

William Stanton: abstract of the paper given on December 6, 2006..

I don't write because I have a theory of writing, or theatre, or radio. When I begin to write, something happens – on a good day. I sit down, sometimes with a plan, and the plan is like Hitchcock's MacGuffin: it's the part of the plot that puts me there, in that chair, at my desk – but it isn't the thing that drives the story.

I discuss two of my plays: *Three Chickens*, a radio play that came from a story I was told when I was working as a dramaturg in Brazil on a project to develop a postcolonial appropriation of *The Tempest*. The second is *Kane*, a stage play about international relief aid and the postcolonial world that grew out of interviews and discussions with a Red Cross field delegate and a journalist.

I don't have a theory of writing, but I mention some theory that has had an effect, if only to jostle, as it were, against creative processes. This includes French post structuralism and its preoccupations with Freud; writings by Freud on post traumatic stress (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*); Derrida on Freud's essay, Barthes on the death of the author, Habermas on the conservatism of the postmodern, the erosion of communicative action and the colonisation of the life-world by the administrative and managerial imperatives and rationalities of commodity capitalism; the incorporation of post avant-garde aesthetics into the culture industry.

Against a background of increasing neoconservative social and economic imperatives I believe art can renew itself and have a critical purchase on reality. The aestheticisation of everyday life, resulting from the failure of the avant-gardes of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, has become a mechanism of normalisation and control. Now we must look again at the utopian possibilities in art that can turn its colonisation by late commodity capitalism inside out. Art must once again become radical, no longer in the sense that original modernism set itself against bourgeois society, but in a new sense of politicisation, by staging people's stories; by revealing the penetration of culture by normative controls; and above all by showing where responsibility lies.

If the author is dead, let the writer speak, but in a rational partnership with actors, directors, scenographers, electricians, musicians and dancers. And let us not forget that it is the audience who construct the totality of the *mise en scène*, and the meaning of the drama.

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