's *Blasted* and an Experiential Genealogy of Contemporary Women's Playwrighting. In: P. Farfan and L. Ferris, eds., *Contemporary Women Playwrights: Into the Twenty-First Century*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 17-34.
- Conte, T. (2006). Vocabolario teatrale. In: T. Conte, ed., *Le parole del teatro. Una guida per lo spettatore*, Torino: Einaudi, pp. 115-179.
- Fazzini, M. (2017). Wole Soyinka. In: M. Fazzini, *The Saying of It: conversations on literature and ideas with 13 contemporary English-language poets*. Pisa: ETS, pp. 76-86.

- Frank, K. and Lusin, C. (2017). Introduction: Current Debates and British Drama since 2000. In: K. Frank, and C.Lusin, eds., *Finance, Terror, and Science on Stage. Current Public Concerns in 21st Century British Drama*. Tübingen : Narr Franck Attempto, pp. 9-15.
- Gonnermann, A. (2017). Homo Homini Rhino Est: April De Angelis' *Wild East* (2005) and the Deconstruction of Responsibility in Corporate Culture. In: K. Frank, and C.Lusin, eds., *Finance, Terror, and Science on Stage. Current Public Concerns in 21st Century British Drama*. Tübingen : Narr Franck Attempto, pp. 101-123.
- Lusin, C. (2017). Surviving Boom and Bust: Finance, Responsibility, and the State of the World in Nicholas Pierpan's *You Can Still Make a Killing* (2012). In: K. Frank, and C.Lusin, eds., *Finance, Terror, and Science on Stage. Current Public Concerns in 21st Century British Drama*. Tübingen : Narr Franck Attempto, pp. 79-100.
- Megson, C. (2013). 'And I was struck still by time': Contemporary British Theatre and the Metaphysical Imagination. In: V. Angelaki, ed., *Contemporary British Theatre: Breaking New Ground*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 32-56.
- Shepherd, S. (2009). What they make. In: S. Shepherd, ed., *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Theatre*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 119-188.
- Shepherd, S. (2009). Why they do it. In: S. Shepherd, ed., *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Theatre*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 189-227.

Podcasts

- Goold, R., Theatre Voice (2009). *DIRECTOR RUPERT GOOLD ON ENRON*. [podcast]. Theatre Voice. Available at: <<http://www.theatrevoice.com/audio/director-rupert-goold-on-enron/>> [Accessed 22 Jan. 2018].
- Theatre Voice (2013a). *HOW TO PLAY MONEY: THE GAMESHOW — AND SURVIVE THE EXPERIENCE*. [podcast]. Theatre Voice. Available at: <<http://www.theatrevoice.com/audio/how-to-play-money-the-gameshow-and-survive-the-experience/>> [Accessed 28 Apr. 2018].
- Theatre Voice (2013b). *The Critics' Circle Centenary Conference: The Future of Criticism*. [podcast]. Theatre Voice. Available at: <<http://www.theatrevoice.com/audio/the-critics-circle-centenary-conference-the-future-of-criticism/>> [Accessed 15 Mar. 2018].
- Theatre Voice (2005). *REPUTATIONS: DAVID HARE (1/3)*. [podcast]. Theatre Voice. Available at: <<http://www.theatrevoice.com/audio/reputations-david-hare-13-michael-billington-richard-bo/>> [Accessed 15 Jun. 2018].

- Theatre Voice (2005). *REPUTATIONS: DAVID HARE (2/3)*. [podcast]. Theatre Voice. Available at: <<http://www.theatrevoice.com/audio/reputations-david-hare-23-michael-billington-richard-bo/>> [Accessed 15 Jun. 2018].
- Theatre Voice (2005). *REPUTATIONS: DAVID HARE (3/3)*. [podcast]. Theatre Voice. Available at: <<http://www.theatrevoice.com/audio/reputations-david-hare-33-qa/>> [Accessed 15 Jun. 2018].

Newspaper Articles

- Armstrong, J. (2009) Playwrights make drama out of global financial crisis. *Independent*, [online] Available at: <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/news/playwrights-make-drama-out-of-global-financial-crisis-1782524.html>> [Accessed 24 Jan. 2018].
- Lambert, R. (2010) Why David Hare is wrong about business. *Financial Times*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.ft.com/content/2417db1a-0386-11df-a601-00144feabdc0>> [Accessed 6 Jun. 2018].
- Theguardian.com (2012) Lucy Prebble: ‘Gaming is an artform just like theatre’. *The Guardian*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2012/feb/12/lucy-prebble-computer-games-playwright>> [Accessed 30 Aug. 2018].

Websites

- Anglistik.uni-freiburg.de (n.d.). Freytag’s Pyramid. [online] Basics of English Studies. Available at: <<http://www2.anglistik.uni-freiburg.de/intranet/englishbasics/DramaStructure02.htm>> [Accessed 14 Sep. 2018].
- Bushtheatre.co.uk, (2013). Money: The Gameshow. [online] Bush Theatre Official Website. Available at: <<https://www.bushtheatre.co.uk/event/money-the-game-show/>> [Accessed 28 Apr. 2018].
- Dramaonline.com, (2018). *Drama Online Official Website*. [online] Available at: <<http://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/>> [Accessed 18 Jun. 2018].
- Nationaltheatre.org, (2018). Lyttelton Theatre. [online] National Theatre Official Website. Available at: <<https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/your-visit/national-theatre-venues/lyttelton-theatre>> [Accessed 26 Jul. 2018].
- Playwrightsstudio.com, (2018). *Clare Duffy*. [online] Playwrights’ Studio Scotland. Available at: <<http://www.playwrightsstudio.co.uk/playwrights/clare-duffy.aspx>> [Accessed 28 Apr. 2018].
- Royalcourttheatre.com, (2018). Enron. [online]. Royal Court Theatre Official Website. Available at: <<https://royalcourttheatre.com/whats-on/enron-noel-coward-theatre-2/>> [Accessed 26 Jul. 2018].
- Royalcourttheatre.com, (2018). The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas. [online]. Royal Court Theatre Official Website. Available at:

- <<https://royalcourttheatre.com/whats-on/the-ritual-slaughter-of-gorge-mastromas/>> [Accessed 26 Jul. 2018].
- Royalcouththeatre.com, (2013). *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*. [online] Royal Court Theatre Official Website. Available at: <<https://royalcourttheatre.com/whats-on/the-ritual-slaughter-of-gorge-mastromas/>> [Accessed 28 Apr. 2018].
 - Thearches.co.uk, (2018). Money the Game Show. [online] The Arches Official Website. Available at: <<http://www.thearches.co.uk/events/arts/money-the-game-show>> [Accessed 24 Sep. 2018].
 - Unlimited.org.uk, (2018). MONEY the game show. A playful and politically sharp look at the roots of the 2008 financial crisis... [online] Unlimited Theatre Official Website. Available at: <<http://www.unlimited.org.uk/projects/money/>> [Accessed 14 Sep. 2018].
 - Uv.es, (2018). Outline for an analysis of a theatrical production. [online] Universitat de València Official Website. Available at: <<https://www.uv.es/tronch/stu/OutlineAnalysTheatrProd.html>> [Accessed 17 Jun. 2018].

Pdfs

- Lethbridge, S. and Mildorf, J. (2004). *Basics of English Studies: An introductory course for students of literary studies in English. Drama*. [pdf] Tübingen, Stuttgart and Freiburg: English departments of the Universities of Tübingen, Stuttgart and Freiburg. Available at: <<http://www2.anglistik.uni-freiburg.de/intranet/englishbasics/PDF/Drama.pdf>> [Accessed 17 Jun. 2018].
- Oxford Cambridge and RSA (2015). *DNA – Dennis Kelly. Delivery Guide*. [pdf] Cambridge: Oxford Cambridge and RSA. Available at: <<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/208645-dna-delivery-guide.pdf>> [Accessed 22 Jan. 2018].
- Pavis, P. (1985). *Theatre Analysis: Some Questions and a Questionnaire*. [pdf] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available at: <<https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/S0266464X00001573>> [Accessed 17 Jun. 2018].
- Robinson, M. (2012). *Enron. Study Guide*. Edited by Karen A. Callaway and Lara Goetsch. [pdf] Chicago: Timeline Theatre Company. Available at: <https://timelinetheatre.com/app/uploads/Enron_StudyGuide.pdf> [Accessed 22 Jan. 2018].
- Theatre Projects (n.d.). *Stage Directions*. [pdf] Theatre Projects. Available at: <http://theatreprojects.com/files/pdf/Resources_IdeasInfo_stagedirections.pdf> [Accessed 9 Aug. 2018].
- Wheeler, K. (2004). Freytag's Pyramid. [pdf] web.cn.edu. Available at: <<https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Freytag.pdf>> [Accessed 14 Sep. 2018].

Films Quoted

- *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013). [film] USA: Martin Scorsese.

Interviews

- Cavendish, D. with Featherstone, V. and Kelly, D. (2013). *Vicky Featherstone and Dennis Kelly, interview*. Available at: <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/10263020/Vicky-Featherstone-and-Dennis-Kelly-interview.html>> [Accessed 1 Aug. 2018].
- Cavendish, D. with Prebble, L. (2009). *Lucy Prebble interview for Enron*. Available at: <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-features/6905597/Lucy-Prebble-interview-for-Enron.html>> [Accessed 1 Aug. 2018].
- Gee, A. with Prebble, L. (2010). *Drama! Music! Financial Shenanigans!*. Available at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/21/theater/21prebble.html>> [Accessed 30 Aug. 2018].
- Kellaway, K. with Hare, D. and Graham, J. (2018). *State of play: David Hare and James Graham talk drama and politics*. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/may/06/david-hare-james-graham-drama-politics-labour-party>> [Accessed 15 Jun. 2018].
- Royalcourttheatre (2013). *Dennis Kelly & Vicky Featherstone interview*. [video]. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FmX30CoyvA>> [Accessed 1 Aug. 2019].
- Turner, L. and Duffy, C. (2013). *MONEY the gameshow: interview with Clare Duffy*. Available at: <<https://www.ayoungentheatre.com/money-the-gameshow-clare-duffy-bush-theatre/>> [Accessed 28 Apr. 2018].

Encyclopedia Articles

- Conversi, L.W. and Sewall, R.B. (n.d). Tragedy. [online] In: *Britannica*. Available at: <<https://www.britannica.com/art/tragedy-literature>> [Accessed 14 Sep. 2018].
- Pressacco, F. (2012). Black-Scholes, formula di. [online] In: *Treccani. Dizionario di Economia e Finanza*. Available at: <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/formula-di-black-scholes_%28Dizionario-di-Economia-e-Finanza%29/> [Accessed 18 Jun. 2018].
- Treccani.it (2012). Bolla speculativa. [online] In: *Treccani. Dizionario di Economia e Finanza*. Available at: <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bolla-speculativa_%28Lessico-del-XXI-Secolo%29/> [Accessed 23 Sep. 2018].

- Wessler, H. and Freudenthaler, R. (2018). Public Sphere. [online] In: *Oxford Bibliographies*. Available at: <<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756841/obo-9780199756841-0030.xml>> [Accessed 7 Jan. 2018].

Online Images or Videos

- Davenport, R. (2014). *MONEY The Gameshow 2014*. [images]. <<http://www.unlimited.org.uk/projects/money/>> [Accessed 28 Apr. 2018].
- Guardian Culture (2017a). *'Time to Leave' by David Hare, performed by Kristin Scott Thomas*. [video]. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvaG98Y6qbc>> [Accessed Jul. 2018].
- Guardian Culture (2017b). *Brexit Shorts: Burn by James Graham, starring Joanna Scanlan*. [video]. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UF7tuQzIYPI>> [Accessed Jul. 2018].
- Harlan, M. (2013). *Pippa Haywood and Tom Brooke in The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*. [image]. Available at: <<http://www.sierz.co.uk/blog/the-ritual-slaughter-of-gorge-mastromas/>> [Accessed 22 Jan. 2018].
- Kjtheatredriary.com (2010). *The Power of Yes*. [image]. Available at: <<http://www.kjtheatredriary.com/2010/01/power-of-yes.html>> [Accessed 31 Aug. 2018].
- Postcardgods.blogspot.com (2009). *The Power of Yes – National Theatre*. [image]. Available at: <<http://postcardgods.blogspot.com/2009/10/power-of-yes-national-theatre.html>> [Accessed 31 Aug. 2018].
- NationalTheatre (2010). *David Hare's The Power of Yes – Audience reaction*. [image]. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JF0KhVOQ0gw>> [Accessed 31 Aug. 2018].
- Muir, A. (2009). *David Hare's The Power of Yes*. [image]. Available at: <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/6267896/The-Power-of-Yes-at-the-National-Theatre-review.html>> [Accessed 31 Aug. 2018].
- Pinterest (n.d.). *Enron by Lucy Prebble*. [image]. Available at: <<https://www.pinterest.it/pin/834503005925641237/>> [Accessed 31 Aug. 2018].
- List.co.uk (2010). *Lucy Prebble's play Enron deals with the financial crisis*. [image]. Available at: <<https://www.list.co.uk/article/30504-lucy-prebbles-play-enron-deals-with-financial-crisis/>> [Accessed 31 Aug. 2018].
- Danhutton.wordpress.com (2010). *"Enron" by Lucy Prebble*. [image]. Available at: <<https://danhutton.wordpress.com/2010/04/30/enron-by-lucy-prebble/>> [Accessed 31 Aug. 2018].
- Independent.co.uk (2010). *Enron play flops in the US as art imitates life*. [image]. Available at: <[130](https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-

</div>
<div data-bbox=)

- entertainment/theatre-dance/news/enron-play-flops-in-us-as-art-imitates-life-1964509.html> [Accessed 31 Aug. 2018].
- Corbis, R.J. (n.d.). *UK - 'Enron' Performance in London Samuel West as Jeffrey Skilling with artists of the company in Lucy Prebble's 'Enron' directed by Rupert Goold at the Noel Coward Theatre in London.* [image]. Available at: <<https://www.gettyimages.ca/detail/news-photo/samuel-west-as-jeffrey-skilling-with-artists-of-the-company-news-photo/539747510#/samuel-west-as-jeffrey-skilling-with-artists-of-the-company-in-lucy-picture-id539747510>> [Accessed 31 Aug. 2018].
 - Postcardgods.blogspot.com (2013). *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas.* [image]. Available at: <<http://postcardgods.blogspot.com/2013/10/the-ritual-slaughter-of-gorge-mastromas.html>> [Accessed 31 Aug. 2018].
 - Variety.com (2013). *London Legit Review: 'The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas'.* [image]. Available at: <<https://variety.com/2013/legit/reviews/london-legit-review-the-ritual-slaughter-of-gorge-mastromas-1200610756/>> [Accessed 19 Sep. 2018].
 - Franks, E. (2013). *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas by Dennis Kelly at The Royal Court Theatre.* [image]. Available at: <<https://elliottfranks.photoshelter.com/image/I0000ioEqdtVyhic>> [Accessed 19 Sep. 2018].
 - Harlan, M. (2013). *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas.* [image]. Available at: <<http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/the-ritual-sla-royal-court-the-9380>> [Accessed 19 Sep. 2018].
 - TheArches (2011). *Money...The Game Show.* [image]. Available at: <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/thearches/5597864717/>> [Accessed 24 Sep. 2018].
 - Untheatre (2013). *MONEY the game show.* [image]. Available at: <<http://www.unlimited.org.uk/projects/money/>> [Accessed 24 Sep. 2018].
 - Untheatre (2013). *"Money The Gameshow".* [image]. Available at: <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/untheatre/8513643312/in/photolist-adYcG8-awLuFa-7d5YNM-7d9QVs-dSo4i3-dYdWrx-dSo4ds-dYdX5B-dYdY3g-dYdTPT-dYjBWw-dYjDxE-dShtt2-dYjBAs-dYjB9N-nL9FWH-9eLBm4-GVRgnR-4Uatd-V57f73-EzWhk6-7d5Ywe-LcG4J3-b8MX4a-87cU45-BANg6m-LVWZBy-a>> [Accessed 24 Sep. 2018].
 - Untheatre (2013). *MONEY the game show.* [image]. Available at: <<http://www.unlimited.org.uk/projects/money/>> [Accessed 24 Sep. 2018].
 - Untheatre (2013). *"Money The Gameshow".* [image]. Available at: <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/untheatre/8445320203/in/photolist-adYcG8-awLuFa-7d5YNM-7d9QVs-dSo4i3-dYdWrx-dSo4ds-dYdX5B-dYdY3g-dYdTPT-dYjBWw-dYjDxE-dShtt2-dYjBAs-dYjB9N-nL9FWH-9eLBm4-GVRgnR-4Uatd-V57f73-EzWhk6-7d5Ywe-LcG4J3-b8MX4a-87cU45-BANg6m-LVWZBy-a>> [Accessed 24 Sep. 2018].
 - Untheatre (2013). *"Money The Gameshow".* [image]. Available at: <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/untheatre/8512520677/in/photolist-adYcG8->

awLuFa-7d5YNM-7d9QVs-dSo4i3-dYdWrx-dSo4ds-dYdX5B-dYdY3g-dYdTPT-dYjBWw-dYjDxE-dSht2-dYjBAs-dYjB9N-nL9FWH-9eLBm4-GVRgnR-4Uatd-V57f73-EzWhk6-7d5Ywe-LcG4J3-b8MX4a-87cU45-BANg6m-LVWZBy-axC4GF-UxtWh1-6DP78a-UxtWsb-5gfZH7-66GJPV-UxtWnG-dYdWQa-6ntuNH-q5A5W-UxtWAN-5dqws8-pv3N3h-oyu7d2-DRH1HE-V57f5j-Yzy61-V57fa9-YXw2eb-8yYRrM-9A8Z8g-NEgPp5-6FdKai/> [Accessed 24 Sep. 2018].

- Untheatre (2013). "*Money The Gameshow*". [image]. Available at: <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/untheatre/8446409294/in/photolist-adYcG8-awLuFa-7d5YNM-7d9QVs-dSo4i3-dYdWrx-dSo4ds-dYdX5B-dYdY3g-dYdTPT-dYjBWw-dYjDxE-dSht2-dYjBAs-dYjB9N-nL9FWH-9eLBm4-GVRgnR-4Uatd-V57f73-EzWhk6-7d5Ywe-LcG4J3-b8MX4a-87cU45-BANg6m-LVWZBy-axC4GF-UxtWh1-6DP78a-UxtWsb-5gfZH7-66GJPV-UxtWnG-dYdWQa-6ntuNH-q5A5W-UxtWAN-5dqws8-pv3N3h-oyu7d2-DRH1HE-V57f5j-Yzy61-V57fa9-YXw2eb-8yYRrM-9A8Z8g-NEgPp5-6FdKai/>>> [Accessed 24 Sep. 2018].
- Untheatre (2013). "*Money The Gameshow*". [image]. Available at: <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/untheatre/8512531623/in/photolist-adYcG8-awLuFa-7d5YNM-7d9QVs-dSo4i3-dYdWrx-dSo4ds-dYdX5B-dYdY3g-dYdTPT-dYjBWw-dYjDxE-dSht2-dYjBAs-dYjB9N-nL9FWH-9eLBm4-GVRgnR-4Uatd-V57f73-EzWhk6-7d5Ywe-LcG4J3-b8MX4a-87cU45-BANg6m-LVWZBy-axC4GF-UxtWh1-6DP78a-UxtWsb-5gfZH7-66GJPV-UxtWnG-dYdWQa-6ntuNH-q5A5W-UxtWAN-5dqws8-pv3N3h-oyu7d2-DRH1HE-V57f5j-Yzy61-V57fa9-YXw2eb-8yYRrM-9A8Z8g-NEgPp5-6FdKai/>>> [Accessed 24 Sep. 2018].
- AcesFullofSeven (2006). Enron Commercial – Change. [video]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_NxYUpLE6A> [Accessed 31 Aug. 2018].