THE "POLETHICS" OF THE MEDIATED/TIZED SPECTATOR IN THE GLOBAL-TECHNOLOGIZED AGE: DAVID GREIG'S THEATRE

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Abstract:

Contemporary Scottish playwright David Greig's dramaturgy has been concerned with the massive changes wrought across the world by neoliberal globalization in the last two decades. A political triple turn comprising ethics, the media and the spectator, and a shift between the notion "'mediatized' reiterative 'expectator'" to "mediated performing spectator" within the "polethic" frame of 'relationality' in Greig's works are argued in this article. It is further argued that the plays examined (*Damascus*, *The American Pilot*, *Brewers Fayre* and *Fragile*) use productive strategies like diffusion, reversibility and interchange*ability*, which foreground the asymmetries of the global/technologized age "polethically" mediating the global performing spectator.

Key Words:

Globalization, David Greig, Media, Spectator, Ethics, Politics.

TRIPLE TURN: ETHICS, MEDIA & SPECTATORSHIP IN THE GLOBAL-TECHNOLOGIZED AGE

In his short review of Michael Kustov's *Theatre@risk*, David Greig states that "[t]he thrust of Kustow's argument is that in a corporate, mediated, screened world the last public space – public in the true sense – is the theatre" (*Glasgow Sunday Herald*)[1] adding that he shares "his passion and confidence that theatre is the necessary art form of the century" (*ibid.*). Greig's theatre emerges as a creative response in this milieu by raising questions around the role of ethics, the media and spectators in the context of the global-technologized age when the idea of the nation is being

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[1] This review appears at the beginning of the 2000's Methuen edition of Kustov's *Theare@risk*.

transformed. Néstor García Canclini claims that "[t]he "communicational market" fuelled by globalization processes "mediatizes almost all local experiences and debilitates nations" (García Canclini 2007: 101)[2]. Besides, the nation-state has proved to be an inefficient structure to sustain ethico-political engagements. Dan Rebellato argues for the nation-state's inconsistency to address ethics in a global context (2008a: 256-7). Rebellato argues that "the political context in which the state-of-the-nation[3] play was developed has changed, and as a consequence political theatre has changed" (2008a: 245). Under neo-liberal globalization, defined by Rebellato as "the global extension of capitalism under neo-liberal policies" (2008a: 250), politics is increasingly and worryingly less ethical: public space is being eroded, social welfare undermined, and the breach between rich and poor widened. Globalization, "requires a theatrical response that is different in kind from the political topics of earlier generations" (Rebellato 2009: 85). As Clare Wallace puts it, "a new politics has emerged that presents writers with a complex puzzle of how to represent a world governed by the forces of globalization, how to question the operation of power and the role of mediatisation or how to examine the rampant injustices of the present" (2011: 197).

Political plays from the 1990s on then have been responding to ethical concerns, phenomenon framed in what has been called the ethical turn, while at the same time increasing its interest in aesthetic experimentation. In fact, more and more, a theatre concerned with ethics is a theatre concerned with form (2009: 49) since the violence exerted by the media is not only the one of the reproduced facts but also the violence on minds, the one that emanates from representation, the sensible violence, linked to narrative forms, to aesthetics. The violent accidental is not only in content, topics, but in form: the way of *formalizing* (giving shape to) reality, of advertising objects and subjects, of integrating them to the mediated grand spectacle and at its rhythm. (Imbert 2010: 32; emphasis original)[4]

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[2] This and all subsequent translations from García Canclini's *Lectores, espectadores e internautas* are my own. In Spanish, the quotes read: "mercado comunicacional" and "mediatiza casi todas las experiencias locales y debilita a las naciones" (2007: 101).

[3] For a succinct definition of the state-of-the-nation play, see Rebellato 2008a, p. 246-250.

[4] This and all subsequent translations of Gérard Imbert's *La Sociedad Informe: Posmodernidad, ambivalencia y juego con los límites* are my own. In Spanish, the quote reads: "La violencia ejercida por los medios no es solo la de los hechos reproducidos sino la violencia sobre las mentes, la que emana de las representaciones, la violencia sensible, ligada a las formas narrativas, a las estéticas. Lo accidental violento no está únicamente en los contenidos, los temas, sino en la forma: la manera de formalizar (dar forma a) la realidad, de publicitar los objetos y los sujetos, de integrarlos al gran espectáculo mediático y a su ritmo"(2010: 32).

The surveyed plays are permeated with accident; a theatre full of accident and one which tackles the overwhelming nature of accident at present in the global media can reach the spectator because "[t]oday, the accident has been integrated to the narrative model and the spectator's sensibility" (Imbert 2010: 37)[5]. Indeed, the pressing question is how to open up spaces in such a tightly interwoven fabric. Contemporary theatre's response to complexity is by necessity complex. In fact, the 1990s not only brought a massive transformation of identities after the fall of the Berlin Wall in Europe but also a chain of failures encompassing the Enlightenment project with the Holocaust, the end of communism and socialism, both of which triggered a sense of utter fragmentation and uncertainty. Neo-liberal policies like deregulation and privatization have paved the way for the hegemony of financial markets in a global media context. This phenomenon was accompanied by another set of intermingled, rapid changes including wider mobility, cheap technology, and access to the Internet, diversification of the media, climate change and global terrorism among others. Many wars took place in the 1990s; but there was one occurring particularly near and widely witnessed via the global media. In-yer-face theatre registered the anxieties of the decade in Britain offering extremely violent and emotionally-charged plays. The role of the spectator has gradually gained ground via the notion of spectator as witness and the vast impact, among others, of Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy.

In the new decade, the role of the spectator together with ethics and the relation of ethics and media have further acquired notoriety in critical assessment. On the one hand, Nicholas Ridout has stated that "there is something particular about theatrical spectatorship that offers ways of thinking about ethics – and, specifically, thinking socially and politically about ethics – that no other cultural practice seems to offer" (2009: 15). On the other hand, Judith Butler has claimed that "ethical relations are mediated" (2011: 9). Gary B. Madison and Marty Fairbairn argue that the common thread in contemporary intercontinental dialogue is the *ethico-political* (2000: 2; emphasis original). This ground has lead the article to use the pun "polethics", by placing the words politics and ethics together in order to approach Greig's theatre concern with both politics and ethics[6]. Within this "polethical" sphere, "contemporary British performance […] has seen an extraordinary increase in the use of audience participation since the turn of the millenium" (Freshwater 2009: 4) and there has been a "seismic shift in the nature of spectatorship" (Aaron 2007: 123). Global media, technology among other globalization processes encompassing

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[5] In Spanish, the quote reads: "Hoy el accidente ha sido integrado al modelo narrativo y a la sensibilidad del espectador" (2007: 37).

[6] "Polaesthetics" as the combination of politics and aesthetics might be useful but evidently surfaces in Jacques Rancière's *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*.

changing perceptions of space, time and relationships have given way to the expansion of concerns influencing the ways to tackle and address the role of the spectator in contemporary theatre. Greig's theatre, mainly concerned with the changes wrought across the world globalization, including the asymmetries generated by neo-liberalism in post-industrial societies, poses transnational questions around the triple turn which encompasses ethics, the media and, spectatorship in the global-technologized age.

Global Media, 'Mediatization' and Mediation: Diffusion

Global societies, the spectators within it and their relation with each other are permeated by the global media. On the one hand, "mediatized" appears in Philip Auslander's seminal *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture,* which he borrowed from Jean Baudrillard to mean that "a particular cultural object is a product of the mass-media or of media technology" (2008: 4). However, the use of 'mediatization' in this article is focused on a critique of the underside of mediation within global-media saturated environments and is applied to Greig's theatre foregrounding of such phenomenon's effects. On the other hand, mediation has been borrowed from Jacques Rancière's idea of theatre as site of mediation[7] as theorized in *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009a). 'Mediatization' is used in order to analyze the myriad ways in which the spectator[8] in its widest definition, i.e. beyond theatrical spectatorship, is "mediatized" by contemporary global media, culture, politics, and economics. The article also draws on Nicholas Abercombrie and Brian Longhurst's notion of *diffused* audience. In their book *Audiences* (1998), they identify three types of audiences: *simple, mass* and *diffused* audiences.

The global *diffused* spectator is mediated by the stress of financial markets since capital controls the media, among other reasons. "Contemporary society makes the world into spectacle because it is organized by capitalism, which has commodified everything and has thereby colonized everyday life" (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998: 82), which would result in capital as a form of 'mediatization'. Greig suggests in *Rough Theatre* that "[t]he institutions of global capital manage the imagination in

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[7] In *The Emancipated Spectator*, Jacques Rancière uses the phrase "theatrical mediation" (2009a: 3).

[8] Dennis Kennedy (*The Spectator and the Spectacle*) describes spectators as those who look and audiences as those within hearing (2009: 5). Although the article will generally use the term spectator given the centrality of the visual, visuality and the image and the intersection with the global media, audience might also be utilized. However, ideas of vision, visual and visuality are handled cautiously since "[t]he visual is another non-verbal or intuitive means of thinking" (Di Benedetto 2006: 126). According to Rancière's *The Future of the Image*, the category of the Visual in contraposition to Image, "refers to nothing but itself" which refuses the Other (2009c: 2) and would subsequently negate an ethical dimension.

the first instance through media institutions. [...]. These forms create the narrative superstructure around which our imagination grows" (2008: 214). Bulding upon Greig's claim, 'mediatization' could be defined as the use of power in the global media for the reiteration and perpetuation of a set of static assumptions, unlocked sensibilities and circular patterns of thought. Globalization is described by Rebellato in his introduction to Greig's *Plays 1* as an expansion of consciousness (2002: xiii). As a response, theatre seeks to "produce a form of consciousness, an intensity of feeling, an energy of action" (Rancière 2009a: 14), which can operate as intervention within such an expansion providing forms, intensities and energies which in turn will aim at a more ethico-political existence. Martin Esslin is preoccupied with the shaping of consciousness by electronic mass-media (1996: 169). Electronic mass-media can be said to model this narrative superstructure. 'Mediatization', it is thus suggested, is a key component to this unique narrative superstructure Greig highlights. Abercrombie and Longhurst convey a similar idea by stating that the media is allowed to put forward a set of assumptions as true. They argue that "[t]he world is defined in terms of those assumptions and it is very difficult to think outside them because they structure the debate presented in the media" (1998: 12). It is argued, then, that Greig's theatre operates as a site of mediation with the possibility of ethico-political resonances within the global-technologized neoliberal unbalanced milieu we live in, one permeated with ambivalent structures Greig's plays seek to problematize via diffusion.

Drawing on Arjun Appadurai (1993), Abercrombie and Longhurst use the notion mediascape: "Mediascapes[9] provide *large and complex repertoires* of images and narratives, *convoluted mixtures* of the world of news and the world of commodities, to people throughout the world" (1998: 80; my emphasis). Media, 'mediatization' and mediation are so prominent that our environment is conformed by mediascapes. Greig's works respond to the superstructure of mass media aesthetics by offering alternative ambiguous landscapes whereby the "mediatized" spectator is mediated by experimenting contradiction and transcendence with theatre. Setting, motifs, characters among other elements are fuelled with ambivalence as political strategy in Greig's theatre. Helena Grehan's *Performance, Ethics and Spectatorship in a Global Age* (2009), book on performance that argues a relation between the spectator and ethics in the global age interestingly suggests that the spectator's potentiality to respond is with ambivalence (2009: 22). In fact, this indeterminate terrain aims to

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[9] Mediascape appears in this context as a playful notion which evokes the idea of the world and even plays as mediascapes but also could be read as theatre as a resistant space which aims at escaping the negative effects of the media.

elicit a "participatory aesthet[h]ics" (Bottoms 2011: 447)[10] from the culturally-embodied audience triggering new ways of interaction. However, "[a]nxiety and apprehension are central to many of the effects and affects evoked by participatory performance" (Freshwater 2009: 65). As a result, s/he is left with a sense of responsibility s/he has to cope with as ethical obligation. "At the risk of creating an unwelcome ambivalence in his audience" (Cavendish 2005: 589), Greig's works are full of ambivalent situations and problematic dialectic which possibly provide the spectator with some kind of response, be it immediately, belatedly or both. The mass-media global technologized saturated environment is countered with heightened metaphorical structures, strategies, conflictive encounter, and untranslability, among other devices. Such an environment is intervened not only via the dramatic text but also on stage during performance. The impact depends on the spectator's response, what all the involved in theatre bring to the space of theatre that far from merely shocking the spectator triggers a process of myriad mediated relation.

'Relationality' in the Theatre of the Global Age: Reversibilities[11]

In the context of globalization, Butler argues for the need of a global ethics of both proximity and distance and crucially the reversibility of both. The paradigm of 'relationality', borrowed from Nicolas Bourriaud' *Relational Aesthetics* (2002), although applied to contemporary art from the 1990s, appears as a meaningful strategy in order to think contemporary experience and what changes are taking place both in society and the theatre. 'Relationality' also appears centre stage in theorists such as Rancière and Butler. Indeed, Rancière articulates theatre politics in terms of relationship: "Politics plays itself out in the theatrical paradigm as the *relationship* between the stage and the audience, as meaning produced by the actor's body, as games of proximity and distance" (2009b: 17; my emphasis). Similarly, Butler is interested in "ethical obligations that are global in character and that emerge both at a distance and within relations of proximity" (2011: 1).

The notion "productive reversibilities"[12] indicates the ethical stance of the constant bouncing between proximity and distance that the plays unfold. It is a sort of ethics in motion, 'on the move' more pertinent to the digitally permeated eye, to

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[10] "Participatory aesthetics" is a notion used by Stephen Bottoms in order to refer to Tim Crouch's *ENGLAND* and *The Author*. I add an –h creating "participatory aesthet(h)ics" to evoque Greig's theatre "aesthethics" I have discussed elsewhere (Rodríguez: 2012).

[11] Reversibility does not refer to the two sides of the same coin in this context. The emphasis is to be found in the fluctuation between different perspectives. The bouncing is not bidirectional either but myriad.

[12] This notion is similar to what Grehan calls a process of "productive ambivalence" whereby "it is precisely lack of safety that engages spectators in a process of continual reflection and response" (2009: 24).

the age of unrest. The spectator needs faster mediation because the media endows the spectator with multi-tasking abilities and with increase in speed. However, the key is in the oscillation as well as in the provisional focalization on moments which foreground an ethico-political dimension. Butler warns that "the event takes place always in a 'here' and 'there'" (2011: 8). Stephen Bottoms actually refers to the "oscillating awareness for the spectator" (2011: 448). While these moments might be provisional; ethics is an obligation (Butler 2011).

Reversibility also operates at the level of ideology which interpellates a given culture. According to Paul Taylor's review of *The American Pilot* (2005), "[s]o near in some ways and yet so far apart in others: that's the effect of the dominance of American culture for you" (2005: 588). If the play is complex and a committed desire of understanding exists, the spectator will enter circuits of 'relationality' that coexist in motion where "[s]he links what she sees to a host of other things" (2009a: 13), says Rancière. It is suggested that theatre offers the possibility of transforming an 'expecting' "mediatized" spectator into a critically mediated spectator. The spectator of the theatre is equally spectator of the media, the Internet, etc. Since global media and technologies have permeated relationships, and these follow the logic of the spectacle, we become spectators of other's lives and our own lives. García Canclini remarks that "[n]ow we are spectators of what also occurs in news narticle's sections which are not time out sections" (2007: 69-70)[13]. Within the dominance of spectacle, this article asks, can the mediated spectator become performer within contemporary global mediascapes?

From the Global 'Mediatized' Reiterative 'Expectator' to the Global Mediated Performing Spectator: Interchangeabilities

Once the notions of mediated and "mediatized" spectators, diffusion, relationality and reversibility have been described, the concepts of reiterative 'expectator' and performing spectator will be explored. When Rancière provocatively puts forward that "[w]hat is required is a theatre without spectators" (2009a: 4) he does not seem to mean the ending of the category of the spectator. He puts forward this claim in order to emphasize 'learning' instead of solely 'being seduced by images'. Bourriaud suggests "the 'perceptual fascination' caused by the electronic image scanning" (2002: 97). In contraposition to this perceptual fascination, art's function consists in appropriating perceptual and behavioural habits brought on by the technical-industrial complex to turn them into *life possibilities*, to borrow Nietzsche's term. Otherwise put, reversing the authority of technology in order to make ways of thinking, living and seeing creative. (2002: 69)

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[13] In Spanish, the quote reads: "Ahora somos espectadores de lo que también ocurre en secciones del diario que no son la de espectáculos" (2007: 69-70).

The critique might be addressed to "a society prone to wincing at its own spectacle" (Imbert 2010: 37)[14]. In fact, "[b]eing a spectator […] is our normal situation" says Rancière (2009a: 17). "According to the Brechtian paradigm, *theatrical mediation* makes them conscious of the social situation that gives rise to it and desirous of *acting* in order to transform it" (Rancière 2009a: 8; my emphasis). Incorporating the idea of performance transgressing particular roles ascribed to a part in the theatrical event, a shift from "'mediatized' reiterative 'expectators'" (MRE) to "mediated performing spectators" (MPS) is argued.

In trying to possibly articulate qualities atypically attributed to the figure the spectator, the article uses the term 'expectator'. The 'expectator' and expectancy can be distinguished at different levels in Greig's plays. Global 'expectator' can refer to the person who brings his/her own experiences, perceptual system, bodies, set of expectations – possibly not untouched by morbidity, voyeurism, scopophilia, fetishism, and thirst for shock – to/for the play, other work of art or/and event. However, "as participating individuals rather than a group of detached voyeurs, we are asked also to consider our placement *in relation* to a globalized context of material injustices" (Bottoms 2011: 457; my emphasis). The global 'expectator' in this sense expects *something* to happen because s/he cannot be shocked anymore. S/he has seen too much which creates the impossibility of accommodation into the sensorium. Certainly, theatre provides spaces for being more a global spectator than a global 'expectator' by offering less saturation and more imagination, less of a spectacle and more of a performative space. This should automatically convert the 'expectator' into spectator with ethical obligations.

Another notion of global 'expectator' refers to the one whose life is based on waiting for her/his own rights as human being. S/he expects something to happen that never happens. Rancière states: "[T]he self-evident facts that structure the relations between saying, seeing and doing themselves belong to the structure of domination and subjection" (2009a: 13). Wasim seems to evoke this state of expectancy when he says in *Damascus* (2007): "There is a world./ We do not see./ We do not speak./ We do not write./ This is my world./ Far away." (2007: 105)[15]. At another level, TV as a major global medium which distributes and perpetuates certain images to the global 'expectator' can be also full of prejudice or irony or both. The Trader says in *The American Pilot* (2005): "He's American. You never know what to expect" (2010: 349). There are also global 'expectators', pluralizing Guy Débord's book, 'in the

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[14] In Spanish, the quote reads: "una sociedad propensa a estremecerse con el espectáculo de sí misma" (2007: 37).

[15] The author's spacing is respected regardless of the text's style and it is marked with slashes.

societies of spectacles' who have the possibility to become spectators or the opportunity of saying, seeing and doing and yet choose to remain expecting.

At both a dramatic and theatrical level, characters are also 'expectators', not only because of the argued reversibility but also on stage. While not performing, characters in *The American Pilot* are literally sitting in a line on stage waiting for their turn to speak (Shuttleworth 2006, Taylor 2006). Expecting occurs not only formally in the treatment of characters on stage but also in relation to the atmosphere. An expecting – later called suspended – atmosphere is built-into *Damascus* via the TV images of the current situation on a plasma screen in the hotel foyer where the action of the play takes place. Paul, in *Damascus*, is also expecting not to be prevented from flying due to a terrorist attack alarm at Beirut airport which also foregrounds the ethics of expectancy by underlying the spectator's fragility. Rather than a formal 'expecting', this is a plot and thematic device. In the two last plays to be investigated, *Brewers Fayre* (2009) and *Fragile* (2011), the audience expects lines on the PowerPoint presentation, which indicate the lines they have to speak. What are the possibilities of expecting, of performative waiting, of an acting passivity?

The touchstone seems to lie in the fact that it is not only about expecting but also about acting. The spectator feels a desire to act, of becoming a performer in his/her own life. In a way, s/he becomes "the productive and emancipated spectator" (Bennett 1997: 1). The active power of performance leaves an imprint which implies transformation of some sort because MPSs are "drawn into the circle of action that restores their collective energy" (2009a: 8). This collective energy then could be spent in efforts trying to end up with practices of citation and reiteration which coerce bodies, as argued by Butler's *Bodies that Matter* (1993). The possibility of critical and/or ethico-political engagement is with the mediated performing spectator (MPS). "Rather than being placed in front of a spectacle, they are surrounded by the performance" (Rancière 2009a: 8) since the "world is treated as composed of objects and events that are performing and therefore have to be attended to" (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998: 80). In this way, "[t]he spectator also acts" (Rancière 2009a: 13), and "the world [is seen] as a set of performances" whereby "[l]anscape becomes mediascape" (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998: 82). The idea of reiteration in order to mirror the citational practices which maintain the global 'expectator' via the global media has also been added. That is, "symbolism shapes their lives" (Halliburton 2006: 367); of characters, of actors, of spectators. Recalling Imbard at the beginning of this article, form is giving shape to something and if that "something" is life, there is much more than expected at play. Ideally, the

"'mediatized' reiterative 'expectator'" (MRE) becomes the mediated performing spectator (MPS)[16].

By "[b]eing at once a performer [...] and a spectator" (Rancière 2009a: 22), or 'spect-actor' (Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*), the notion of spectator foregrounds the centrality of interchange*ability* (more than that of simultaneity). The italics in this concept are related to the idea of the spectator's potentiality to be a performer. Interchange*ability* destabilizes the binaries "doing" (from Greek drama) and "seeing" (from Greek theatre), "doers" (actors) and "lookers" (spectators), activity and passivity, etc. The stake lies in the constant bouncing of categories, the possibility of interchange*ability* be it mental or physical. Erika Fischer-Lichte uses the notion "reversal of roles" (2008: 40), which "is particularly pertinent to the analysis of the autopoietic feedback loop between actors and spectators because it spurs the dynamic and multiple shifts in the subject-object relation" (2008: 40). Rancière argues that "[e]mancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting" (2009a: 13). Thus "the centrality of the spectator as subject of the drama" (Bennett 1997: 1) is displaced to the centrality of transgression of boundaries and the constant "interchangeability of roles" (Ilter 201: 400) and positions whereby the performing spectator is mediated.

SOME INSTANCES FROM THE PLAYS

"There's No Point Killing Him Unless We've Got the Video" [17] *: The American Pilot*

In *The American Pilot* (2005), a Pilot is found badly injured by villagers of a town , in a country mired in a civil war with the United States' intervention. The setting "might be Afghanistan, it might be northern Iraq, it could be anywhere [...] that is poor, and anywhere where people are fighting for their own freedom" (Sierz 2006). The villagers and the Pilot's encounter, their behavior and the result of it is provokeded by the "mediatized" image of themselves inflicted via global TV having disastrous bodily and mental repercussions. As Abercrombie and Longhurst put it: "Modern life is thoroughly mediated by images of many kinds. Images come to be taken for reality and people come to see themselves as their images" (1998: 90). The play finishes with a massacre of most of the villagers by the American soldiers who come to assist the pilot taking with them the Farmer's daughter, Evie. "Mediatized" violence appears as a weapon to the point that violence for the sake of it is devoid of meaning. In other words, without making the image distributable and consumable in global

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[16] Interpenetration of roles and mutual influence within members of the audience might allow the term "peer-forming" since members of an audience form and transform the self via the others and viceversa.

[17] Quote from *The American Pilot*, p. 404. It is not capitalized in the original.

media circuits, the pilot's death is pointless. Hence, the Translator says referring to the Pilot: "There's No Point Killing Him Unless We've Got the Video" (Greig 2010: 404). As *Guardian*'s critic, Michael Billington puts it, "[t]o a guerrilla captain, he is a hostage who can draw the attention of the world's media" (Greig 2010: 588). The Captain and The Translator ask themselves, "will beheading him before a camera propel the rebels' cause into the media spotlight?" (Marlowe 2006: 366).

Since the global spectator who in real life is enmeshed in a piling up of images of violence circulated in the media, it is stated that s/he is meditated in the theatrical context, which opens up new questions in the responsibility they contract when they consume these images. As Tim Crouch argues, "I believe that we must be responsible for what we choose to look at. Legislation exists to enforce this belief – it is a criminal act to watch the abuse of children on the Internet. It is not illegal to watch a beheading" (2011: 417). And if the spectator decides to look, "[t]he choice of response to such a media image is ours, but it is always an *ethical* choice" (Kearney 2000: 22; emphasis author). Although not necessarily led to paralysis, "we are unprepared for the media image" (Butler 2011: 9). As Michele Aaron makes manifest both in her book's title *Spectatorship: The Power of Looking on* and its content, the illusion of the thought of non-vulnerability and the inertia in looking are irreparably linked. Revealing fragility and negating normative ways of looking lead to 'polethics' in Greig's theatre.

The realism of the images we see on the media is also juxtaposed to the plays' eschewal of mimesis reinventing the notion of character. That is, the spectator is also mediated by a series of monologues all characters but the Pilot have, which according to the author, give the impression of being spoken after their death and yet characters are on stage (Fischer and Greig: 2011). This phenomenon was called "stage 'ghostings'" elsewhere[18]. The presentation of grotesque bodies, in particular the 'glow' of the Pilot and the Captain's idea of Evie leading an army as a Joan of Arc figure "in a coup de théâtre that they hope will make global headlines" (Marlowe 2006: 366) add to the set of images which 'poethically' and 'polethically' mediate spectators.

"The Television Shows News Images of the Current Situation"[19]*: Damascus*

Damascus (2007) contains numerous references to the media, particularly globally-distributed TV images. Scottish Paul travels to Damascus in order to sell an English textbook package of which he is discussing the details about with Muna, the

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[18] Rodríguez (2012).

[19] Quote from *Damascus*, pp. 13, 29, 40, 54, 75, 89, 96 and 101. It is not capitalized in the original.

local Syrian teacher. The encounter is surrounded by continuous untranslatability, misunderstanding and miscommunication with some moments of stark clarity, as for example, Muna's "contrary to what you may hear on your news/media, we actually have a free education system here of a/very high quality" (Greig 2007: 24). Another strategy Greig uses is repetition since "*[t]he television shows news images from the current situation*" (Greig 2007: 13) is a heavily repeated stage direction during the play, among others. Paul Virilio identifies "the image, instantly shown to TV audiences and continuously repeated" (Armitage 2012: 160) as "the instrumental image loop of television" (Armitage 2012: 159). Fischer-Lichte's aesthetic theory, which highlights a shift from the work of art to the event, and crucially, "an *event* that involves everybody" (2008: 28; emphasis author), develops the notion autopoetic feedback loop in performance. The idea of loop is not built on the top of reversibility but further addresses the myriad combinations at work. This loop is always present in performance where the images uncomfortably haunt the play's atmosphere: "The fact that we are in a war zone is neatly referenced in the foyer's plasma screen, showing constant TV images of the Middle East conflict" (Lee 2007: 1185). At present, repetition of images, the "tyranny of emotions" (Imbert 2010: 29) and the dictatorship of newness and spectacle co-exist.

Thus, in *Damascus*, a play about the prejudices circulating between Western and Middle-Eastern cultures, Greig chooses to be repetitive, due to, the article puts forward, the image load present in contemporary global-media daily life. The theatre spectator is presented the same images but in a different medium. In this way, the spectator, it is suggested, is positively mediated. As Ridout claims:

Such a theatre might work by presenting precisely the same images as those circulating in the global media, but doing so in theatrical situations in which the audience is actively aware of its own participation in the event rather than a passive recipient of media saturation. (2009: 58)

As Grehan puts it, in theatre "the other's call might penetrate in ways that it may not in the media-saturated realm outside the performance space" (2009: 23). The image is distant but close at the same time, as required by the symbolic and material frame of globalization. The form is distant but it allows one to fill in the image with experience, which is in turn related to proximity since one is utilizing his/her own experiences in order to understand better, to be able to make connections in the complex map of human interaction. This distance paradoxically allows one to 'performingly' reconnect perception and experience. The use of the image in *Damascus* foregrounds Ridout's idea that "[t]he global media separate our perception from our personal experience by constantly bombarding us with images which [...] seem to have nothing to do with our experience" (2009: 58). Recapturing the idea of diffusion, hotel's pianist Elena creates a suspended atmosphere with her choric

presence. In Greig's plays, "a cluster of images […] evoke being suspended in space" (Reinelt 2011: 216) and in this sense both the stage direction repetition and Elena's precise (due to her description) but indeterminate (due to her surreal aura) presence contribute to the "suspension with respect to the ordinary forms of sensory experience" (Rancière 2011: 24), whereby the spectator is mediated.

"Children Stabbing Each Other…Twitter"[20]: Brewers Fayre

Brewers Fayre (2009) uses the medium of PowerPoint, namely, Elaine's lines are performed by the audience as a chorus as they are projected in italics on a screen. In other words, "[t]he audience play the role of Elaine" (Greig 2010: 491). Elaine is further complicated by the fact that "[w]hen the big speech arrives an actress who has been sitting in the audience should stand up and take over the role of Elaine" (Greig 2010: 491). After this speech, her lines are "no longer in italics" (Greig 2010: 491). Yet, her speech is still visible on the screen raising awareness about interchangeability and its subjacent ethics. That is, this strategy highlights the reversibility of roles and positions and enhances other visibilities, a visibility with a just experienced awareness, for instance. The greeting that the audience receive from Christine (speech is unassigned in the text but we later learn she is Elaine's daughter) when they/she say(s) "*Hello Christine*" (Greig 2010: 493) is "Fuck off" (Greig 2010: 493) and later, "I want to kill you" (Greig 2010: 494). *Brewers Fayre* is, in short, about a family in which the mother chats on the Internet in order to meet someone and step out of daily routine. The long answer is related to the three issues which seem to be at stake in relation to ethics, the media and the spectator: (1) the pervasiveness of technologically-mediated relationships, (2) the overwhelming effect global media saturation has on the spectator, like the 'mediatization' of knowledge, and (3) the consumerist and image-ridden ideology which inhabits spectator's bodies and minds.

The first is exemplified in the text with the emptiness of global consumerist societies which unable to create human non-virtual contact, search for sex on a chat: "Chat. Send someone a virtual kiss. Soon you/will be meeting real partners and entering a whole new/world you never imagined was possible" (Greig 2010: 495). Furthermore, the audience is in fact the impersonation of Elaine on a chat talking to Anthony on the web. When Elaine leaves Ian at home to go to a Christmas party, which is in fact an arranged meeting with Anthony, she/the audience ask(s): "*Will you be OK?*" (Greig 2010: 509) to which he replies: "I've got the computer/ I've got the radio/ I'll be fine" (Greig 2010: 509) strongly resonating with a material taken-over of technology and media in relationships. When Anthony is waiting for Elaine,

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[20] Quote from *Brewers Fayre*, p. 496. It is not capitalized in the original.

Christine appears to look for something to do or someone to talk to: "I'm staying in the hotel. Nothing else to do. Nowhere to go. Television" (Greig 2010: 510).

Second, *Brewers Fayre* is preoccupied with endless image and word accumulation and the end of meaning. There is nothing due to accumulation: "Not one awful thing but a slow accumulation of small/bad things just piling up until eventually/we can't bear the weight of it any more and the whole/thing just collapses" (Greig 2010: 496). The overwhelming circulation of words and images seems to motivate the following fragment:

Hurricanes, Waves. Wars. Debt.

…

Children stabbing each other.

…

Twitter.

…

Human thought has been given the power to form

itself into words and be broadcast without reference to

the authority of any individual mind. All kinds of

thoughts can just bark themselves out into a world as soon

as they happen – like a kind of cultural Tourette's.

…

Fuck.

…

We can't listen.

We can't think.

We feel overwhelmed. (2010: 496)

The brutal juxtaposition of the image of children stabbing each other and Twitter is a clear example of how via theatre, a mediation which highlights "mediatization" can occur. Wikipedia also raises suspicion in the global "mediatized" environment: "You know things./ Wikipedia"(Greig 2010: 523-4)[21].

Third, *Brewers Fayre* includes a playful monologue about "wanting" associated with consumerist neoliberal globalized societies, desires put forward more often than

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[21] This quote by criticizing the true knowing lack in contemporary societies, targets the ills of spectatorship, as spectator of spectacle, as expressed by Rancière when tracing the critiques to specatorship in the same book: "To be an spectator is to be separated from both the capacity to know and the power to act" (2009a: 2).

not by media aesthetic processes calling into question the need for 'spectacularity' in one's life:

> I want a career in media
>
> Or law
>
> Or maybe media law.
>
> I want to go to Bali.
>
> [...]
>
> I want to be caught up in an atrocity but survive it
>
> and be able to give the first eyewitness account of it on
>
> the news and when they cameras talk to me in the
>
> aftermath I want to be ash covered and tearstained and
>
> I want to say something surprising, I want to say
>
> something interesting and profound and new ...
>
> I want money.
>
> I want fame.
>
> I want love.
>
> I want two children – I want a boy and I want a girl.
>
> I want a husband.
>
> I want interesting friends.
>
> I want to sit on my bed all day wearing my socks and
>
> writing songs.
>
> I want to write a song as good as 'Umbrella' by
>
> Rihanna.
>
> I want to fall in love.
>
> I want to smash the boundaries of art.
>
> [...]
>
> I want to buy a helicopter and explode myself in the
>
> sky above Fife and I want to have what's left of me float
>
> down on Tesco's car park and coat the faces of the
>
> shoppers in an imperceptible film of glittering ash. (Greig 2010: 501)

All references from Rihanna to Tesco place the spectator at the vulnerable and fragile space where Greig's corrosively ironic and heightened metaphors work at its best.

"We'll Call the People, We'll use the Internet, We'll Start a Campaign"[22]: Fragile

In *Fragile* (2011), the last play to be examined, the lines are "spoken" instead of being "performed" and the audience is referred to as "choir" instead of "chorus". In *Fragile*, one character is performed by the audience due to austerity measures mediated by a PowerPoint. Artistic creation allies media and technologies, and the spectator to highlight the financial crisis. *Fragile* presents, in principle, two characters, Jack and Caroline, the first being mentally ill and the second being his mental health support worker. However, Caroline is performed by the audience by reading her lines as they are projected on a PowerPoint presentation. The author vindicates that this decision is part of the cuts. Greig makes the audience say: "*Mental Health Support Services across the city have to find/savings of 10 per cent*" (Greig 2011: 57). Diffusion, reversibility and interchange*ability* are also at play in *Fragile*. Curiously enough, Caroline is also split in the sense that the PowerPoint operator functions as actor: "There is a sense in which the stage/manager *responsible for* the PowerPoint is the other/actor in the company" (Greig 2011: 49; my emphasis). Being "responsible for" something can also embed ethical resonances. Indeed, *Fragile* unfolds an ethical dimension: "*We're all in this together*" (Greig 2011: 51) and "we don't matter enough" (Greig 2011: 60) and an insistence on the need for change: "Things can change Caroline,/even when you think they can't" (2011: 61), and "'this situation is fucked up and it's got to change'" (Greig 2011: 62). The almost identical last sentence is repeated[23] three times towards the end in this short piece, once by Caroline/Audience and twice by Jack: "This situation is all fucked up and it has to change" (Greig 2011: 64).

Jack, mentally ill, gives the example of himself having found Caroline's help as the way things can change for the better (Greig 2011: 61). The play suggests that tools such as PowerPoint and Internet are there, that the Arab Spring having been an example of its uses and eventually of change. However, as García Canclini warns "power is also unequally distributed and deregulated on the Internet" (2007: 128)[24]. Gérard Imbert cautions that the Internet is "an space where all is possible because

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[22] Quote from *Fragile*, p. 63. It is not capitalized in the original.

[23] This also occurs in *Damascus*. Repetion is an ethico-political strategy used by Greig I have discussed elsewhere ("David Greig's Theatre 'Aesthethics'", article given at "Theatre and Alternative Value A TaPRA Postgraduate Symposium", Royal Holloway, University of London, 28 January 2012) because it is placed against the backdrop of the dictatorship of newness in relation to neoliberal consumerist societies and in global media broadcasting and the Internet.

[24] In Spanish, the quote reads: "en la Red el poder está desigualmente distribuido y desregulado" (2007: 128).

nothing is verifiable" (2010: 28)[25]. Other aspect to *Fragile*'s concern with global media is in relation to how revolution has taken place in Arabic countries. Jack tells the story of Mohamed Bouazizi's suicide in Tunisia, the spark that instigated change by producing shock in that country (Greig, 2011).

Since Jack thinks of doing the same as Bouazizi, namely, setting fire on himself, Caroline/the audience promise(s) that they/she will use the Internet to start a campaign, to "*protest*" (Greig 2011: 63). The play ends with Caroline asking for the lighter. The global spectator who has witnessed these revolutions via the global media is offered a mediated experience in the theatre in which they are required participants. They are Caroline. They can aim at preventing violence resulting in a theatrical example of intervention putting forward an ethico-political commentary on the global, "mediatized", saturated, militarized and asymmetrical world we live in, state which is yet 'on the move'.

'STITCHING UP': ANALYSIS OF PLAYS

Greig's theatre abounds in the outcome of the strait-jacket of 'mediatization' at many levels putting forward the possibility of a more liberated and engaged mediation. The first pair of plays, which illustrates the analysis of "mediatized" encounters, is *The American Pilot* (2005) and *Damascus* (2007). The second group, which aims at illuminating "mediatized" interactions, is *Brewers Fayre* (2009) and *Fragile* (2011). Technology is pervasive in the plays' analysis and yet as García Canclini poses in *Lectores, Espectadores e Internautas* (2007), "[c]onnectivity is not a synonym of interaction" (2007: 75)[26]. In the first pair of plays, the character's encounter is "mediatized" by global TV. In the second pair, the character's interactions are "mediatized" mainly by the Internet and PowerPoint, Twitter and Wikipedia also being referred to. The productive diffusion, reversibilities and interchange*abilities* set in motion and the relation between characters, spectators and the world beyond the proscenium arch and theatre's entrance are at the core of Greig's dramaturgy. The effects of "mediatization" in the first two plays are massacre and suicide; in the second group, emptiness and mental illness together with a foregrounding of self-explosion and self-immolation.

Despite demarcated boundaries which prove that characters are on stage and the audience in the auditorium, limits are continually challenged. Rancière states: "The separation of stage and auditorium is something to be transcended; [...] by placing the spectators on the stage and the performers in the auditorium; by abolishing the

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[25] In Spanish, the quote reads: "un espacio donde todo es posible porque nada es comprobable" (2010: 28).

[26] In Spanish, the quote reads: "Conectividad no es sinónimo de interactividad" (2007: 75).

difference between the two" (2009a: 15). The plays foreground the idea of audience on stage, i.e. the audience speaking the lines of a character in *Fragile*. Besides, the audience *performing a character* in *Brewers Fayre* which after the monologue is restored to the stage (the audience does not perform it anymore). We also have the idea of character as audience (Elaine is a character performed by the audience). These categories are then destabilized whereby an ethics of spectatorship in the global-media saturated environment are foregrounded. All these features propel what Rancière calls emancipation. All global spectators/'expectators are "mediatized" to some extent. The less "mediatized" the more emancipated. The more "mediatized" the less emancipated. The more mediated the more emancipated.

In both plays, Greig forces and invites a different theatrical experience and a mediated participation in the theatrical event. This unveils an ethics in the frame of financial globalization. *Brewers Fayre* further problematises the status of the global spectator. The audience or Elaine say(s): "When you say 'we' I think you mean 'I'" (Greig 2010: 496). The "I" and the "We" become blurred foregrounding, as in *Fragile*, a dramatic and performative refraction of ethics. Yet, this *we* "combines the participatory with the discursive" (Rayner 1993: 11). The disorientation produced by the two first plays (grotesqueness, massacre, suicide, terrorism) and the interplay with the audience in the two second plays and the issues they touch upon calls for connections whereby spectators are possibly mediated. The mediation in the first group is highly abstract and in the second more straightforward, although this fact does not resolve the myriad complications to face when analyzing 'mediatization' in the plays. Mediation emerges in the treatment given to bodies and power exertion in the first pair of plays. Mediation surfaces in relation to the technological dimension and PowerPoint in the second pair.

"Mediatized" bodies particularly suffer in the first group of plays analyzed, *The American Pilot* (2005) and *Damascus* (2007) while in *Brewers Fayre* (2009) and *Fragile* (2011), the brutalization is more nuanced and the critique's focus is "mediatized" minds. Despite this distribution, minds of characters are also central in the first and their bodies in the second. The mechanic act of reading the sentences projected on the PowerPoint highlights not only the mechanistic actions we perform in the everyday and the media and technological inertia we are led by but also imply a mediated participation. While in the first group performance surrounds the audience, in the second group spectators have a more open invitation to be surrounded by performance. However, all examples provide the possibility to become, as argued above, mediated performing spectators (MPS). Greig's is a "[t]heatre as art and as a model of living together" (Kustov 2000: xv). In order to 'live together' in an unbalanced globe, it is pressing to raise questions around the issue of power.

The Power. The Pain. PowerPoint. The Point? The 'Polethics' of the
Mediated Global Performing Spectator

The article has attempted to put forward that theatre offers a space of media(t)-iza-
(tion) in which the global spectator might become a performer, one who matters
about power circulation, its circuits and its dwelling places. The plays' interest in
'mediatization' and mediation problematizes power imbalance within globalization
and aims at destabilizing the circulation and the sites where power, apparently
deterritorialized, both moves freely and resides. Greig's theatre expands the concept
of mediation by foregrounding the permeation of the media both showing the
positive and negative outcome and pointing towards the possibilities and
potentialities of conscious and critical mediation. This mediation targets "the
mapping of the mediascape to which […] [the spectator] relate[s] in […] everyday
life" (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998: 170).

Greig's work is not concerned with an overthrowing of media technologies and
media industries but the contrary. It calls for "a sense of the public as present
interactivity, not only mediated" (García Canclini 2007: 127)[27]. The plays do not say
that global media is wrong: the plays show what is wrong with it. It is as important to
look at its uses and effects as to our relationship to them and how they are shaping
global societies. Greig's plays elucidate that "there are alternative, grass-root uses of
the new media, and they are engendering challenges to the consensus" (Kustov 2000:
xvii). In fact, media power strongly resonates in the plays and yet no media-based
special effects but the ones mentioned above are made. However, media influence
and power exertion remains central to the dialectical-ridden nature of the plays
which relentlessly foreground globalization at present.

In the contextual turn to ethics, the media, and spectatorship, s/he has to think
emancipation as a process in which s/he is also performer of, on and about. Greig's
theatre offers a "polethics" to the global mediated performing spectator (MPS). At a
general level, "polethics" designates the co-existent and permeating ethico-political
implications of plays. Michele Aaron argues for cinema, for "ethics' relationship with
its other, but similarly more flamboyant, associate: politics. In doing so, "we
necessarily move beyond the sealed-off site of cinema [here theatre] to the public
sphere" (2007: 109) and this idea goes back to the beginning of the article where
theatre was claimed as the last public venue in the globalized world. "Polethics"
embeds firstly an interpenetration between politics and ethics and secondly an
intrinsic relation to the public sphere. Bearing in mind formal strategies, the

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[27] In Spanish, the quote reads: "el sentido de lo público como interactividad presencial, no
solo mediática" (2007: 127).

representation of spectacular, grotesque bodies and violence points towards resistance. According to García Canclini, "[i]n order to rethink criticism it is necessary to make sure that resistance also unfolds in spectacular acts" (2007: 71)[28] or as Rebellato puts it, violent moments can point to a socialist analysis, "one that operates at the level of feeling and metaphor" (2008b: 202). Thus, ethical concerns must coalesce with the aesthetic presentation of those phenomena in order to leave an imprint in the mediatized, globalized, technologized/technocratized mind of the spectator.

The article has described mediation and 'mediatization' respectively as being unavoidable but possibly changeable in its uses and as being part of the colonizing mechanisms the media impose in sensible apparatuses within a unique superstructure. The complex patters that take place in contemporary societies are theatrically reflected in Greig's works. These complex patters usually undermine the asymmetrical processes lurking behind. Greig's works, by utilizing these patterns, foreground inequalities at present, his theatre becoming "polethical". These patterns are characterized by diffusion, reversibility and interchangeability. The opening up of these patterns also unveils the fragility and vulnerability of societies which could lead to uncertainty and disturbance or probably to "polethical" resonances. These patterns have been unpacked in connection to structures which pervade society, the plays' strategies and also and crucially to people's capabilities to respond.

Both showing how 'mediatization' works and trying to resist it, the surveyed plays are all alternative and radical instances of mediation. *The American Pilot* makes the global spectator aware of power circulation via global media. The speech about redistribution of power is about the redistribution of pain. Global media is revealed to administer ways of thinking and inhabiting one's body and mind with catastrophic consequences. In *Damascus*, Elena, who also sustains a peculiar status in the play, has a choral voice full of critical and angst-ridden comment: "It's axiomatic that in any society that people who order lunch/in three-star hotels will and should be the first murdered/in pursuit of revolutionary social change" (2010: 29). In *Brewers Fayre*, the global spectator is exposed to the play's remorselessness which throws at the audience: "I want to kill you". *Fragile* embeds a seed of radicality which in a sense fulfills by negating spectacular violence to the global expectator at the end of the play. In a global world where the "mediatized" image has lost its shocking effect, a "polethics" of theatre as mediated practice revisits the "mediatized" environment in

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28 In Spanish, the quotes reads: "Para pensar la crítica hay que hacerse cargo de que la resistencia también se despliega en actos espectaculares" (2007: 71).

order to empower audiences by assisting them in the mapping of crucial links between power circulation and violence in global media-saturated societies.[29]

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