

Mime Journal

Volume 26 *Action, Scene, and Voice: 21st-Century
Dialogues with Edward Gordon Craig*

Article 14

2-28-2017

Two Unknown Essays By Craig On The Production Of Shakespeare's Plays

Patrick Le Boeuf

Bibliothèque nationale de France

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarship.claremont.edu/mimejournal>



Part of the [Theatre History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Le Boeuf, Patrick (2017) "Two Unknown Essays By Craig On The Production Of Shakespeare's Plays," *Mime Journal*: Vol. 26, Article 14. DOI: 10.5642/mimejournal.20172601.14

Available at: <http://scholarship.claremont.edu/mimejournal/vol26/iss1/14>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Claremont at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mime Journal by an authorized editor of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

Two Unknown Essays by Craig on the Production of Shakespeare's Plays

Patrick Le Boeuf
National Library of France (BnF)

Edward Gordon Craig's creative period spans the first two decades of the twentieth century, from the ground breaking productions of 1900–04 in London to the writing of *Drama for Fools* in 1916–18, through the invention of the übermarionette around 1905 and of the kinetic stage in 1907, milestone publications such as *The Mask* (founded in 1908) or *On the Art of the Theatre* (1911), and the Moscow production of *Hamlet* with Stanislavsky in 1912. He himself was convinced that World War I had broken him and that he never found again, after the Arena Goldoni school was closed in 1914, the exceptional set of propitious circumstances that enabled the extraordinary burst of activity he displayed between 1900 and 1915. His own son, Edward Craig, devoted two hundred pages of the biography he wrote about him to the years 1899 to 1917, and only sixty-six pages to the last fifty years of his father's lifetime.

But Craig still had many years to live after the end of World War I. He died in 1966, still enthusing for everything theatrical as much as he did during the creative period that established his reputation as the prophet of a modern theater. He went on publishing some books and many articles until the year he died but, except for Frederick J. and Lise-Lone Marker's book on his production of *The Pretenders* in Copenhagen in 1926, and Paul Sheren's studies of his contribution to George C. Tyler's production of *Macbeth* in New York in 1928, theater historians seem rarely interested in that part of his career. However, the various Craig archives scattered all around the world include many unpublished and unknown essays, note- and sketch-books, and stage designs from Craig's late period, and it is well worth browsing them in order to discover how Craig's theatrical thought evolved after World War I. This paper is devoted to two unfinished essays on the production of Shakespeare's plays, written by Craig between 1920 and 1940, which show that the spectrum of his conceptions eventually extended, quite unexpectedly, to minimalism and experiments in the Elizabethanism he had decried in his early years.

"Nine Ways of Opening *Macbeth*"

The first of these two essays is entitled "Nine Ways of Opening *Macbeth*." Craig began to work at it as early as 1920–22, partly on the basis of ideas he had jotted on a sheet of paper around 1900 for an unrealized production of *Macbeth*. He interrupted his work on that topic in 1922, and resumed it sporadically in September 1928, April 1932, July 1933, January 1935, and February 1937. As this list of dates suggests, he never made continuous efforts to finish the essay. He didn't return to it after February 1937; apparently, he had lost by then any interest in that project.

A Pleading for Both Plurality and Unity

The point of "Nine Ways" was to develop an idea that was just hinted at by Craig in "Thoroughness in the Theatre": "We believe that *The Tempest* can be produced in ten or even twenty different ways, and that each interpretation can be right" (Craig, *The Theatre—Advancing* 192). Craig's intention, in "Nine Ways," was to demonstrate "that each play, each act, and each scene of Shakespeare is capable of many different interpretations."¹ But he insisted, both in his introduction and his conclusion, that if very different interpretations of a Shakespeare play can be perfectly right in themselves, what is not right is the inconsistent "hotchpotch" of different styles, and different aesthetic choices within the same production. In his introduction, he attacked what he labeled the "traditional" approach of English stage directors to Shakespeare:

It is because *Macbeth* is too often produced in two or three different ways at one and the same performance, that a thing called "the traditional way" came into being [T]o this hotchpotch, tradition is always adding new ingredients, and ends by becoming quite incomprehensible and unpalatable. (EGC Ms B 169, bundle C, 145)

In his conclusion, he returned to an idea he had so frequently expressed, the idea that the only element of unity that ensures the aesthetic consistency of a production lies in the director's vision. Interestingly, he accompanied that idea with an explicit comparison between the absolute power he claimed for stage directors, and the political regime that was then ruling over Italy:

Each way is a key to nine ways of producing the whole play. If I have no theatre of my own, no fellow artists sworn to abide *Fascisticamente* by my word, then any way will do—for whatever I may do, the piece cannot be of a piece. It can only be a patchwork: no one's fault, but the fault of a system

But if I have a theatre of my own, I should select one of these ways without hesitation—but which way depends upon the size of my theatre ... and not upon the audience. (EGC Ms B 36, 42r–v)

On the whole, then, the essay, had it been completed, would have reflected the internal tension between two conflicting principles: the "fascistic" principle of the director's unquestioned domination over his actors and crew, and the "libertarian" notion that Shakespeare's plays are open to many different, equally acceptable, interpretations, which can depend on external, merely physical parameters such as size of venue.

Why Macbeth? Why the Three Witches?

The general objective pursued by Craig in this essay seems clear; the next questions that come to one's mind are about the reasons why he selected that particular play for his demonstration, and that particular scene within that play.

Craig's interest in *Macbeth* is quite a long story, although it is less often evoked than Craig's connection with *Hamlet*. One of the most famous portraits of his mother Ellen Terry is John Singer Sargent's painting of her as Lady Macbeth (1889), and in *Index to the Story of My Days*, Craig reminded that she had been "in agony over" having to play that part (Craig, *Index* 87). Again in *Index*, he wrote that he had made some drawings for *Macbeth* in 1904 (267); possibly the drawing he reused in "Nine Ways," vaguely dated "around 1900," was actually one of those. In 1905, *Macbeth* was among the plays that Max Reinhardt suggested he could have produced for him (Newman 31). Craig wrote Count Kessler on 20 December 1905: "I believe a great success awaits himself [i.e., Reinhardt] and myself in *Macbeth*" (qtd. in Newman 59). In 1908, he made serious plans to collaborate with Herbert Beerbohm Tree on a production of the Scottish play, and drew several designs on that occasion. That production did not take place, but Craig exhibited his designs in London, at the Leicester Galleries, in September 1911. Craig mentioned the play in three essays he wrote in 1907–08 and included in 1911 in *On the Art of the Theatre. Towards a New*

Theatre, published in 1913, contains no less than seven of his *Macbeth* designs, dated 1906, 1908, 1909, and 1910. These dates suggest that the Scottish play remained one of Craig's constant preoccupations throughout his most creative period. Eventually, he managed to take an active part in an actual production of *Macbeth*, but only as scene designer in what he regarded simply as a "potboiler," namely George C. Tyler's production in New York at the Knickerbocker Theatre in 1928, labeled by Sheren an "artistic failure [that] cannot be blamed on Gordon Craig's settings *per se*, but rather on the fact that Craig agreed to design them in the first place" (Sheren 191).

In his introduction, Craig stated that he chose the first scene of *Macbeth* because it is the "shortest scene known," consisting of just ten lines and sixty-one words. But there are other, more important reasons as well. This scene can serve to illustrate the difference between drama and theater, between literature and *mise-en-scène*. Craig is fascinated by the fact that, from a strictly semantic or literary point of view, this scene makes no sense, delivers no information of any value. It does not play any part in the dramatic structure of the play, but, once realized on stage, its function is to strike a mighty note that will resonate throughout the rest of the show:

What do the words mean?

They have to mean something, we say. And on going over them, we find they mean very little—so little, that we wonder whether the play could not get on quite well without them

[B]ut it contains a thing—an idea—an impression—a glimpse of something—and that is why it was written.

... That is Poet and Theatre combined: and a queer, eccentric combination, some three hundred years or more in advance of the times for which the play was made—and still in advance of the times. (EGC Ms B 169, bundle C, 11–12)

Were it not doubly anachronistic, with regard to both Shakespeare's time and Craig's time, one could almost be tempted to state that what draws Craig to this scene is its *postdramatic* potential. It represents for a stage director both an extreme challenge and extreme freedom: How to put on stage a text that has no intrinsic meaning, but that is "so valuable," as Craig puts it, just because of "the mere sound of the words, the mere look of the thing"?

Ultimately, what makes this scene so attractive to Craig is that it is imbued with the supernatural element. In his article "On the Ghosts in the Tragedies of Shakespeare," dated 1910, he already had asserted the following about *Macbeth*: "We must open this play high up in an atmosphere loftier than that in which we generally grope ... ; for this is ... a matter of that strangely despised thing, the imagination; that which we call the spiritual" (Craig, *On the Art* 133). In the introduction to "Nine Ways," he argued:

There is another reason for artists to try their hands on these Shakespeare plays—it is that there is no modern playwright who deals so much in the mystical and the beyond words imaginative. His ghosts, his fairies, his magic islands and his magic transformations, are nothing to treat in a scholarly way. (EGC Ms B 169, bundle C, 13)

What Craig meant by "a scholarly way," he had explained in advance in another passage from "On the Ghosts":

I know that the students have written about these spirits But if I were asked to present this play of *Macbeth* upon the stage, I should need to bring to it an understanding different entirely from that which the student brings when he has only himself to consider as he sits reading it in private. You may feel the presence of these witches as you read the play, but which of you has ever felt their presence when you saw the play acted? (Craig, *On the Art* 131)

In other terms, what matters to Craig is not an interpretation of what the witches represent or symbolize, not an historical contextualization of the superstitions they embody, not a clinical analysis of the psychotic condition they may stand for. What matters to Craig is the practical means through which he could suggest the actuality of a spiritual force on stage. He never questions the actuality of that spiritual force. This is the reason why he rejected one of the possible ways of staging this scene, which could be labeled the “realistic” way:

Now this rules out of the programme any serious thought we may have had of treating them [i.e., the three witches] as old Scotch women of Elizabeth's time, who everyday told fortunes, drank whiskey until they were fuddled, and tricked superstitious people in trifling ways. ... And I regret this ruling out of one of my nine ways of doing the scene It would have been amusing to have tried it (EGC Ms B 169, bundle B, 7)

Nine Ways ... or Rather, Three

As things happen, Craig did not manage to describe nine different ways of opening *Macbeth*. The first and the ninth are fully developed, and another one, unnumbered, is drafted in some detail; the rest is just hinted at in the introduction, or summarized in very laconic notes jotted on the first pages of his manuscript. It is a pity, as it would certainly have been most interesting to see how Craig would have elaborated on such brief indications as: “Mortals more than mortal. Modern dress,” or: “The hammering demons—on rock—with rocks. Drums like Zulu” (EGC Ms B 36, 1r), or “as machine women, born of industrialism and all its terrors.” One can only speculate on how Craig would have described “the scholarly way, the so-called Shakespearean way, an attempt at reconstruction of what happened in the Globe Theatre in 1610” (EGC Ms B 169, bundle B, 8).

The first way, written by Craig “circa 1920–22” on the basis of a design drawn “about 1900,” is described in a whimsical tone, not to be taken too seriously. Craig fancies that the English actresses he wanted to engage refused for frivolous motives, so that he had to turn to Mademoiselle Raucourt and Rachel, two French actresses who had died respectively in 1815 and 1858. Then he amuses himself deriding the inadequacy of William Poel, the great Elizabethanist, as an actor: “For the second witch, I had thought of William Poel—but seeing that Rachel and Raucourt are to be the other two, I fear Poel would not be seen or heard. I must have something stronger— I have decided on Voltaire” (EGC Ms B 169, bundle D, 3). Rachel, Raucourt, Voltaire ... This is a performance by ghosts. But these ghosts are supported by no less than ninety supernumeraries, arranged “in three rings, close-packed, like crushed files of soldiers” and echoing the three actors who utter each word “in the deliberate, slow, forced tone of hypnotic drunkenness.” (EGC Ms B 169, bundle D, 5)

The unnumbered script, dated January 1935, is more practical in tone, and accompanied with realizable designs. Here Craig uses “a more or less bare stage,” much music along with “the thud of a machine,” sophisticated lighting effects, and between six and fifteen supernumeraries in addition to three anonymous actresses whose style of acting would be best described as hysterical: “talking all the time—muttering—cursing—laughing furiously— ... one of them goes nearly mad” (EGC Ms B 36, 13–14).

Craig's ninth way—or, as he puts it, “the first, the last and only way such a scene was conceived to be done” (EGC Ms B 169, bundle E, 4)—is the most fascinating. Craig labeled it “the actors' way” and summarized it in an informal and undated note as follows: “*The words alone* No motion, no costumings, sceneries: a wall, lights full up and suggest by these words ... ” (EGC Ms B 36, inserted sheet, unnumbered). The full development is dated September 26, 1928. This very precise date is significant: Craig's interest in the Scottish play had been revived by his contribution to Tyler's New York production (which was to be premiered on November 19, 1928, after an out-of-town opening night in Philadelphia on October 29), and his mother Ellen Terry had died just two months earlier, on July 21. In this script, Craig summoned Isadora Duncan and Eleonora Duse to act as two of the witches, and the third name was left blank. Surely, the only actress who would have aptly completed such a cast could only have been, in Craig's mind, his mother Ellen Terry. Perhaps he dared not write her name because she had died so recently. Duncan had died the previous year, and Duse in 1924: once again, this was a ghost cast, but this

time it was supposed to perform in front of a ghost audience as well, consisting of “men and women loved by us all—dead and gone, but eager still to guide things,” i.e., the best actors from past centuries. The stage is “utterly bare—only its immense brick walls can be seen, towering up.” But sound and lighting effects remain sophisticated: “a noise so hideous—a mixed noise of cries and the labouring of machines— ... a light as though a thousand stars were dying out” Then, once everything has turned quiet again, the three actresses (or, rather, their ghosts) deliver their ten lines, motionless, “with an awful sadness.” (EGC Ms B 169, bundle E, 1–2)

The contrast between Craig's description of this ultimate “way of opening *Macbeth*” and what was about to take place a few weeks later on the stage of the Knickerbocker Theatre is striking. Here, Craig prefigures Samuel Beckett, Peter Brook, or Claude Régy, while his set designs, signed “CPB” for “Craig—potboiler” and inadequately realized by conservative firms unable to understand his conceptions, were about to clash with “Douglas Ross's old-fashioned staging in all its operatic splendor” and “over-stuffed realism” (Sheren 192).

Craig is often accused of distrusting actors and expressing the wish to replace them with marionettes, but here he trusts them to the point of making them the sole creators of the show, the sole significant element on stage: “there is no motion: then what is it that holds us?—their presence alone” (EGC Ms B 169, bundle E, 3). However, only very fine actors can achieve such an effect, and Craig seemed unsure that such fine actors still could be found in his time, except in a realm of ghosts: “This is the actors' way—where are they?” (EGC Ms B 36, inserted sheet, unnumbered)

“A Note on Sanity in Stage Production of Shakespearean Plays”

From a merely formal point of view, Craig's second essay can be said to be “complete”: it has a beginning, a development, and a conclusion. It is unfinished, though, in the sense that Craig did not reread it entirely (he began to do so in March 1940, but did not go further than the first seven pages), and that it was initially conceived as the first section within an essay that would have comprised four. He did not purge its flaws, the main one being its imbalance: the first chapters are lengthily detailed, while the last ones are hastily dispatched, as though Craig had grown increasingly impatient and bored with his topic.

Craig wrote this essay in the Parisian suburbs in March and April 1937, a very unhappy year, marked, as his son put it, by “dullness and loneliness” (E. Craig, *Gordon Craig* 341). Writing on Shakespeare was another way of forgetting the anxiety that everyone else was also experiencing, two years before World War II.

What Are the Essential Elements for a “More Than Adequate” Production?

Craig's point in this essay is summarized as follows on a handwritten page that precedes the clean typed copy:

Briefly—a Shakespeare play is rarely produced well enough anywhere It is due to the failure to provide the Essentials necessary to a *more than adequate* interpretation of the piece ... [which] are the place, the voice, the movement. (EGC Ms B 83, p. 0)

Accordingly, Craig's essay comprises three chapters: “The Place,” “The Voice,” and a third chapter labeled “Movement—Action—Acting—Costume.” Of course, the triad “Place, Voice, Movement” looks like just a slight alteration of the triad “Action, Scene, Voice” which was introduced by Craig in 1905 in “The Art of the Theatre: the First Dialogue” (Craig, *On the Art* 90). But whereas in 1905 he meant by *scene* “all which comes before the eye, such as the lighting, costume, as well as the scenery,” in 1937 what he meant by *place* was essentially the building itself, and the issue of scenery is not tackled at all in “A Note on Sanity.”

The very title of the essay may sound puzzling. What did Craig mean by the notion of “sanity” in stage production? Actually, he considered that there are basically three ways of doing a Shakespeare play: the “crazy” one, the “insane” one, and the “sane” one. “Crazy” and “insane” are not to be understood here as synonymous. By “crazy” he meant:

a way which can justify itself, since it has often been proved the best way, by this or that "crazy" genius who, spite of breaking all the rules and flinging "sanity" to the winds (and much of Shakespeare with it), has proved that the crazy way was anyhow a delight to even the regular playgoer. (EGC Ms B 83, 6)

Although Craig refrained from asserting it too overtly, it is quite clear that he ranked himself among the "crazy geniuses" who had chosen that way of producing Shakespeare. But his intention in this essay was not to elaborate once again on how he would have done a Shakespeare play, had he been in complete and autocratic control of a theater equipped with all the resources of state-of-the-art technology.

Portrait of Stratford as the Capital of Insanity

What he labeled the "insane" way was epitomized by the series of productions that could be seen on the stage of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon. That theater had been expensively rebuilt in 1932 after a fire had destroyed the older venue in 1926. The new building was "aggressively modern" and controversial (DiPietro 120). Theodore Komisarjevsky's "shocking" productions had been performed there since the reopening in 1932. In particular, Komisarjevsky's *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1935) "was universally panned as an artistic failure" (DiPietro 126). But the Stratford production of that play that Craig took explicitly as the target for his harshest criticism in "A Note on Sanity" was Henry Kiell Ayliff's, which was performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company in April 1937. At any rate, Craig took great care not to mention the stage director's name, laying all the blame on the actors and arguing that what was insane was in fact a managerial issue, the allegedly deliberate policy of not engaging the best actors available at the time: "I am quite certain that if Edmund Kean and Frederick Lemaitre were living to-day (were Frederick an Englishman), neither of them would be made welcome at Stratford-on-Avon" (EGC Ms B 83, 38).

Not Ghosts Again ...

Just like "Nine Ways," this essay is placed under the aegis of ghosts. One could not stress too much how important, not to say central, ghosts, spirits, and the supernatural in general were in Craig's theatrical conceptions. At the beginning of "A Note on Sanity," he affirmed that the theater "must be a theatre of spirit" in order to attract an audience. A good production, no matter which aesthetic values it endorses, is recognizable in that it is able to manifest a spiritual presence on stage:

We may not believe in ghosts, because we are inclined less and less to believe in them—I mean, when we don't *see* them; and nowadays we manage to see fewer and fewer
Ghosts, like shadows, cannot be entirely chased away: we can always do with a few. Even as we can always do with the imagination. Educate us ever so excellently, our logic, reason, sound good sense can always admit of the impossible now and again. Even realists are occasionally imaginative. (EGC Ms B 83, 2–3)

But that spiritual presence must be made manifest through physical means, and Craig then elaborates on the most physical of them: the stage.

Give Shakespeare Plays a Shakespeare Stage

Craig distinguishes between what he labels the "simple," or "first," stage (i. e., the wooden stage from Shakespeare's time), and the "complicated," or "last," stage (i. e., the highly mechanized stage of the twentieth century, with all its sophisticated technology). This distinction is important, he argues, because "what is stupid to insanity in our 'last' stages we can perhaps correct by a careful and not too enthusiastic consideration of our 'first' stage" (EGC Ms B 83, 4).

But, despite a considerable amount of archeological research, it is impossible, he says, to have an accurate knowledge of what an Elizabethan stage looked like and how it was used in practice. Since we must admit that it is impossible to have a "real Shakespeare stage," then we have to accept the idea that

whatever we do in that direction, all we can eventually get is a sham, a “pseudo-Elizabethan” stage: “it can't be genuine—admit it and no harm is done” (EGC Ms B 83, 8). What is reprehensible is not the desire to strive to reconstruct a stage from Shakespeare's time and to do a Shakespeare play on that stage: what is reprehensible is the claim that such a stage and such a production are authentic. Craig's advice is to get acquainted with wooden buildings from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (any of them, not just theaters), and draw inspiration from them without striving to make replicas of them. As an engraver, Craig is particularly sensitive to the richness of the texture of wood, and he refuses to have that material “ruled with a ruler,” “planed away” or “straightened when it wanted to bend or twist or turn slightly” (EGC Ms B 83, 11). He argues that it is more important, in order to reconstruct an Elizabethan stage, to observe actual Elizabethan artifacts, than to rely entirely on one's assumptions:

We never look at the grand wooden furniture of the Elizabethans, when wondering about their stages. We look into our minds, and these reveal something which we reconstruct on paper, using rulers and sharp steel pens and compasses and tracing-paper—and the net result is a scraggy kind of drawing ... (EGC Ms B 83, 17)

Then Craig reminds us that the most famous advocate of a return to Elizabethan conditions of staging was Poel, who had died three years earlier, in 1934—the very man whose acting skills he had derided in “Nine Ways”:

And I remember that instead of building for him a replica of the Globe or Swan or Blackfriars theatre, his “friends and disciples” did nothing at all—excusing themselves. Money was not lacking, for money poured in to build a theatre at Stratford-on-Avon: with a small fraction of the surplus, the Stratford-on-Avon committee would have built a replica of the Globe some couple of miles from the town, where Poel and his students would have worked and made experiments to the lasting benefit of the Theatre in Stratford. Moral fear seized all these Poelites and anti-Poelites—Press, friends, enemies and all, and nothing was done except by Poel—who died. (EGC Ms B 83, 18)

Here is the true reason for Craig's attack on the Stratford managers: they had missed an historical opportunity for founding an experimental school led by Poel and devoted to the exploration of Elizabethan techniques of staging and acting.

Craig's Attitude to Elizabethanism

In his recent book devoted to the Elizabethan revival, Joe Falocco refutes forcefully J.L. Styan's proposal to regard Craig and Poel as members of the same “Shakespeare Revolution,” and denounces what he calls “the injustice done to both Poel and Craig by attributing them a common philosophy” (Falocco 19). While it remains true that there are many significant differences between Poel's and Craig's theatrical conceptions, the passage quoted above from “A Note on Sanity” suggests that Falocco's assertions should be considerably qualified. Indeed, the whole issue of Craig's attitude to Elizabethanism would be worth studying in detail.

Craig's opinion about Poel varied considerably, not only over time but occasionally within the same text. He had seen at least two of his productions.² On two different pages of his copy of Poel's *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, Craig was able to inscribe two judgments as sharply contrasted as the following: Poel “did good work and tried always to do his best” (8 EGC 1308, title page). “His productions of Shakespeare plays repel. They are not living, happy, tragic, human—but thinlipped always” (8 EGC 1308, 227).

The unfinished draft of an unpublished article, dating probably from late 1913 or early 1914, contains a ferocious (and unfair) attack on Poel. This draft is in Dorothy Nevile Lees's hand, not Craig's, and it is difficult to determine whether she authored it or just wrote at Craig's dictation, but surely it reflects in some way Craig's opinion at that time: “You can talk of Mr Poel as an Elizabethan in that he is a pedant,

and his pedantry centres in that age ... William Poel belongs essentially to the archaeological theatre; he is dry and literary, and the new theatre is just the opposite" (EGC Ms B 872).

It seems however that, at some point in time, both Craig and Dorothy Nevile Lees made their peace with Poel and Elizabethanism. The July 1926 issue of *The Mask* contains an article by Craig that sings the praises of Nugent Monck's work at the Maddermarket Theatre in Norwich (Craig, "The Chances" 113–114). True, Monck had used Craig's screens in Dublin at the Abbey Theatre, at Yeats's request (Falocco 79), but, more importantly, he had worked with Poel, whose "archeological" conceptions he shared. The Maddermarket Theatre, which was opened in September 1921, was hailed as "the first Elizabethan theatre to be constructed in this country since Cromwell ordered the closing of the playhouses," and Monck used it as "a versatile stage for presenting Shakespeare and also for applying Elizabethan methods to the work of other dramatists" (Falocco 86). In his article, Craig asserted that the Maddermarket Theatre had all the qualities that would suit a National Theatre. A few months later, *The Mask* even published an article by Poel. In 1950, Craig wrote a text in which he proved quite sympathetic to Poel:

Poel had a very fine idea and I think carried it out admirably ...
We ordered [at Stratford] a Festival Theatre of the modern kind and forgot all about Poel.
Yes, we failed him. Is it possible?—yes, it was possible: and then Poel died. He was the one man needed at that moment and in that place. (EGC Ms B 34, 5r, 7r)

This text was intended for the second volume of Craig's memoirs, which was not published. What we can read in the first volume is again an expression of Craig's distrust of the Elizabethan Movement (despite Craig's friendship with Bernard Miles):

[T]he books and talk about Elizabethan stage, and how important to abide by that stage when performing Shakespearean plays, only irritated me [in the 1880s]—even as it tries to annoy me today ...
I don't think it matters a damn what shape our theatre is, or its stage, provided we know how to make use of every inch. I use my imagination—and maybe *information* (if it's exact) can help. (Craig, *Index* 99–100)

As a matter of fact, Craig is not quite sincere here. Since the 1920s, he had had a huge interest in the history of the theater (E. Craig, *Gordon Craig* 314). There are quite a few books on the topic of the reconstruction of Shakespeare's stage in the Craig Collection in Paris, and Craig annotated most of them. He always was dissatisfied with them, until eventually Cyril Walter Hodges's *The Globe Restored* was published in 1953: Hodges's sketches he found at last "sometimes excellent and at times convincing" (4 EGC 1190, unnumbered page). And "A Note on Sanity" also evidences his keen interest in the material conditions of theater-making in Shakespeare's time and the issues tackled by devotees of the Elizabethan Movement.

Give Shakespeare Plays a Shakespeare Pronunciation

Craig went so far, in the second chapter of "A Note on Sanity," devoted to "The Voice," as to call for experiments in original pronunciation. In 1927, Craig had purchased a collection of essays entitled *Shakespeare's England*; the second volume of this book contains a study of "Shakespeare's English" (and its phonic qualities) by Henry Bradley, which Craig only read in 1935 and over which he enthused. This study opened quite new horizons for him: "[W]e must also return to that doubly, trebly difficult thing—the speaking both the verse and the prose *as the Elizabethans heard it*: for this is the job we have to do if we are to revive the Shakespeare stage as it was ... " (EGC Ms B 83, 27).

Neither William Poel nor Nugent Monck made any effort in that direction. In a way, Craig can be said to display here more of an archeology-oriented mind than Poel. According to Falocco, "a careful analysis of Poel's theory and practice reveals ... that historical reconstruction was not his main objective" (Falocco 8). In that context, there is no latent inconsistency in wearing Elizabethan dress on a

reconstructed Elizabethan stage, while delivering Shakespeare's lines in the twentieth-century pronunciation of English. But for Craig, the inconsistency between what can be seen and what can be heard was blatant. Pronunciation is just one of the many parameters of a production; if all other parameters are dealt with in the Elizabethan manner, why not experiment with that parameter as well?

[I]f there were a school of experiment I could test what [Henry Bradley] says by having hundreds of lines learnt by able speakers and spoken by them from the stage of a facsimile reconstruction of the Globe Theatre. Only then could I say whether it was worthwhile (and *why* it was so worthwhile) for Sir Toby, when calling Sir Andrew "Sir Knight," to sound the *k* as Mr. Bradley says it was sounded ("as in the German *Knabe*"). (EGC Ms B 83, 28)

It is clear, however, that Craig's intention is not merely archeological. He is not so much interested in recreating the accurate pronunciation from Shakespeare's time for the sake of accuracy alone, as in exploring the expressive possibilities of such pronunciation—for instance, here, the increased energy that sounding the initial *k* would bring to such an ordinary word as "knight." This is in line with what some twenty-first century actors say they feel when they perform in historical pronunciation: "Shakespeare in Original Pronunciation (OP) has fascinated me as an actor for many years. It changes the way I move, the way I feel when speaking Shakespeare, and it informs the choices I make" (B. Crystal 3); "Several [actors] told me how the different pronunciation had altered their perception of their character or their behaviour during performance" (D. Crystal 144–145).

Craig was fifteen years ahead of his time: the first performances of Shakespeare plays in "Original Pronunciation" took place in 1952, with John Barton's production of *Julius Caesar* at Cambridge, at the Arts Theatre (D. Crystal 20–12), and Bernard Miles's production of *Macbeth* in London, at the Mermaid Theatre (O'Connor 92–93).

By Way of Conclusion: Gordon Craig the Elizabethanist?

We should not, however, jump too quickly to the conclusion that Craig, then aged sixty-five, had turned into a convinced Elizabethanist. He continued to speak of Elizabethanism in terms of experimentation. While he was drafting "A Note on Sanity," he made a few notes for himself, which Daphne Woodward typed as though they had been part of the text:

Now are you content? You are—take care!! take awful care.
No. You have only a school now. Let no public see this grim "revival"—lovely here and there—full of hints for the workers in theatres—no more. It is your *school*, and no more. (EGC Ms B 83, 9)

Harley Granville-Barker expressed the idea, too, that such experiments are unsuitable for public consumption, because the public no longer is the same as in the Elizabethan era, no longer has the same cultural and intellectual background, no longer responds the same way to what is presented on stage (Mazer 125). Craig did not make that point in "A Note on Sanity," but wrote in *Index*: "Today I know that the Elizabethan stage without the Elizabethan audience is but a pie dish without the pie or guests" (Craig, *Index* 99). He prophesied that a New Globe would be built, but expressed the idea that no more than one was required: "It seems likely that one such pseudo-Globe will be shortly built—one hopes that one will be enough to satisfy the people who like the sort of thing, and that one in each town and village of England will not be felt to be a necessity" (EGC Ms B 83, 8).

However, it is clear that Craig had turned, over time, considerably more sympathetic to the Elizabethan Movement. In "Nine Ways", he still regarded Elizabethanists as "inhuman beings" (EGC Ms B 169, bundle A, 5), and explained that it is vain to attempt to do a play in the "Shakespeare way," because "One's own way is spite of our limited capacity better than when we ape the way of another, however terrifying his name may be" (EGC Ms B 36, 2).

It seems that Craig grew progressively convinced by the virtues of Elizabethanism as he was writing his second essay. Towards the beginning of that process, on March 29, 1937, he still had some doubts as to whether the Elizabethan way fitted him:

Now for Theatre 2—i.e., “the last.”
 This is, I fear, your only *sane* Theatre.
 First danger: do not Elizabethanize it, or it will become eccentric. It must remain of the day,
 1937, 1947, 1957, and so onwards. (EGC Ms B 83, 9)

Less than one month later, on April 20, he realized that the whole issue had become more significant to him than he had first thought it would:

You may begin to suppose I am making poor fun of this matter—but it is not so. I am quite as serious, *now I come to look carefully into it*, as anyone else has been. How could I not be serious, when there is something in these ancient doings which may count—may be essential to us of to-morrow, when there will be more people than there are at present who will wish to search and find and establish ... the sane rules for stage production of the plays of Shakespeare. (EGC Ms B 83, 36, emphasis mine)

One has the feeling here that Craig is experiencing a revelation of what is the actual essence of Elizabethanism. As already mentioned above, Poel's aim was not historical authenticity for its own sake, but a modernist quest for new ways of making theater. According to Falocco, Bernard Shaw was one of those few who were able to recognize the potential of the Elizabethan Movement: “The Elizabethan revival, in its reflection of modern methods, represented for Shaw a viable alternative to the status quo: a ‘picture of the past,’ he wrote, which ‘was really a picture of the future’” (Falocco 11).

It is surely strange to find that Craig and Shaw seem to be in agreement, for once. What prevented Craig from discovering that same potential earlier seems to have been his fear of being overwhelmed by his own interest in archeology. He was aware that it was all too easy for him to forget the ultimate aim of finding new solutions for the Theater of the Future, and indulge instead in sterile antiquarianism. The line that divides the two is fearfully thin, and Craig's admonition to himself to “take care!! take awful care” foreshadowed the doubts and fears that surrounded Sam Wanamaker's project of reconstructing a New Globe in London. Falocco observes that the New Globe's productions have so far “reflected the playhouse's distinct missions of historical recovery and postmodern expression” (Falocco 163). Craig's ambivalent and fluctuating appreciation of Elizabethanism reflects the same kind of duality, and his hesitating exploration of the topic may not be totally irrelevant for our own time.

NOTES

1. This sentence is to be found in Craig's holograph draft (Paris, BnF, EGC Ms B 36, p. 2r), but was not included in the typed clean copy (EGC Ms B 169).
2. A manuscript annotation on 8 EGC 1308 (206–07) mentions only *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1896) and *Everyman* (1901), while in EGC Ms B 34 (6), Craig claims he saw *Measure for Measure* (1893). The latter statement dates from 1950, and Craig's memory may well not be serving him right here.

WORKS CITED

Manuscript Sources

Manuscript sources are in Paris, National Library of France (BnF), Performing Arts Department, Edward Gordon Craig Collection.

Craig, Edward Gordon. "Memoirs²." Circa 1950, holograph with later corrections. EGC Ms B 34.

—. "The Three Witches. The First Scene in Macbeth: an Exercise. EGC. 1920–21–22." Draft of *Nine Ways of Opening Macbeth*, circa 1900, additions 1920–22, Apr. 1932, July 1933, Jan. 1935, Feb. 26, 1937). EGC Ms B 36.

—. "Shakespeare Plays & Performance. The Place. The Voice. Music. Dance." Five distinct items, the third being a clean copy of Craig's *A Note on Sanity in Stage Production of Shakespearean Plays*, content dated Mar. 23–Apr. 21, 1937. Typed by Daphne Woodward (c. Oct. 1938–Mar. 1940); Craig's holograph corrections dated Mar. 20, 1940. EGC Ms B 83.

—. "Nine Ways of Opening *Macbeth*." Clean copy, consisting of five distinct bundles labeled "A" to "E", content dated 1920–22 and undated, typed Apr. 1932 by Daphne Woodward; Craig's holograph annotations, undated (c. 1935–37). EGC Ms B 169.

—. "The Old Stage—The New Theatre." Fragments of texts in Edward Gordon Craig's hand and in Dorothy Nevile Lees's hand; press clipping on William Poel, dated Sept. 12, 1913. EGC Ms B 872.

Hodges, Cyril Walter. *The Globe Restored: A Study of the Elizabethan Theatre*. Ernest Benn Limited, 1953. Annotated copy. 4 EGC 1190.

Poel, William. *Shakespeare in the Theatre*. Sidgwick and Jacskon, Ltd., 1913. Annotated copy. 8 EGC 1308.

Published Sources

Bradley, Henry. "Shakespeare's English." *Shakespeare's England: An Account of the Life & Manners of His Age*, vol. 2. Clarendon Press, 1926, pp. 539–574.

Craig, Edward Gordon. "The Chances for and against Good Theatres in Provincial Centres in England, with Special Reference to the Maddermaket Theatre of Norwich." *The Mask* vol. 12, no. 3, 1926, pp. 113–114.

—. *Index to the Story of My Days*. Hulton Press, 1957.

—. *On the Art of the Theatre*, edited by Franc Chamberlain. Routledge, 2009.

—. *The Theatre – Advancing*. Little, Brown, and Company, 1919.

Craig, Edward. *Gordon Craig: the Story of His Life*. Limelight Ed., 1985.

Crystal, Ben. "Shakespeare's Original Pronunciation." *Shakespeare's Original Pronunciation*. British Library, 2012.

Crystal, David. *Pronouncing Shakespeare: The Globe Experiment*. Cambridge UP, 2005.

DiPietro, Cary. *Shakespeare and Modernism*. Cambridge UP, 2006.

Falocco, Joe. *Reimagining Shakespeare's Playhouse: Early Modern Staging Conventions in the Twentieth Century*. D.S. Brewer, 2010.

Marker, Frederick J. and Lise-Lone Marker. *Edward Gordon Craig and The Pretenders: A Production Revisited*. Southern Illinois UP, 1981.

Mazer, Cary M. *Shakespeare Refashioned: Elizabethan Plays on Edwardian Stages*. UMI Research Press, 1981.

Newman, L.M., editor. *The Correspondence of Edward Gordon Craig and Count Harry Kessler: 1903–1937*. W. S. Maney & Son Ltd., 1995.

O'Connor, Marion. "Reconstructive Shakespeare: Reproducing Elizabethan and Jacobean Stages." *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*, edited by Stanley Wells and Sarah Stanton, Cambridge UP, 2002, pp. 76–97.

Poel, William. "Poetry in Drama." *The Mask*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1927, pp. 7–9.

Sheren, Paul. "Gordon Craig's Only American Production." *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, vol. 29, no. 3, 1968, pp. 163-192.

Styan, J.L. *The Shakespeare Revolution*. Cambridge UP, 1977.

Patrick Le Boeuf has been head of the Archival and Printed Materials Unit within the Performing Arts Department of the National Library of France since 2014. He was in charge of the Edward Gordon Craig Collection from 2006 to 2009, and again since 2014. He wrote several articles about Craig and curated in 2009 the exhibition in Avignon titled "Craig et la marionnette".