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Edward Gordon Craig
and the "smallest drama in the world"[1]

Abstract

Edward Gordon Craig's *Drama for Fools* was planned as a long cycle of very short plays, to be daily performed in changing places. Based on the alternation between the episodes of a continuing story and its interludes, it systematically introduces disruptions: in order to bring a variety of atmospheres (with parodic rewritings as well as satirical miniatures), but also to comment what is happening on stage, from an audience-based point of view. Craig's predilection for short plays, interrupted by different kinds of micro-actions, can be interpreted in many ways. As a general feature of *The Drama for Fools*, extreme shortness reveals how much the author is aware of the contradictions between his gigantic project and his former utterances against spoken drama. But Craig seems also to be influenced by the traditional puppeteers, because he wants to leave some space for improvisation. Furthermore, from a dramaturgical point of view, briefness can be considered as a result of Craig's hostility against quarrels and debates on stage. Preventing his characters from speaking too much, he substitutes dialogue with non-verbal actions which anticipate the micro-actions of much later puppet theatre miniature performances.

> All these things & many more not put down for lack of time chase
> through the empty head of the Fool who loves the Theatre
> better than all the women, & how he loves them!
> (Craig 2012: 18)

A Very Long Cycle of Very Short Plays

Written mostly during World War I, as he was trying to set up new projects after the forced closure of the Arena Goldoni, his theatre school in Florence, Edward Gordon Craig's *Drama for Fools* (2012) is certainly one of the most paradoxical examples of puppet dramaturgy ever composed. Even

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[1] *Noa*, one of the interludes of *The Drama for Fools*, had first been called by Craig "the smallest drama in the world". After he had written *Yes, or the Death of Aristocracy*, he corrected his comment and substituted it with "Not the smallest drama in the world, but the second smallest" (Craig 2012: 320).

if the English stage-director and theoretician wrote only a small part of the gigantic cycle he had dreamt of during the years 1914-18, the tensions and the contradictions we can find in this little known[2] and unfinished work simultaneously reveal the dynamics of his powerful imagination and the under-valued dimension of distance and humour with which he sometimes considered his own artistic statements.

One of the major paradoxes in *The Drama for Fools* lies between the unusual length of this project and the equally unusual shortness of its parts. Craig planned in fact a one year-long cycle of performances, beginning on 1 April – the Fools' day – and ending on 31 March. His intention was to write 365 little plays (or maybe 366, for leap years…) which would have been daily performed, moving each time from town to town and from village to village in the Italian countryside – with the result that nobody but he and his assistants could ever see the whole *Drama for Fools* on stage: the author wanted thus to prevent the audience from comparing different parts of his work. Called "The Globe", as an ironical reference to William Shakespeare, Craig's itinerant company would not have played in proper theatres, but in city halls, market places or in the open air, building three stages disposed in form of a U, a bar, and using multi-coloured flags for ornament as well as parades on bicycles to make announcements for the performances.[3]

As usually happened with his projects, when he began working on it Craig was fully involved in this matter and he enthusiastically thought over all its aspects: he accurately calculated the prices of the entrance tickets, wrote detailed notes about how to produce wonderful light effects, how to quickly change sets, how to move puppets on large stages, etc. But he was far too impatient to complete the *Drama* itself and, after a while, he gave up composing it: by the end of the war he had only written about sixty plays, half of them remaining at the stage of first draft versions. A half-dozen were published between 1918 and 1921 in his journal *The Marionnette* or in the London literary magazine *The English Review*. Craig also prepared a book edition of some of his plays at the beginning of the 1920s, but found no publishing house interested in it. Therefore he just carried on – his whole life long – rereading his typescripts, correcting them, writing comments or drawing sketches in their margins, and show

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[2] A few parts of *The Drama for Fools* have been published by Craig himself, in his journal *The Marionette* and in *The English Review. Romeo and Juliet 300 Years Later* was republished in *Puck*, n° 1 (Craig 1988) ; *The Scene*, a first draft for a prologue, was included as an annex by Christopher Innes in his monography (1998). Marina Maymone Siniscalchi, who had access to Edward Craig's collection of manuscripts, translated some of them into Italian for her book *Il Trionfo della marionetta* (1980), the first one devoted to Craig's drama (see also Siniscalchi 1977-78). See the bibliography in Craig 2012: 424-5.

[3] See Craig 2012: 13-18.

ing to some of his visitors the coloured booklets and the handmade boxes where he kept them conscientiously. The author felt a strong attachment towards his collection of booklets for *The Drama for Fools*.[4] Despite the financial difficulties he suffered in the last decades of his life, they were among the few items never sold to private collectors or to public libraries, but left as a heritage to his son Edward Craig.

Meant for daily representations all along the year and kept as a precious material to be chiselled and crimped with delicate colourful illustrations throughout half a century, Craig's *Drama for Fools* is nonetheless composed of playlets which by their shortness vividly contrast with the monumental dimensions of the whole project. If the first part of the drama, *Hell*, would probably need an hour-long representation, the average length of the plays is closer to a quarter of an hour, and many of them could be performed in a few minutes. It is therefore difficult to imagine that Craig seriously retained his idea of an itinerant theatre performing only one play at each of his stopping places: more likely, he composed many parts of his *Drama for Fools* without taking further consideration of the performing frame he had previously intended.

This autonomy of the playwriting dynamics towards the original theatrical project is also revealed by the imbalance between the two components of the *Drama*: its main story and its interludes. *The Drama for Fools*, indeed, was originally meant to represent the adventures of three protagonists (the worm Cockatrice, a Blind Boy, and a parrot named Columbus), travelling through time and space from Genesis to the present. Craig only composed a few episodes of their story, the greater part of the plays he actually wrote being interludes to be performed between them: sometimes with the same characters (above all Cockatrice, the impersonation of hypocrisy, who really fascinated him), but much more often with completely different ones.

Strangely enough, there is no consistent difference in length amongst the dramaturgical materials meant for the two components of *The Drama for Fools*: as far as we can infer from the plays which Craig considered as finished, some interludes may be as long as the episodes, as well as some episodes remain very short.[5] Moreover, sometimes they involve the same

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[4] Some other manuscripts for *The Drama for Fools*, mostly preliminary drafts or typescript duplicates, were sold to the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Département Arts du Spectacle) and to the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center (University of Texas, Austin). Other documents, mostly drawings, belong to private collectors and sometimes appear in art auctions. Craig's most important collection of typescripts for his *Drama*, in form of sixty-six coloured booklets with many handwritten annotations and illustrations, is now owned by the Institut International de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mézières.

[5] The episodes vary from 2,164 words (*The Painter and The Three Magics*) to 11,404

protagonists and sometimes they do not, as if their author did not want to make a clear distinction between the interludes and the episodes. But one could say nonetheless that the alternation between a continuing story and short disruptions produced by more or less autonomous fragments is structural for Craig's dramatic cycle, in which action often tends to split up. Just as the Kyôgen interludes in Japanese Noh theatre, but in a much more deconstructive and ironical way, the introduction of shorter events in a longer narrative development can be identified on two levels of *The Drama for Fools*: as a transition between two different parts (the so-called interludes) and as an inner rupture in some of these parts. Already in the *Second Prologue* of the drama, the very first line of the spoken text was immediately followed by the stage direction "*here an Interlude is performed*", which Craig later cancelled and substituted with this sole indication: "*music*" (1918a).

Most of these short actions, when conceived as interludes between the episodes of *The Drama for Fools*, are either very synthetic and parodic re-writings of famous plays, literary works or historical anecdotes (*Romeo and Juliet 300 Years Later*; *The Temptation of St Anthony*; *The Gordian Knot*…), or satirical miniatures of contemporary everyday life. Excepting *The Gates of Hell*, a meta-theatrical prologue about the way Hell should be represented on stage, and *Cockatrice*, a Worm's introspective monologue between two parts of *The Roman Adventure*, the interludes usually have no connection to the main story and instead evoke a variety of atmospheres contrasting with the dominating influence of fairy tales and children's literature which pervades the adventures of Blind Boy, Cockatrice, and Columbus.[6]

On the contrary, when included as inner ruptures into another action, micro-events act always as comments of what is happening on stage, from an audience-based point of view. These brief exchanges may come from some characters of the main story, who having looked at an interlude performed on the other stage,[7] react to what they have seen. At the end of *Uplifted Petticoats*, having just witnessed the murder of Mrs Lee by her lover, Ahha[8] and Blind Boy thus express their feelings:

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words (*Hell*); the interludes from 189 words (*Yes*) to 5,213 words (*Democracy*), most of them being from 2,000 to 4,000 words long.

[6] In a 1921 note Edward Gordon Craig commented: "There is a suggestion in much of this of *The Blue Bird* – dam it – *burn it out.* / Away with the children – & the childish & the search for the Path. / *Candide* is the antidote – let them all grow up at once after the Prologue. / Avoid the "Fairy Play" & the Magic – make it more *REAL*. – except when ludicrous – / modernize Cockatrice all along – keep him *strong*" (2012: 85).

[7] Craig's project was to perform *The Drama for Fools* on two or three stages simultaneously, thus allowing the characters from the main story to witness the interludes and vice versa.

[8] Ahha is, in one of the first dramatic configurations for *The Drama for Fools*, a "modern puppet" which, contrasting with the "ancient puppet", Buddha, should have been

AHHA.	[*Turning to the Blind Boy.*] But what a fearful thing.
BLIND BOY.	Well, it's the new age you know. It's all the vogue, this up-lift of the ladies, the liberty of free thoughts in the free man. My mother was blind thank God.
AHHA.	But you didn't see how it ended.
BLIND BOY.	Why should I? Have I missed anything?
AHHA.	No, no. Come away.
BLIND BOY.	All the better. Come on, let us get back in the past. Things are so clear there like Uncle Gloucester. The blind saw things feeling by them.
	[*They go out.*]

<div align="right">(Craig 2012: 316)</div>

But such comments may also come from other characters, utterly stranger to *The Drama for Fools' dramatis personae* as listed by Craig at the end of his introduction (ibid.: 58). These men or women, who are non-fictional figures borrowed from the artistic or the intellectual worlds, make short appearances only on these occasions. This is the case, for example, of Charles Darwin and John Ruskin in the interlude *Shopping*. They peer through the window into a shop where a "Real Lady" is choosing the "Perfect Gentleman" she will buy to act as a foil for her when visiting friends and relatives. Even though the play does not include any line for them, Craig included a series of drawings in one of the typescripts; there, in speech-balloons, we can read the two men's brief comments on what they see, apparently alluding to Ruskin's famous aversion against the theories developed in *The Origin of Species*. In one of the drawings we have:

RUSKIN.	Ascended, I say.
DARWIN.	Descended.

In another one:

DARWIN.	Descended.
RUSKIN.	Ay, descended.

<div align="right">(Ibid.: 311)</div>

In *Romeo and Juliet 300 Years Old*, an almost futuristic parody of Shakespeare's tragedy, the Bard himself, in the company of Francis Bacon and Max Reinhardt, witnesses with despair the transformations of his masterpiece, before being chased and insulted by "three witches" – not the

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one of the protagonists of the main story. It will be replaced by Cockatrice, just as the Blind Boy replaced Buddha. Ahha and Buddha appear mainly in the First Prologue (see Didier Plassard, "Des prologues sans fin", in Craig 2012: 65).

ones from *Macbeth*, but Germaine de Staël, Byron's wife Anne Isabella Milbanke, and the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Harriet Beecher Stowe:

> [*Enter William Shakespeare in front of Curtain.*]
> Shakespeare.[9]   — Wer has mein play re-written…my dear Romeo and Juliet? Wer has mutilated my Romeo? Wer has done it? Vat has 'e done it for? Vy has 'e done it?
> [*Red fire. Enter Madame de Stael, Miss Milbanke, and Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe.*]
> All Three Together. — *We* did it… and if it was to do again we should do the same.
> Shakespeare.   — Mein Gott! Sie Three Witches!
> Madame de Staël. — You sentimental old fool!
> [*Passing in front of him.*]
> Miss Milbanke. — You liar! [*Ditto.*]
> Mrs Stowe.   — You villain! [*Ditto.*]
> All Three Together. [*Turning on him*] — You Hun!!!
> [*Shakespeare faints.*]
>
> (Ibid.: 272)

The Discomfort of Becoming a Playwright

Craig's predilection for short plays, interrupted by different kinds of micro-actions, can be interpreted in many ways. As a general feature of *The Drama for Fools* in all its components, extreme shortness reveals how much the author is aware of the contradictions between his gigantic drama project and his former utterances against literary theatre or, more broadly, against spoken drama. Craig, who, long before Antonin Artaud, had denounced the power of literature over the Western theatrical stage and dreamt of silent movements made by human figures, sets and lights, was now discovering himself as a playwright, and a pretty profuse one, with real skills in writing funny dialogues, in playing on words, and in making use of intertextual jokes (Plassard 2014). The fact that he felt uncomfortable with this aspect of his creative work can be easily inferred from some handwritten annotations in the margins of the typescripts, where, for example, he counted how many words are to be found in one play, and then criticized it as being "too wordy". Preferring short dramatic actions was therefore a way, for him, not to become completely a playwright, even for puppet theatre: that is to say, to put a limit to his own writing impulse, to restrain his desire of satirizing his contemporaries in this way (a major aspect of *The Drama for Fools*, which often acts as a sound box for Craig's an-

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[9] Shakespeare speaks with a heavy German accent. This was a real provocation given the war context and the occasion for which Craig wrote his interlude, that is, the official celebrations of Shakespeare's 1916 Tercentenary in Great Britain. See Plassard 2015.

ger, contempt and frustration in this period of forced isolation due to the war), of quoting and parodying William Shakespeare or Hugo von Hofmannsthal, of inventing gags, making his characters speak with strange accents or in invented languages, sing nursery rhymes or music-hall hits, etc. The richness and the variety of his theatrical inventiveness, during these years of World War I, is thus constrained in very short plays which he did not want to bring further, although he went on rewriting them on so many occasions, until the very last years of his life in Vence.

Since the time when he was dreaming of a theatrical company using *Übermarionettes* (Eynat-Confino 1980; Plassard 1992: 47-53), Craig had begun to study the history of puppet theatre, to experiment with different kinds of puppets, and to think over their artistic potential; yet, he was also aware of their limitations, and above all of their need for movement, concrete action, and partly improvised dialogues. As he wrote in his introduction to *The Drama for Fools*:

> Perhaps one of the chief distinctions between a Drama for Marionettes and a Proper Drama is this… that whereas a Proper Drama has to be vague and roundabout in its movements, a Marionette Drama has always better be direct and rapid and even obvious. (Craig 2012: 30)

The extreme shortness of Craig's plays was therefore programmatic and, linked to his definition of puppet theatre, it follows the dramaturgical codifications of its most popular forms, just as Alfred Jarry had done a few years earlier when rewriting *Ubu roi* in the Guignol version *Ubu sur la butte*. Although he was clearly an inheritor of the poetics of Symbolist theatre and an admirer of Henri Signoret's and Maurice Bouchor's Petit Théâtre in the Galerie Vivienne,[10] Craig could not imagine performing William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* or Aristophanes's *The Birds* on a puppet-stage like they had done in the beginning of the 1890s.[11] His models did not come from literary circles, where puppet theatre was so often considered as a possible alternative to actor theatre for non-realistic dramaturgy,

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[10] Among his various attempts to find technical solutions for moving life-size puppets which could lead to the *Übermarionette*, Edward Gordon Craig's experiments with keyboard-puppets (see the catalogue of the 2009 exhibition *Craig et la marionnette*, ill. 4 and 45, in Le Bœuf 2009) had been inspired by Henri Signoret's "excellent" figures to which he namely refers in some of his notes for *The Drama for Fools* (1916b), saying that in 1908 he brought some "additions" to them. For some other technical solutions envisaged by Craig, see Le Bœuf 2010.

[11] In one note dated August 1917, Craig imagined how to perform *Hamlet* with puppets: but he reduced Shakespeare's tragedy to a monodrama, with the main character as "a fine figure of a man" surrounded by "demi-animals, insects, etc. / Half-pigs – cats – rats – crocodiles – snakes – wasps – pelicans – vultures – owls – / When not speaking their lines we should hear their hissing – barking – mewing – gruntings –buzzings – and hootings" (2012: 396).

but rather from the Italian street puppeteers, with their little booths, their short shows, their naive plots, and their family audiences. Did he not, a world famous stage-director and theoretician of modern theatre, feel proud and delighted that a modest glove-puppet street performer, the *burattinaio* Enrico Ponti, whom he met several times in Bologna, expressed his approval of the drawings for *The Drama for Fools*?

> And the old man approved of my notes and designs for the Marionettes. I am no longer afraid of what the others may think.
> …
> We talked on, and I showed him, as I said before, a few of the designs I had made for my Drama of Fools, and explained one or two of the situations. His approval... appreciation of what was professional in them, was worth more to me than an article in The Nation or Il Corriere della sera. He put his finger on the pointed feet of Dr. Fell and drew his nail down the fat sides of the figure, and laughed quietly, and laughed again and pointed to the second design of the Blind Woman sitting on Dr. Fell's knee, and nodded his head quickly and continually. (Ibid.: 50)

Even his first project of performing this dramatic cycle with a touring company shows how much Edward Gordon Craig was influenced and fascinated by traditional puppeteers.[12] The shortness of his plays was therefore for him a way to follow their example: to de-sacralize the written text and to leave room for improvisation. Even though he compulsively rewrote and amended *The Drama for Fools*, Craig emphasized the fact that his plays would only be finished by their performers, when produced on stage. Reading them once more in the 1950s, he added this comment in the margin of a typescript:

> As I wrote this I avoided being wordy –
> But I left gaps where good talk (not necessarily good writing)
> could come in more <u>easily</u>
> The actors and producers can add
> all the talk <u>needed</u> –
>
> (Craig 1916)

Already during World War I, when he was collecting ideas for his drama, Craig sometimes left the major part of theatrical invention to the performers, as if puppet plays were for him necessarily linked with improvisation – be it

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[12] When moving to Rome in 1917, Craig also thought of performing daily *The Drama for Fools* in his workshop, like many Symbolist writers and Nabi painters had done in the 1890s (for example Alfred Jarry with Pierre Bonnard and Claude Terrasse for the Théâtre des Pantins, or Paul Ranson with his performances of *L'Abbé Prout*) but this project too was soon abandoned.

verbal or non-verbal – as a kind of oral literature (what he calls "good talk" in opposition to "good writing"), as well as in movement and gesture. At the end of *An Incident*, a "marionette pantomime" which remained at the stage of a first sketch, after having briefly summarized the action (the poses and simpering airs of a young girl taking a bath by the seaside), he merely wrote "That is all. / A good marionettist should need no more to do good work with this" (Craig 2012: 374).

Refusing the Quarrel

From another point of view, Craig's short interludes stay sometimes very close to a modernist sensibility, as expressed at the same time by Italian Futurism. As surprising as it may sound, the poetics of Futurist theatre may have had some influence upon some aspects of the *Drama for Fools*: indeed, extreme shortness is here often combined with features (like iterative structures, *compenetrazioni* of various narrative levels, nonsense and absurd humour) which seem reminiscent of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's, Luciano Folgore's, Francesco Cangiullo's or Giacomo Balla's *sintesi teatrali*. Although he repeatedly criticized the Futurists in his journal *The Mask* before World War I and defined himself as an opponent to many points of their programme (Taxidou 1998: 54-8), Craig followed their activities with attention: he even published (with depreciating comments) Marinetti's manifesto *The Music-Hall* in *The Mask* and reviewed (negatively) Fortunato Depero's *Balli Plastici* staged in 1918 by Vittorio Podrecca with his Teatro dei Piccoli (Craig 1918b). The most evident example of this influence is the already mentioned *Romeo and Juliet 300 Years Old. Dissacrazione* of classic literature, modern transposition of the plot, iterative structure, dehumanized protagonists (Juliet appears as a dummy, Romeo as a mechanized war cripple): these processes follow exactly the dramaturgical principles we can retrieve from the intensive production of Futurists' synthetic theatre during the years 1915-16.

Yet, the shortness of the different plays composing *The Drama for Fools* derives from another theoretical statement too, that is, Craig's conviction that human conflict is an unnecessary ingredient for dramaturgy, and that it should even be banned from the theatre. This refusal of what he called "the Quarrel" was certainly one of his major dissentions with the Italian Futurists, whose productions were so often based upon antagonism, destruction and violence. Longing instead for universal harmony, order, and balance, Edward Gordon Craig was resolutely hostile against any idea of struggle or even debate – hence, for example, his disapproval of parliamentary government and democracy. Composing *The Drama for Fools* in the middle of World War I could only reinforce his convictions and lead

him to a complete renunciation of agonistic moments. As he declared in
The Marionette Drama, an introduction he wrote for a planned edition of
some of his plays:

> Let the Quarrel crawl, crawl away; but, Dramatists, don't lie on the floor
> and imitate its contortions in the delusion that there is nothing else in the
> world to serve your turn. (Craig 2012: 32)

It would nonetheless be exaggerated to assert that there is no quarrel in
the many stories of *The Drama for Fools*; as a matter of fact, his main con-
cern was to denounce hypocrisy, and making use of such materials as the
Brothers Grimm's tales, Shakespeare's tragedies, historical or legendary
figures Craig could not avoid bringing conflicts, treacheries or death men-
aces on stage, but he tried to abate them or, at least, to solve them with
other means than direct struggle. In *The Three Men of Gotham*, for example,
a "blithering interlude for *burattini*", which is a dramatization of a popular
comic tale, two countrymen armed with quarter-staves quarrel upon the
possibility of crossing a bridge, brandish their weapons and move around
furiously, raising clouds of dust. Yet what they hit is "*the road, the bridge,
everything except each other*" (ibid.: 264). Even on a glove-puppet stage, where
quarter-stave fights are commonly the rule, the author does not want his
characters to fight and he moves away from their expected behaviour with
humour.[13]

Refusing the quarrel prevents Craig above all from bringing on stage
any complicated plot – that is to say, any long dialogue. Although he likes
to confront antithetic characters, the opposition between them remains
oversimplified and usually ceases after a few minutes, because of one's
departure (*Noa*; *Mr Fish and Mrs Bones*), one's sudden death (*The Tune the
Old Cow Died of*; *The Rape of the Unicorn*), or of a third one's intromis-
sion (*The Three Men of Gotham*; *Simple Susan*). Yet, violence is not com-
pletely excluded and even killing may happen: in the already mentioned
Uplifted Petticoats, a very cruel parody of Jennette Lee's *The Symphony Play*
(1916), the female protagonist has her throat cut by her gardener and lov-
er right before her husband's eyes. But this happens without any kind of
preparation or motivation – one could even say without any conflict – for
Mrs Lee's[14] "modern husband" appears to be remarkably understanding and
tolerant in front of his wife's flirting with their gardener (Craig 2012: 316).

More generally, murder, death or departure within *The Drama for Fools*
always occur as sudden and unexpected events, mere interruptions of an

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[13] Protagonists of the traditional glove-puppet theatre, such as Pulcinella, Guignol or
Punch, often hit the stage edge with their stick, but as a menace for the antagonist, and a
prelude to the fight. In Craig's playlet, the two men do not fight at all.

[14] Craig gives to this character the playwright's name and mixes her own personality
with the one of her protagonist as appearing in Act 4 of *The Symphony Play*.

action which has hardly begun. *Yes, or the Death of Aristocracy*, the shortest interlude of *The Drama for Fools*, is certainly the most accomplished example of such a strategy because it puts on stage only one character, who dies immediately after pronouncing his very first line:

> [*It is a sandy beach. There is a clear sky. The sea is heard but not seen.*
> *Enter afar off Philippe Godefroi Christophe de San Luc. He appears no larger than*
> *an atom. He approaches... approaches; he is half way; he stops... he turns and looks*
> *back; he continues to approach... to approach.*
> *He is now near to us. He is carefully dressed.*
> *Now he is quite near. He arrives.*
> *He stops. He rests upon the sand.*
> *He puts his hand to his heart.*]
> Philippe Godefroi Christophe de San Luc. Oui...
> [*He dies.*]
>
> (Ibid.: 260)

Verbal and Non-verbal Actions

Exactly as happens in *Yes*, many endings of the interludes in *The Drama for Fools* come from sudden transformations, acts or gestures. The interaction between the characters does not find its end through dialogues or dramatic events, but in an avoiding movement, a flight, a renouncement. Because he wants to restrain his own wordiness and to prevent his characters from speaking too much (and sometimes from speaking at all), Craig tends generally to substitute dialogue with non-verbal action in putting an end to the dramatic development. If there is a struggle in Craig's dramatic cycle, it seems therefore to occur between what has to be said and what has to be performed on stage, between the *logos* and the *opsis*: that is to say, also, between Craig as a playwright and Craig as a stage-director or stage-designer. This contradiction is thematized with humour in the already mentioned *Gates of Hell*, a meta-theatrical prologue to *Hell* where Tom Fool, the pseudonym under which Craig is writing *The Drama for Fools*, enters a discussion with a scene-painter about how to represent the underworld on stage:

> Tom Fool.   But generally it begins with demons with pitchforks who
>   come out and cry "Hew! Hew! Hew!"
>
> Scene-Painter. Well, sir, I didn't like to infringe. I thought I had to leave
>   the literary part to you, sir.
> Tom Fool.   Leave nothing to me – do you hear? Nothing! Why, man,
>   do you take me for a fool?
>
> (Craig 2012: 88)

This dialogue is not only reminiscent of a famous quarrel in theatre history – the one which during the first decades of the seventeenth century divided Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones over the problem of authorship in court masques – but it is also an ironical allusion to Craig's hesitations in this same matter. Written under a pseudonym, composed of very short playlets, which exclude any complicated plot, sometimes presented as mere sketches which the stage-directors and the actors-puppeteers of the future should finish, the plays of *The Drama for Fools* tend also to substitute dialogues with non-verbal elements. For example with sound effects in *Noa*:

> [*Outside the wind whistles.*]
> The Wind.   Hooouuiiiiee... Hooouuiiiiee... eeeuuiiooohyouyouyou...
> She .   Noa.
> [. . . *The sea roars.*]
> The Sea.   Rrrrushushushushush... hush... hush.
> She .   Noa.
> [. . . *a train rushes by outside.*]
> The Train.   Fuff... Fuff... Fuff... Fuff... fuffooooHoo! [*It whistles again.*]
> She .   Noa.
> [. . . *The bell then strikes.*]
> The Bell.   King... king... king... king.
> She .   Noa.
> [*Immediately a pistol-shot is heard outside.*]
> The Pistol.   Ping.
> She.   [*Like a cock answering one afar off even before the sound has
>   done.*] Noa!
>
>   (Ibid.: 320)

With hand gestures in the heath scene of *Once upon a Time*, a parody of *King Lear*:

> King.   [*Holds up one finger.*]
> Fool.   [*Holds up two.*]
> King.   [*Holds up three fingers.*]
> Fool.   [*Holds up four.*]
> King.   [*Holds up five fingers.*]
> Fool.   [*Holds up his fist.*]
>   [*The King runs out followed by the Fool.*]
>
>   (Ibid.: 284)

Or with a complete set transformation at the end of *The Rape of the Unicorn*:

> [*Music. The Royal Arms, minus Unicorn, descends, the Lion growling, the mouth of the Lion moving and his tail wagging. The Unicorn is raised into position. The band takes up the strains of "Rule Britannia". The Royal Arms are raised again. Grand*

Apotheosis. As the Royal Arms go up again a Butcher's shop is attached to them and is drawn up, filling in the foreground and shutting out most of the Forest. A side-piece is pushed on right and left.
The Figure of the Butcher is chopping… chopping. An Infant is ringing at his shop-bell.]
THE BUTCHER'S SON.   [*Squeals out.*] Shop, mother!

(Ibid.: 344)

Refusing speech and dramaticity, Craig takes an interest in scenes of everyday life which he sometimes transforms in short pantomimes. In *An Incident*, for instance, the author's light irony concentrates on the girl's behaviour caught in its smallest details, and presented as a show in itself:

Anon out she bobs in a bathing-suit and a little cap with frill and ribbons. She turns once more this way and that way, and then this way again and yet again the other way. The hips again figure with effect.
She goes down to the water. We hear splashing and splashing. Then she comes out and comes on to the stage wet. The marionette, its wood, tells plainly from under the wet clinging bathing suit.
The water drips upon the real sand strewn very thickly on the stage. Every step she takes makes a wet imprint. She turns and poses this way and that a little and then goes into the cabin. (Ibid.: 374)

Meant for a few minutes' duration, such a minimalist action, here coloured with a slight hint of eroticism, is not more developed than those of the very short films which were available before World War I in the kinetoscopes. But the focus on such details, like the wet foot-prints on the sand, acts in a poetic and suggestive way which anticipates the micro-actions of much later puppet theatre miniature performances (e. g. Henk and Ans Boerwinkel's Figurentheater Triangel, Guido Ceronetti's Teatro dei Sensibili, and more recently Bruno Pilz's work). Because they invite the audience to a new kind of attention, both concentrated and dreamy, Edward Gordon Craig's playlets for *The Drama for Fools* must be considered as a major step in the invention of contemporary dramaturgies for puppet theatre.

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