

Connoisseurs of twilight: wrestling with writing ruins.

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Where have ruins taken me? To Mike Pearson's body in *Flesh* 1974 and *Flesh* 2014. To Theatre Studies student Peter Lorentz asking his parents to send him to the new United World College in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina and to his subsequent performances in this city as it rebuilds itself. To a bullet hole in a wall in Mostar. To Karim Wasfi, conductor of the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra playing the cello in the debris of sites of explosions across Baghdad. To the annual re-enactment of the Battle of Hastings performed by 600 people dressed in the uniforms of C11th infantrymen in the ruins of Battle Abbey in Sussex. To St Peter's Seminary at Kilmahew down the road in Cardross. To the memory of my mother urging us to leave a ruined farmhouse near the village where I grew up 50 miles from London in about 1955. 'This is an unhappy house' she said. 'I don't like it here. We must all leave'. To Palestinian youths using the ruined buildings destroyed in the seven-week Israeli offensive of 2014 - in Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip for practicing their Parkour skills. To Lake Bala in Wales to the ruined lives of the Minister Emyr Elias and his wife Gwendolyn in WG Sebald's novel, *Austerlitz*, and to the drowned village of Llanwddyn. To Peter Brook's Bouffe du Nord in Paris and to the Mahabharata in various (semi) ruined sites across the world. To the Villa Grimaldi in Santiago de Chile where tour guide Pedro Matta leads people around the building which served as a torture centre for General Pinochet's secret forces. To a book by Peter Davidson called the 'Last of the Light: about twilight'. Twilight I feel is the light of the ruin. Twilight is a ruin's mood statement. To the writings of Doreen Massey who has helped to think more clearly about places of ruin. And to many other locations too.

I think this is the 3rd talk I have given in the last 18 months on ruins, or rather on my attempts to research and start writing a book provisionally entitled *Performing Ruins* – part of a wider series

edited by Dee Heddou and Sally Mackay called *Performing Landscapes*. In planning this I have endeavoured not to cover the same ground as at either the CCA symposium last September or the *Only Human* event in the autumn of 2014. In particular, I do not propose to say anything directly about *Ruin porn* or *Ruinenlist* although these may emerge tangentially when I speak of the romantic allure of ruins. They may also come up in conversation. Also I do not propose to show you any images of ruins, except when there is a clear connection to performance or theatre – or to twilight.

SHOW TWILIGHT IMAGES

What I want to do tonight is to share with you a number of challenges I'm currently wrestling with as I begin to write the book, and these I've now begun to realise are in no way dissimilar to the early stages of any large research project. Doreen Massey wrote that 'a lot of enquiry consists in reformulating the initiating question'. As my project remains an enquiry into the relationship between the apparently unproblematical term 'ruin' and theatre and performance – for this is the 'contract' of engagement required in participating in Dee and Sally's series – in Massey's terms the initiating question might have been something like: 'what modes of performance and what dramaturgical paradigms exist in sites of ruination?'. So far so good. But actually not that simple at all.

What I have found myself doing over the last 18 months has been an unfinished process of 'reformulating the initiating question' – testing and playing with the boundaries and elasticity of the project, of problematizing the apparently self-evident question of 'what is a ruin', of identifying and weighing up the range of lenses and perspectives I might draw upon to understand and position the phenomena of contemporary ruination, and reflecting on how to apply the conceptual perspectives of theatre and performance studies to ruins and their ever increasing role within cultural production.

Beyond these particular issues in the study of ruin and ruination I find myself within an endless and (happily) unresolvable interplay betwixt and between at least 4 dualisms or binaries:

- The intuitive and the analytical
- The rational and the romantic
- The affective and the cognitive
- The associative and the deductive

Now, of course, as in most cases, such binaries are highly unproductive if ruthlessly pursued and applied as categorical options or choices, but are helpful as conditional, contingent and temporary 'parking spaces' to reflect on questions such as these:

- How do we know ruins?
- How do ruins work?
- What do ruins do?
- What explains ruins?
- What are ruins made of?

What I want to do in this talk is to share some thoughts and uncertainties around:

- Firstly: What ruins are and how we might understand their qualities and the way they work in the context of my project.
- Secondly: Consider some of the contextual factors which offer explanations as to why writing and thinking about ruins over the last two decades has become at worst an academic 'industry' and production line, or at best a stimulating site of enquiry, felicitously drawing upon different disciplines, art forms and innovative ways of thinking and seeing.
- Thirdly: How contemporary performance has chosen to engage with ruins and how the lens of Performance Studies might help us to understand how ruins work and how we work in ruins.

What are ruins? How do we know ruins?

Mytho/psycho geographer, Phil Smith, in an essay for the PR issue on Ruin and Ruination

schematically differentiates ruins from (in quotation marks) 'ruins'. Phil says:

'Ruins' are what remain when ruination is temporarily and superficially removed from ruins – those strange places where the grass is grown in the moat, visitors largely ignore the materials in their hunger for signs, where wooden walkways are constructed for apparent fear that folk may become infected by the thirteenth century. (PR: 67)

What Phil is suggesting here is that once ruins become 'ruins' (quote marks) they become part of a cultural and socio-economic package with myriad ensuing expectations and behaviours. He is, however, at pains not to valorise (or indeed romanticise) ruins over 'ruins'. They are 'no more authentic or legitimate than 'ruins', nor 'ruins' any less performative or vital than ruins. They are both layers that exist at different strengths and thicknesses in almost any site of ruination.' (PR: 67)

Hold on to notions of '**layering**' and '**thickness**' as I proceed.

Ruin as concrete noun, ruin as transitive verb, and ruination as abstract noun. Schematically and whimsically we might divide the drivers of ruination into three (highly porous) and rather ridiculous categories: human agency, weather and the laws of entropy. Perhaps, at first glance a ruin appears fixed and static, marking the almost total demise of its original function. The reality of a ruin, however, is in its state of movement, of degeneration, of becoming and of final disappearance. From one prosaic perspective, any building or material object which lacks a programme of maintenance and repair is on the road to ruin. Failure to mend a leaking gutter, to replace a roof tile or to re-point crumbling mortar hastens the process of ruination. Thus, from such a perspective, as buildings are constructed so they are falling into ruin. As an aside, a number of architects and planners, including Sir John Soane and Albert Speer, designed buildings particularly with a sense of how they would look as ruins. Hitler's architect Albert Speer's plans for building Berlin for the 1000 year Reich were

designed so that in their ruination they would resemble the ruins of ancient Rome. Hitler and Speer visited Rome in 1940 partly to study the Coliseum and Hitler had pictures of Roman ruins hanging on the walls of his chancellery in Berlin.

However, even this ruin sketch proposes but one pathway to ruination, but one that has been – and remains – dominant in literary and artistic consciousness over centuries. And this is the model of slow and irreversible decline, of crumbling, of neglect, of an absence of human agency (e.g. repair and maintenance) and of entropy. This paradigm of slow but inexorable ruination lies at the centre of the melancholy romance of ruins, an existential sense of loss and sadness engendered through contemplation of human mortality and material decay, a reminder that in the end everything turns to dust. Here the ruin engenders a meditative disposition and passivity in the face of an inevitability that may only be deflected or delayed, but can never finally be circumvented. Of course, the narrative(s) which position ruination as natural and inevitable, where *culture* (or the humanly constructed) returns and disappears back into *nature* have always been a limited and insufficient explanation of ruin causality, even if it has been accorded hegemonic status as the dominant framework in which to engage and approach a ruin. The apparent ‘naturalness’ of becoming ruin is also a highly partial account in so far as it implicitly seems to preclude human agency as a significant explanatory factor in ruination; as if the seductively and aesthetically pleasing ruined abbey or castle in question arrived at this state without the helping hand of, for example, church policy-makers, medieval power struggles or murderous conflicts. Beyond the forces of gravitational pull and material decay there is little that is ‘natural’ in ruinous castles, abbeys and stately homes. Here the first impulse to ruin is triggered usually by an inability to keep pace with the exorbitantly high costs of maintenance (even in 16th/17th century Europe), political and economic change and brutal and deadly conflicts between families, classes, religions or nation states.

This acknowledgment that ruin and ruination is processual, a building on the move, in decline towards to dust and rubble, poses awkward questions in relation both to structures whose ruination

has purposefully been arrested, fixed and frozen (Phil Smith's 'ruins' in quotation marks) and to the vast majority of contemporary ruins produced by the decisions and consequences of capitalism or destruction through warfare.

What Doreen Massey says about place is pertinent here. For 'place' we might easily substitute 'ruin':

For me places are articulations of 'natural' and social relations, relations that are not fully contained within the place itself. So, first, places are not closed or bounded – which politically lays the ground for critiques of exclusivity. Second, places are not 'given' – they are always in open ended process. They are in that sense 'events'. Third, they and their identity will always be contested.'

I like and want to hold on to the idea of the ruin as 'event' suggesting as it does a lack of fixity, a porosity of boundaries, an acknowledgment that ruined places are the result of human agency and that ruins themselves have agency within them.

The ruin and 'not-ruin' tension I find compelling and complex. And timely, as increasingly the desire not to let 'sleeping ruins lie' but to 'do' something with or to them seems an increasingly dominant impulse. An impulse with many different and often conflicting motivations.

So, how do we know a ruin? For sure Massey offers a hugely important clue, namely about the 'social relations' which may be revealed in any study of a ruin through the perspectives of cultural geography, archaeology, sociology, history, ethnography and performance studies. However much as I am drawn to these knowledges I wonder whether they tell – or can ever tell - the whole story. By themselves, however smart the analysis, these perspectives may tell us little about what the ruin in question is actually like. Archaeology probably comes closest to answering such a question but often does not reveal much about the sheer materiality of the ruin at the particular stage one encounters

it. In the presentation I gave on ruins for the **Only Human** conference in 2014 and in the essay I wrote with Hayden Lorimer I posed some question we might wish to ask a ruin. In relation to its material – and maybe also immaterial - composition we might wish to pose questions like these:

- What are the dominant materials still to be found in this ruin?
- Are they hard or soft to touch?
- How would you describe the relationship between these materials?
- What senses does your site most trigger? Colour, touch, smell, sound ...?
- Does the ruin have a smell to it? Does this smell change during different times of the day and in different weather conditions?
- What is the palette of colours in this ruin?
- What is the light of this ruin?
- What kind of atmospheres does your site generate?
- What is revealed by the ruination of this place which would not be evident if it was 'whole'?
- What are the 'force fields' of this ruin?

There are many more. You will note that I enjoy posing questions.

This mode of thinking is relatively new to me and draws loosely, as many of you will know, on some of the ideas in Jane Bennet's book, *Vibrant Matter* (2010). Theatre and performance studies have, of course, long tried to understand spatial dynamics and the semiotic charge of props, materials and objects, all stuff which contributes to our *sensing* or (differently) our *reading* of both quotidian life events and activities performed 'on stage' with intention and deliberation. Whilst my book does not embrace Bennett's vibrant materialism as a dominant analytical paradigm, it nonetheless inflects my investigation into what is going on when ruins host performance and theatre events. Any dramaturgy of ruins must surely engage with their materiality in all its complexity as 'actant', that is to say as a non-human signifier of meaning production. Contemporary theatre analysis uses the concept of 'actant' to denote human and non-human actors in the complex set of relationships

which comprise a performance event. An 'actant' therefore has the potential always to do things, to produce an effect and to change the course of any particular set of events.

So, the questions which I enjoy asking of ruins are predicated upon the need to give ruins a voice, to let them answer back and even to ascribe some sense of agency to them. Many of the questions I shall be asking of the various performance pieces – dance, theatre, music and live art – which have taken place in ruins concern the kind(s) of dramaturgical relationship they have with the chosen site. How do we activate a ruin through performance, make it matter, make it signify far more than merely as an aesthetic stage backdrop?

Finally I would stress – and I hope this is obvious – that the perspectives offered by a Doreen Massey or a Jane Bennett for me are not mutually exclusive. I'm not interested in weighing up their relative value, but I certainly feel that knowing the 'matter' – the stuff – of a ruin feeds into the knowing of a ruin in terms of its social, cultural and political context and history. The forensic material investigation into a ruined tower block following an earthquake will tell us not only about the original level of investment in that building but about the value placed on the lives of the people who inhabited it. Evidence of locked fire doors in a burned out clothing factory speak plangently of the relations between workers, managers and owners who once worked there.

Why this preoccupation with ruins?

I want to turn now to offer some thoughts/reflections on why the study of ruins – or preoccupation with them - has become relatively ubiquitous over the last two decades. I think there are different orders of explanation and I want briefly to suggest these to you now. I am well aware that I am part of this cultural phenomenon and what I describe, to a greater or lesser extent, offers witness to why I am standing here now and talking to you about ruins.

I think that there are broadly two overlapping and interconnecting fields of explanation. One concerns the ruin object itself and the manner which that object is brought to our attention and communicated to us. The other concerns the cultural and intellectual milieu – or to use Raymond Williams' term, 'structure of feeling' – which we construct and which in turn constructs us, shapes and directs our interests and our perceptions, and which valorises what appears to be significant or unimportant.

In respect to the first field of explanation whilst it is very debatable whether there are more ruins on the planet than there were 50, 70, 100, 200 years ago it seems clear that their existence - their presence - is brought to our attention more insistently and more rapidly than was ever previously the case. The near instantaneous transmission of news brings us almost immediate perception and awareness of ruined buildings in an Ankara bus station as the result of a suicide bomber. Material devastation occasioned by an earthquake or a tsunami appears on our TV screens as it is happening through the medium of an iPhone camera. Images of the planes flying into the north and south towers of the World Trade Centre are forever imprinted on our retinas. And here it is not just the speed with which we witnessed the destruction of the Twin Towers, but the repetitive ubiquity of the play-back which marks us.

Within this field we need also to register the impact of globalisation in the post WW2 period and the rapidity with factories, offices and other work places are closed permanently – when demand (allegedly) falls or disappears - or relocated to other parts of the world when production, distribution and sales costs are cheaper. The 'global village' phenomenon in terms of communication systems means that capital is vastly more mobile and nimble today than it was even 3 decades ago. Amongst the non-human consequences of this, enabled and propelled by neo-liberal political regimes of the day, are the industrial ruins of a Detroit, of a Redcar or a Motherwell, the coal fields of a Yorkshire, an Ayrshire or a Fife and so on and so on.

Another dimension of globalisation which, in part, feeds off the phenomenon I have just described is the massive increase in tourism both national and international. Turning ruins into sites for leisure and tourist consumption is a complex and multi-faceted process, but for our purposes this evening it is enough to note that whether it be the sites of the frozen ruins of classical Greek or Italian amphitheatres, or the trails – death tourism - to visit places of horror such as death camps in Poland, Cambodia, Rwanda, Chile or Argentina the ruin visit has become an integral part of the tourist economy. Culturally, whether these visits are to celebrate the glories of classical civilisation or pilgrimages to pay respect to the lives of relatives murdered in Auschwitz or the Villa Grimaldi in Santiago de Chile, the ruin becomes an agent of or shrine to memory. The ruin as a memorial, as a way to lament rather than celebrate the past has a long tradition. Silke Arnold de Simine writing in the PR issue on ruins puts it like this:

The ruin encapsulates an intriguing ambiguity in our relationship not only with nature and culture, but also with time. In the ruin the past has not endured, and yet it has not been eradicated either ... it has left a trace, a mark, which is why ruins are often seen as haunted and uncanny. Like ghosts they are unfinished business in one way or another ... the unfamiliar familiar which cannot be repressed. (95)

Finally, in this part of my talk I want to propose two other – connected – reasons why in academia, and perhaps beyond, there has been a burgeoning of ruin scholarship and research. Firstly I want to suggest that preoccupation with failure or what Sara Jane Bailes calls the ‘poetics of failure’ might also lead us to ruins and ruination. Bailes, in her 2011 book *Performance Theatre and the Poetics of Failure* is writing around theatre and performance and particularly on Beckett, Forced Entertainment and Goat Island. In my chapter on ruins *in* theatre and drama I shall be writing on Beckett and FE as case studies of ruination in performance. At one obvious level a ruin may be considered a failure – a failure of its original purpose and function, a material failure as steel buckles, wood rots, concrete degrades, pipes burst and roof slates break and fall away. Through another prism the shelled railway

station, mosque, parliament building or supermarket is a consequence of the failure, one might argue, of diplomacy, negotiation and non-violent forms of conflict resolution. I should add, however, to the perpetrators of the bombing this destruction is 'success' or at least a form of achievement and accomplishment. But beyond such rather literal manifestations of failure the mood music of ruins articulates and arguably generates dispositions and states of mind associated with failure – atmospheres of melancholy, loss, yearning, sadness, nostalgia, belatedness and mortality. I am very aware that these terms and emotional states are the vocabulary and language of romanticism. We may wish to discuss this later but suffice it to say that I am very resistant to dismissing this as a completely exhausted and counter-productive mode of approaching ruins. As Raymond Williams says in his book 'The Country and the City' (12) 'Nostalgia, it can be said, is universal and persistent; only other men's nostalgias offend.' I want to acknowledge the affective in ruins, play with it, try to understand from whence it comes and then move on somewhere else. For me the affective and romance of ruins is as good a starting point as many – but nonetheless a point of departure, one to be checked out from time to time and not a conclusion or terminus.

My other point regarding academic and intellectual excitement with ruins at this particular juncture relates to the increased reach, elasticity and porosity of academic disciplines over the last three decades. I am hesitant to invoke the mantra of cross-disciplinarity here as it is too often merely rhetoric and a gloss to cover good intentions rather than lived practice. As I hope my paper has so far indicated, the study of ruin and ruination is clearly not the exclusive prerogative of any one discipline. Indeed knowing and understanding ruins absolutely requires different lenses and angles of incidence. As theatre and performance studies embrace site, the object and landscape as proper subjects for teaching and research and as, for example, geography and cultural studies begin to employ the schema of performance and the performative to approach ruins so such alliances and interactions – however conditional and hesitant – become more and more plausible and potentially rewarding. As Pearson and Shanks (2001) have shown the dialogue and collaboration between the

archaeologist and the performance practitioner-academic reaps rich rewards when applied to site, landscape and performance.

Performance, theatre and ruins

I want to conclude this paper by reviewing how I will draw upon the interconnected fields of performance and theatre studies to understand not only how live performance takes place in ruins, but also how ruins are agents, generators and enablers of performance. Broadly speaking I will organise the material in three ways:

- Consider how ruin and ruination appear as themes, moods, worlds and behaviours in existing drama and theatre. This will constitute one chapter in the book.
- Identify, map and reflect upon the wide modalities of live performance which take place in sites of ruin and dereliction. These will largely focus upon theatre, performance and live art but will also include dance and music.
- Identify a bewildering range of activities and behaviours which take place in and around ruins which constitute performance and/or the performative. Although these are events which largely do **not** have the intention of being theatre or other modes of performance constructed dramaturgically **for** an audience they may well be ‘theatrical’ and bleed into the taxonomies of live performance identified above.

Let me briefly take each of these in turn and in so doing share with you the rather startling and rich array of activities I have before me.

Ruin/ruination in drama. I must thank my TS colleagues who have provided me with a number of really interesting examples which I will be following up in due course. From the outset I have known that I want this chapter to focus on the work of **Samuel Beckett** and **Forced Entertainment** whilst

mapping in less detail a range of other examples. Beckett's work is arguably 'ruinous' from beginning to end. The bleak setting of *Waiting for Godot* or the apparently post-apocalyptic location – admittedly often assumed by interpreters of the play and not stated by Beckett himself – of *Endgame* gesture to a world in ruins. Indeed we know that Beckett is writing his work for theatre literally in the ruins of post-war Europe and is existentially deeply influenced by the catastrophe of WW2. Krapp in *Krapp's last Tape* surveys the ruins of his own life, often with a wry humour. **QUOTE KRAPP.** Carl suggests that in Beckett ruination is imposed by the sculpting of time – 'his obsession' says Carl 'with the perpetual and interminable elapsing of time'. *Footfalls* shows a dress in a 'tangle of tatters' and in *Play* three characters are in a ruinous triangular relationship of love and desire trapped in urns up to their necks.

In many ways I have long regarded FE as inheriting the mantle of Beckett. Certainly much of their work speaks – never directly but nonetheless distinctly – of growing up and living in the ruins of Thatcher's Britain, the ruined detritus of the party or club at 5.00am in the morning, the ruins of lost hopes or of screwed up love affairs, the paradoxical ruins of theatre which the company wish to escape but are always pulled back to, a ruinous theatricality.

Beyond SB and FE I have been pointed to:

- The beginning of Heiner Muller's *Hamletmachine* played out in front of the metaphorical ruins of Europe. In Muller's *Tractor* we find the idea that 'Europa is a ruin, in the ruins the dead are not counted' (Thank you Cara)
- In Brecht's *Mother Courage* we are faced with the ruins of the 30 Years War.
- Helene Cixous's play *Le Paradire* she paints a landscape of waste and ruins.
- Suspect Culture's *Candide 2000* with a David Greig script is set in the ruins of a bombed out shopping mall.
- Chekhov constructs a world where often the landed classes perceive they are facing ruin or ruinous times. *Uncle Vanya* is preoccupied with wasted hope and ruined lives. The character,

Vanya's heart-breaking closing lines of returning to 'life on the flat' and Sonya's great speech of resignation suggest, if not ruin, then an overwhelming sense of wastedness.

- And much more besides.

Theatre and Performance in ruins

The challenge I face here is the sheer multiplicity of examples I have already traced across different parts of the world. I am faced with a diversity of dramaturgies from the re-enactment of battles in and around ruined castles, through promenade performances which display and reveal a ruin's history to devised work which engages through dramaturgical complexity and seriousness with the life and meaning of the ruin in question. Here I can only offer you a few examples of this rich diversity of work, all of which warrants investigation but not all of which I personally find particularly of interest. As a theoretical framework for positioning these within the landscape of theatre outwith the proscenium arch or black box studio I reference Fiona Wilkie's taxonomy of *site-sympathetic*, *site-generic* and *site-specific*. Wilkie, of course, admits that these are rarely distinct and discrete categories.

At one end of the spectrum we find the culturally startling phenomenon of the re-enactment. For example, I read on the English Heritage website that "On 15/16 October this year 2016 English Heritage will re-stage the Battle of Hastings to commemorate the 950th anniversary of this event". This re-staging will be in the grounds of the ruined Battle Abbey in Sussex. We are enjoined to:

Buy tickets for this event online today and receive 10% off!

Re-live the atmosphere and tension 950 years on, as more than 600 soldiers clash in this special anniversary Battle of Hastings.

Witness the action on the date that changed history and immerse yourself in medieval life.

An action packed and entertaining event for all the family.

Historic Scotland for 2016 invites us to displays of 'spectacular jousting' at Linlithgow Palace and 'over a 100 performers bring history to life at Dumbarton Castle'. Even closer to home the Glasgow Vikings have been '**Bringing history to life for over 25 years'** Their website tells us that **"We pride ourselves on our skills both on and off the battlefield. We regularly train in a variety of weapons, from dagger to dane axe, spear to seax and most in between. We also have a fully certified school visiting team"**.

The ambiguity of the word 'certified' is interesting here!

Whether or not such events are to our taste they deserve to be taken seriously in the spirit that popular cultural forms are no less worthy of intellectual investigation and thought than those we might place in the category of high or experimental art.

Further along the continuum we can encounter, for example, of Shakespeare plays performed in ruined castles and abbeys. This image of *Anthony and Cleopatra* performed in a ruined Trappist monastery in Winnipeg, Canada speaks volumes for an apparent lack of serious dramaturgical engagement with the material reality of this ruin. In Wilkie's terminology I would probably place this within the 'site-sympathetic' category although from this image it is stretching credulity to believe that this ruined site offers anything of dramaturgical worth beyond vague senses of mood and atmosphere.

In a perhaps more interesting variation on this we would want to note the various performances of Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* in dilapidated or ruinous buildings across Europe and N America. Beyond this we might also remember that when Brook left the UK in the late 1960s it was to the ruined theatre of the Bouffes du Nord in Paris that he encamped and where his company has remained ever since.

("Brook's Mahabharata in the Tramway, Glasgow: it might be interesting to look briefly at the range of sites Brook's CICT reanimated and employed during the world tour of the Mahabharata, the

nature of which – and the company's approach to and 'treatment' of these sites – is pertinent here (e.g. the abandoned quarries in Avignon, Athens, Perth, Adelaide; the ruined Majestic Theatre in New York; etc.) – as well as Brook's reanimation of the abandoned/ruined theatre, Les Bouffes du Nord in Paris, which was the company's base for over 30 years.)

BROOK IMAGES: BOUFFES DU NORD, MAJESTIC IN NY & TRAMWAY

At the furthest end of the scale from re-enactments we can find many examples of work sometimes explicitly and self-consciously theatre or performance and at the other end where distinctions between quotidian activity or behaviour and explicit performance are deliberately burred and rendered uncertain. I give you one stark example.

The Villa Grimaldi and its surrounding estate in Santiago de Chile has a 200 year history but today it is classified as a 'Peace Park' and a site which explicitly commemorate the place's more recent history as a torture centre for Pinochet's secret police. Some of the estate remains in a ruinous condition and the rest has been rebuilt and converted to a museum and a place which invites reflection, contemplation and a recognition of the need for cultural memory. Performance Studies scholar and activist, Diana Taylor, has written about this and the typologies of performance it explicitly or unwittingly engenders. Taylor calls Villa Grimaldi a 'dark ruin'. On entering the main building a man, Pedro Matta appears and provides what simplistically we would call a guided tour of the site. Matta repeats this tour almost exactly on each occasion even to the detail of crying at the memorial wall – see slide. Matta informs visitors that 4500 people were tortured here by Pinochet's forces and that 226 of these were 'disappeared' - usually murdered – between 1973 and 1979. Matta talks at first impersonally in the third person and at a certain point in the tour reveals that he was one of those tortured and 'disappeared' here. Here his pronouns change from 'he' or 'they' to 'I' and 'us'. He provides considerable factual detail about the development and refinement of torture methods over this period. He always cries at the memorial wall. In her writing – and I have no time

to go into this now - Taylor reflects intelligently and sensitively on the different dimensions of this experience – this event – as performance and as an act of witness. What is going on here, she asks:

- Is Matta a professional survivor?
- Is he acting?
- Am I his witness?
- His audience?
- A voyeur of trauma tourism?
- What kind of scenario is this?

Taylor's writing about the Villa Grimaldi experience offers a very productive framework which I will translate into other performance events in sites of ruination. Few are as extreme in their history as Villa Grimaldi but I have found a significant number of other examples of ruin performance which attend as acts of memorialising to the dark histories of such places.

And somewhere in this mix I want to think about Mike Pearson presenting the 'Lesson of Anatomy: the Life, Obsessions and Fantasies of Antonin Artaud in Cardiff's Sherman Theatre in 1974 and then the reconstitution of this same event 40 years later in 2014. Mike's body 40 years later. A body slightly younger than mine hardly ruined in 2014 but nonetheless on the path of ruination as all bodies are. Another kind of re-enactment, far, far removed from the Battle of Hastings

SHOW IMAGES

Quotidian/daily performance

And finally I want to sketch the territory of behaviours, activities and events in ruins which contain, without doubt, qualities of theatre and performance but whose stated purpose lies elsewhere. For me this is a fascinating but conceptually complex landscape. Here we find events with very particular dramaturgies where spectating and being watched has an ambiguous and elusive role. Here, the role of ritual is particularly critical. These are some examples:

- The ruin as playground. For Cultural Geographer, Tim Edensor, the industrial ruin affords the opportunity to counter the over-structured, regulated and safety-conscious quality of contemporary Western life; a place to celebrate and practice playfully transgressive activities beyond the predictability of the official playground’.
- As another kind of playground – more perhaps of an adult quality – Fiona Anderson, who gave an HoA seminar here last year, has written (in PR) about cruising in the queer ruins of Brooklyn’s abandoned and ruinous waterfront buildings in the 1970’s and 80’s. Documented at the time by photographers and artists such David Wojnarowicz, John Rechy, Gordon Matta-Clark and Alvin Baltrop. Here we are talking about sexual performance where being seen becomes an integral part of the erotic pleasure of the act itself. Performance in a number of senses of the term. Anderson speculates about the erotic pull of ruins. Another subject for another time.
- The ruin as a site for Urban Explorers (Urbex) and as an arena to practice the skills and pleasure of Parkour.
- The performance of marriage. These images from Portugal and California are amongst many one can find if getting married in a ruin appeals to your sense of romance. The simple question ‘what is going on here?’ will reveal a range of responses both banal and complex.
- Visits by Jews to death camps constitute a ‘secular ritual’. Such tours follow a ‘well-trod route’. Participants engage in ‘prescribed modes of behaviour’ and in ‘activities they often avoid in their everyday lives. Jack Kugelmass argues that these tours evoke ‘the Holocaust dramaturgically ... by going to the site of the event and reconstituting the reality of the time and place’ (Kugelmass 1994: 175)
- The guided tour of classical, or indeed any other kind of ruin, of course is a promenade performance and sometimes one of considerable theatricality – the script, the choreography, the audience, the repetition, the opportunity for improvisation all suggest

that the frameworks of performance studies offer a rich mode of enquiry to shed light on the performative behaviours enabled by ruins.

- And finally for now there is our performance as tourists, visitors or trespassers. My embodied behaviour/performance when I trespassed into St Peter's Seminary some 2 years ago will feel and look different to how I move and speak on Sunday night at the NVAs Hinterland performance.

Conclusion – what I've learned over 18 months is to recalibrate my focus away from ruin as object – typically the ruined building – and to reframe my investigations into ruination as a process, as a force-field, as a movement, as a world or an atmosphere and as lives ruined by natural, social, economic and political causes.

We are interested in the ruin as an operating site of experiment, as a forum for open investigation. A physical form: sidled up to perhaps, observing the Romantic tradition of ruin-tourist. Addressed surreptitiously, solicitously even, in the hope of some secret assignation ... Possibly surveyed for its scenography: as an already-existing performance space, or, where future theatrics exist only as latent potential. By such 'local methods', what the ruin provides can be a series of prompts for extended conversation and critical dialogue.

(Lorimer and Murray, *Performance Research on Ruins and Ruination* 2015)

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