Going Straight: The Politics of Time and Space in David Eldridge's *Incomplete and Random Acts of Kindness*

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In this paper I will explore the politics of the spatio-temporal structures that underlie dramatic structure and argue that the organisation of space and time in dramatic structure can expose productive gaps between representations of time and space in society and our lived experience of it. Drawing on Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's concept of "moral unity", I will examine the ways in which the spatio-temporal structures of drama mirror normative representations of spatio-temporal structures in everyday life. I will argue, following David Harvey, that our lived experience of time and space in contemporary society is significantly different from its representation in drama and in wider society and that this is potentially politically disabling. Through an analysis of David Eldridge's *Incomplete and Random Acts of Kindness*, I will explore how dramatic structure can be utilised to expose this gap between the representation of time and space and our lived experience of it.

Moral Unity

Historically, discussions about the spatio-temporal structures of drama have revolved around the pseudo-Aristotelian unities of time and place. These unities have their origin in Ludivco Castelvetro's sixteenth translation of and commentary on the *Poetics*, rather than in Aristotle's *Poetics* itself. The only unity Aristotle is concerned with is the unity of action. He makes no mention of the significance of place. As to time, he merely observes the tendency of the tragedies he knows to represent the chronological events of a single day.

Castelvetro reads Aristotle in a way that assumes the need for a physical correspondence between dramatic time and space and actual time and space as experienced by the audience during the performance. He imagines the Greek audience to be made up of the uneducated masses: "the common people and the rude multitude." (Castelvetro 19) He assumes them to be very literal minded and concludes that:

> the audience will derive pleasure only if it identifies itself with the characters and the events; this

> identification is possible only if the audience believes in their reality; its belief in their reality will depend upon the credibility – the verisimilitude – of the presentation. It is here that imagination enters. If the audience were endowed with great capacities of imagination, it would 'believe' things far removed from the conditions of 'real life'; since it is not, it will 'believe' only what seems to it to be in the realm of its own experience, to be 'true'. (Weinberg 506–507)

Therefore, he concludes that dramatic time and space must resemble the audience's experience of actual time and space during the performance as closely as possible. He prescribes that a play should be set "in a small area of place and in a small space of time, that is, in that place and in that time where and when the actors remain engaged in acting, and not in any other place or in any other time." (Weinberg 509) He defines the unity of place as a single location: 'that vista alone which would appear to the eye of a single person'. (Carlson 49) His unity of time, not only insists that dramatic actions must happen in one temporal setting over a small space of time, but also clearly implies that dramatic time is both continuous and passes at the same rate as actual time. This can been seen in his reading of Aristotle's statement that 'tragedy tries so far as possible to keep within a single day' (Aristotle 9) as a rule about the maximum period of time that an audience could physically endure to watch a performance:

> the restricted time is that during which the spectators can comfortably remain seated in the theatre, which, as far as I can see, cannot exceed the revolution of the sun, as Aristotle says, that is twelve hours; for because of the necessities of the body, such as eating, drinking, excreting the superfluous burdens of the belly and bladder, sleeping, and because of other necessities, the people cannot continue its stay in the theatre beyond the aforementioned time. (Weinberg 505)

The heated arguments that took place over the validity of Castelvetro's unities during the Renaissance now seen like ancient history. It is, however, in returning to the arguments that were put forward in opposition to the unities that we discover another way of thinking about the use of spatio-temporal structures in drama; a way of thinking that highlights the political implications of these structures, which are so often thought of as politically neutral, if they are even thought of at all.

One of the main arguments put forward by the opponents of the unities was that an adherence to such "physical unity" produces plays whose spatio-temporal structures contravene what Lessing terms "moral unity." (Lessing 138) Moral unity dictates that the spatio-temporal rhythms of a play need to mirror the spatio-temporal rhythms of normal everyday behaviour in the society for which the play is written. The compression of events into the single day and single space demanded by physical unity means that actions are represented as happening within impossible time scales and in impossible places. For instance, as Georges de Scudery points out, the ridiculous temporal compression of events demanded by physical unity in Pierre Corneilles' *El Cyd*: "in the short time

needed to recite 140 lines, the playwright has Rodrigue go home, prepare for the duel, go to the appointed place, fight, overcome and disarm Dom Sanche, return his sword to him, order him to visit Chimène." (Howarth 254) Antoine Houdar de La Motte argues that it is unrealistic for events to be as concentrated in time as the unity of time demands, as it produces a "précipitation d'évenements qui n'a aucun air de vérité." Instead he asks for the freedom to use 'une étenduë de tems vraisemblable et proportionnée à la nature des sujets." (la Motte 40) At the same time he notes of the unity of place, that "[i]l n'est pas naturel que toutes les parties d'une action se passent dans un même apartement ou dans une même place." (la Motte 38) La Motte is advocating a representation of events in accordance with spatio-temporal rhythms; moral as opposed to physical unity. According to Lessing, to break with moral unity is a greater crime than to break with physical unity because the audience's credulity is stretched more precariously by the representation of actions that break normal rules of everyday social behaviour than it is by the idea that onstage action can jump in time or move in space: "moral unity must also be considered, whose neglect is felt by every one, while the neglect of the other, though it generally involves an impossibility, is yet not so generally offensive." (Lessing 138)

When viewed through the idea of moral unity, the spatio-temporal structures of drama take on political significance because, as Pierre Bourdieu argues, our behaviour is shaped by spatial-temporal rhythms. Spatio-temporal rhythms define socially acceptable behaviour through the idea that certain actions must be performed "in the proper place at the proper time." (Bourdieu 162) Conformity to these spatio-temporal rhythms is important because they structure the lived experience of a particular social group and define that group's conception of themselves and the world that they inhabit. Behaviour that defies these rhythms is seen as deviant: "Working while others are resting, staying in the house while others are working in the fields, travelling on deserted roads, wandering around the streets of the village while others are asleep or at the market – these are all suspicious forms of behaviour." (Bourdieu 161) Moral unity is truly "moral" unity as it demands a representation of spatio-temporal structures that is in line with normative social behaviour.

The political implications of spatio-temporal structures are further heightened by Bourideu's observation that spatio-temporal rhythms are neither universal nor transhistorical but, instead, specific to a particular society and stand in relation to its economic relations. Different temporal structures go hand in hand with different modes of production. Bourdieu argues that temporality in pre-capitalist agro-pastoral societies is ordered in a circular structure of "eternal recurrence" based on the patterns

of the agrarian year. (Bourdieu 148) This temporal structure supports the accumulation of symbolic capital in the form of "a heritage of commitments and debts of honour, a capital of rights and duties" through the reproduction of rituals. (Bourdieu 178) The emphasis is on reproduction and stability as opposed to forward progress, on an endless cycle of ploughing, sowing, ripening and harvest.

The movement of such a society towards a capitalist mode of production is accompanied by a transformation of "circular time into linear time, simple reproduction into indefinite accumulation." (Bourdieu 162) David Harvey links early capitalism with a shift towards a linear, mechanised and objective temporality: time as "a mechanised division fixed by the swing of the pendulum, [...] conceived to be linear both forwards and backwards." This shift in the conception of time is important as it underlies "conceptions of the rate of profit […], the rate of interest, the hourly wage, and other magnitudes fundamental to capitalist decision-making." (Harvey 252) Clocks that reliably divide the day into hours and the hours into minutes become vital in establishing rates of pay in an industrial society. Investment requires the ability to build a linear, progressive and predictable model of the future. If I invest such and such an amount of capital in this, then in so and so years with a growth rate of such and such, I can reasonably predict that I will receive such and such a return.

Just as certain temporal structures are seen as standing hand in hand with certain economic structures, so certain spatial structures are seen as determining and determined by certain modes of production. Henri Lefebvre states that "*(Social) space is a (social) product.*" (Lefebvre 27) Every mode of production produces a particular space and is produced by that space: "we may be sure that the forces of production (nature; labour and the organization of labour; technology and knowledge) and, naturally, the relations of production play a part – though we have not defined it – in the production of space." (Lefebvre 46) Shifts in modes of production go hand in hand with shifts in spatial structures. The spatial practices of feudal societies are founded on "[m]anors, monasteries, cathedrals – these were the strong points anchoring the network of lanes and main roads to a landscape transformed by peasant communities." In comparison, the spatial practices of capitalist societies are founded on "the vast network of banks, business centres and major productive entities, as also on motorways, airports and information lattices." (Lefebvre 53) The ancient "absolute space" (Lefebvre 234) of pre-capitalist societies, with the sacred place at its centre, has given way over time to the capitalist "space of accumulation" which has the marketplace at its centre instead. (Lefebvre 263)

Time Space Compression

David Harvey argues that our lived experience of time and space has undergone a significant shift since the eighteenth century. It has become increasingly compressed. Harvey states that under the forces of capitalism "time horizons shorten to the point where the present is all there is." (Harvey 240) This shrinking of time, Harvey argues, is a direct result of changes in the organisation of time and space in order to facilitate increasingly effective commodity exchange. Profit, in simple terms, depends on increasing the flow of capital. Harvey states that as society became more driven by profit, the "accumulation of wealth, power and capital became linked to personalised knowledge of, and individual command over, space." (Harvey 244) The ability to traverse large distances in short times becomes an economic advantage. This involves the collapsing of space and speeding up of time, which can be termed the "annihilation of space through time." (Harvey 258) Improvements in technology enable better transport and communication links, as well as an increased turnover in the actual production of commodities themselves. The faster distances can be spanned and the faster commodities can be produced, the faster the flow of capital. This acceleration has a compressing effect on our experience of time and space "characterised by speed-up in the pace of life, while so overcoming spatial barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse inwards upon us'. (Harvey 240)

Our lived experience of the world in the West is becoming increasingly dematerialised. Since the 1970s, Harvey suggests, there has been "an intense phase of time-space compression that has had a disorienting and disruptive impact upon political-economic practices, the balance of class power, as well as upon cultural and social life." (Harvey 284) This has several causes: an increase in the rate of production facilitated by new organisational structures; improved systems for communication and distribution resulting in a faster circulation of commodities; and a move towards electronic banking which increases the rate at which money flows. The notion of fashion is employed by the producers of mass market goods to increase consumption, so that consumers feel the need to replace perfectly functional goods with more fashionable ones. This is combined with a move from the consumption of material goods to the consumption of services, not just terms of personal and business services but also in the form of entertainment and experiences. This movement from physical to ephemeral goods also increases the rate of consumption. The focus shifts onto the production of commodities that are instantaneous and disposable. This produces what Alvin Toffler terms 'the throw-away society,'

(Toffler 47) in which a throw-away mentality is not only related to the consumption of commodities, a "decreased duration in man-thing relationships," (Toffler 50) but also to the turnover of values that underlie social life itself, "*whatever* the content of values that arise to replace those of the industrial age, they will be shorter-lived, more ephemeral than the values of the past." (Toffler 269) In this way the "accelerative thrust in the larger society crashes up against the ordinary daily experience of the contemporary individual." (Toffler 32–33) In addition to this increasing acceleration, Harvey argues that, in recent years, there has been a crisis in the representation of economic value within the capitalist system. Money itself has become increasingly dematerialised, in that it no longer has a tangible link to precious metals and is progressively devalued through inflation. It no longer acts as a concrete measure of value. The volatile fluctuations of the currency market reflect the increasing unreliability of money's purchasing power. As time and space compress under the forces of capitalism, our experience of the world becomes increasingly destabilised: "The central value system, to which capitalism has always appealed to validate its actions, is dematerialising and shifting, time horizons are collapsing, and it is hard to tell exactly what space we are in when it comes to assessing causes and effects, meaning or values." There is, Harvey claims, a "crisis of representation in advanced capitalism"; a gap between representation and reality. (Harvey 298) I would argue that this crisis of representation is reflected in the spatio-temporal structures of drama. If, as Harvey argues, "individual experience always forms the raw material of works of art" then a shift in our experience of time and space should logically result in a shift in our use of spatio-temporal structures in art. (Harvey 261–262) The spatio-temporal structures that underlie dramatic structure remain predominantly organised around the model of linear causal succession that underlies the spatio-temporal organisation of industrial capitalism. A model that no longer reflects the spatio-temporal basis of our own experience of time and space under financial capitalism.

Incomplete and Random Acts of Kindness

The spatio-temporal dramaturgy of David Eldridge's *Incomplete and Random Acts of Kindness* can be read as negotiating this gap. The play articulates a complete crisis of progressive linear temporality within its structure. In doing so, it articulates a potentially productive structural politics, as its structure enables us to recognise the gap.

If you piece the fragments of the play's plot into a linear narrative, then the play can be

described as telling the story of a banker called Joey, who has to re-evaluate his life when his mother is diagnosed with breast cancer. He takes his girlfriend, Kate, on holiday to the States and asks her to marry him. After his mother's death, he discovers that his father, Ronnie, has started a relationship with her nurse, Maureen. His mother's death and his father's infidelity cause him to have a breakdown. He leaves Kate, moves back in with his father and eventually succeeds in driving Maureen out of his father's house. He decides to volunteer to tutor school children who are having difficulties with reading. He meets a young boy called Trevor and he feels that they have become friends. When Trevor is murdered, Joey feels that he has failed in his responsibilities towards him. He becomes friends with Joey's mother, Shanika, and starts to recover from his breakdown. He starts to help a new student with his reading. Maureen moves back in with his father and Joey moves out.

Through its spatio-temporal structure, the play articulates Joey's subjective experience of time and space in his moment of crisis. There is a sense of a beginning and an end in the play's first and final moments, but the actual events of the narrative are jumbled together rather than told chronologically, and are mixed up with Joey's memories and dreams. The play starts when Joey moves back in with his father and ends at the point when he finally moves out. It is primarily organised around a set of father/son relationships; Joey's relationship with his father and his relationship with Trevor. The story of Joey's relationship with Trevor forms a spine of actual events around which the other events in the play are plotted. Woven around this, Joey and his father struggle to rebuild their relationship. Joey's relationships with the women in his life, Kate and his mother, are plotted through a jumble of memories. Amongst all this, Joey's imagination is haunted by the ghost of Trevor, who wanders in and out of other moments in time and space.

The spatio-temporal structure of the play reflects Joey's loss of the ability to organise his experiences into a chronological succession of events through time during his breakdown. Joey is present on stage throughout the performance, so indicating that the audience are viewing the action from his perspective. In his interactions with other characters, Joey is clearly presented as having difficulty organising his experiences in a linear succession of events through time. For example, when Trevor's mother breaks the news of his murder to Joey, Joey's response is a seemingly random stream of impressions, memories and thoughts:

Joey I went to Wales.

Shanika Did you?

> **Joey** To Penally. There's a castle there. My mum and dad always took us as kids. I went with my best friend. Colin. He'll know what to do. I was going to write Trevor a letter. I – we saw the vicar. I went to a wedding once and a bishop conducted the service. Are you hungry? I've got a sandwich. Do you like cheese? (Eldridge 43)

Joey's thoughts are not unconnected. He moves from thinking about his friend Colin, who always knows what to do in a moment of crisis, to the thought that he didn't know what to do to save Trevor. He connects the vicar he sees in a field in Wales to the bishop who married two of his friends. His list of events is difficult to follow, however, because it lacks a progressive linear narrative. Ronnie, Joey's father, attempts to guide Joey out of his confusion by giving him an example of how to communicate a set of events correctly. He offers Joey a chronological account of what happened to him the day before:

> It's about getting up in the morning and doing things. To me it's about getting up, having a slice of bread and jam and getting in that cab and I'm happy in that cab. The people I've met. The wonderful things I've heard. The stories. Yesterday, I had a couple in the there: they weren't talking. Young couple, looked like they wanted to die, both of them. I kept looking in the mirror. I saw him put his hand on her hand. And she put her hand on his hand. And he kissed her on her ear and she smiled and I came home full of it. (Eldridge 55)

Ronnie communicates the idea that life is about doing things in the right order. In this case, the right order is a chronological succession of events. Ronnie gets up, has breakfast and goes to work. The couple fall out with each other. The couple make up. Ronnie's life is made meaningful both by the stories that he witnesses inside his cab and the stories that he hears. These coherent linear chronological narratives are the "wonderful things" that Ronnie suggests are the secret to being happy. (Eldridge 51) If Joey cannot shape his experience in this way then, in Ronnie's eyes, it is no wonder that he is in constant state of distress.

Joey's inability to form a linear chronological narrative is reflected in his struggle to form or hold straight lines during the play. When Joey helps his father Ronnie build a fence, Ronnie constantly questions Joey's ability to keep the line of the fence straight:

> *Joey holds a fence panel steady for Ronnie.*
>
> **Ronnie** Keep it straight.
>
> **Joey** I am
>
> **Ronnie** Hold it.
>
> **Joey** I am.

Ronnie Stroll on.

Joey I am holding it straight.

Ronnie It's not. (Eldridge 26–27)

Even after the fence panel has been removed, Joey's hands "*remain in mid-air*" tracing the elusive straight line of the fence. Joey's inability to follow straight lines and arrange things in the correct order is also inscribed in his reading and writing. He writes a letter to Kate in an attempt to put down his feelings honestly, but all he produces are "ravings." (Eldridge 29) The words in their lines on the page do not make coherent sense. He is supposed to teach Trevor to read, to follow lines of words and make sense of them, but he unable to communicate this process to him effectively.

The events of the play are plotted in a way that reflects Joey's difficulties with forming chronological narratives. Events become muddled and spatio-temporally compressed into a single present moment in which Joey is trying to synthesize his experiences into a coherent whole. About halfway through the play, Joey says to Kate that he feels as if they are "floating, drifting." (Eldridge 40). The original Royal Court production of the play in 2003 reflected this sensation of floating or drifting in time and space in its staging. The set was a bare black stage. The characters flowed in and out of the action. There was no distinction in the staging of a difference between actual events, memories and dreams. There was no indication, beyond the clues within the text, to the location of the play's action in time and space. Consequently, past, present and imagined events appeared to occur all at once. It was difficult to distinguish between the events and to place them in chronological order, so all the events of the play felt as if they have been collapsed into a single present moment. The play suggests, through its spatio-temporal structure, that the only moment of time that exists is the present, whilst articulating a relationship to space where several spaces seem to fold into each other. Its structure mirrors the spatio-temporal compression that Harvey argues is occurring under the forces of postfordism: "time horizons are collapsing, and it is hard to tell exactly what space we are in when it comes to assessing causes and effects, meaning or values." (Harvey 298)

Time patterns within the play indeed suggest that Joey is experiencing a perpetual present. Movements and interactions are repeated, and this is particularly true of the relationship between the two sons within the play, Joey and Trevor. Joey's first encounter with Trevor repeats in his mind. Joey and Trevor bump into each other as the action flows from scene to scene, greeting each other with a hello as they pass by.

Joey Hello.

Trevor Hello. (Eldridge 4)

The connection between the two is emphasized through Joey's physical mirroring of Trevor. During their first encounter, Trevor "*takes a toothpick out of his hair and sucks it.*" (Eldridge 6) Joey picks up and repeats action, "*picks his teeth with a dental stick.*" (Eldridge 9) Soon after we see Trevor and Joey sitting next to each other. Joey now has completely adopted Trevor's habit. While Trevor "*picks his teeth*," Joey sports "*a toothpick in his mouth.*" (Eldridge 20) The two sons of the play are equated with each other through these mirrored repetitive movements. The scene in which Joey imagines Trevor's death begins with both characters facing each other, picking their teeth. Joey greets Trevor with the usual "Hello" but Trevor refuses to mirror his greeting. Trevor has now changed his response to "Hi." (Eldridge 29) The mirroring of the hellos symbolises Joey's deep need to connect with Trevor. The repetition of the these encounters with Trevor emphasises how Joey's failure to form a "fatherly" relationship with the fatherless Trevor, and by extension the breakdown of his own relationship with his father, lies at the centre of his distress. There is a disruption in the chain of connections between fathers and sons that stretches chronologically backwards into the past and forward into the future. The disruption of this temporal chain leaves Joey stranded in a perpetual present.

The figure of Trevor is frozen in time, like the images in the photographs that he takes with his precious manual camera. In Joey's presence, he is presented as perpetually bleeding, marked by the violence of his death. In the scene, where Joey and Trevor first meet, there is blood on his coat. Next time Joey sees him, his hand is bleeding. In a dreamed meeting, blood pours from Trevor's mouth. The blood becomes symbolic of Joey's failure to connect with Trevor. Trevor constantly floats on the edge of Joey's peripheral vision. While Joey tries to convince Kate to let him move back in with her, he is distracted by the presence of Trevor on the edge his field of vision. The figure of Trevor, as constructed in Joey's mind, is always moving away from him. Every time they passed and greeted each other in the Royal Court production, Trevor was the one to move away. At the end of the scenes between Trevor and Joey, Trevor is always the one to exit, while Joey remains. At times, Joey calls after Trevor's disappearing figure, "Hello! Hello! Hello!" (Eldridge 26) Trevor is a figure that is perpetually present on the periphery of Joey's vision but always escaping his grasp.

In the creation of a perpetual present, Eldridge removes the temporal axis of succession from its position as the principle organising structure of a play. While some critics thought the play

was "difficult to piece together" and did "not fully escape the pitfalls of incoherence and repetition," (Berkowitz) others found the play "beautifully structured." (Taylor) This begs the question, as to how the play is structured if it is not primarily structured through its temporal aspect. The answer is that the temporal movement in time in this play is defined through space. While space was physically undefined in the Royal Court's production, the order of events in the story was made clear by the movement of objects through space and references to particular spaces in the dialogue. The letter that Joey writes to Kate is an object whose movement allows the temporal order of the scenes in which it appears to be clearly determined. The letter to Kate is first mentioned in the dialogue as something that Joey thinks it might be a good idea to do. The second time it appears Joey physically gives it to Kate and she takes it away with her. The third time it appears Ronnie physically has it, as Kate has returned it back in the post. The fourth time Maureen mentions that she found it in the rubbish after Ronnie threw it away. The narrative of the letter indicates that these four scenes are plotted chronologically. Other objects indicate the different temporal orderings of other scenes. Joey's mother's engagement ring first appears in scene nine, in which Kate returns the ring to Joey. Later Maureen gives the ring to Joey after his mother's death. In the same scene, Kate takes the ring from Joey and asks him to marry her. The movement of the ring clearly indicates that the first scene with the ring in the plot comes chronologically before the second scene with the ring in the story. The next time we see the ring, it is on Kate's finger and signals to the Bishop that she and Joey are engaged. The position of the ring indicates that the last scene in the plot comes chronologically between the other two scenes in the story.

Particular spaces are used in a similar way to indicate the order of events. There are three distinct scene locations that indicate specific points in time to the audience. The first of these locations is Wales. There is only one scene set in Wales but references to it locate other scenes in a temporal relationship to it. In scene five, Joey mentions to Trevor that he's "going to Wales." (Eldridge 6) In scene eight, Joey meets a priest in Wales who tells him about "Odo de Barri." (Eldridge 13) In scene twelve, Joey mentions Odo de Barri to Trevor. This indicates that these three scenes are ordered chronologically. Another space that clearly indicates a point in time is the hospital. As with Wales, there is a single scene set in the hospital, just after Joey's mother's death. Mentions of the hospital in other scenes then locate them as happening before this point. In the second to last scene of the play, Kate asks Joey how his mother got on at the hospital, so locating this scene towards

the beginning of the story, even though it comes towards the end of the plot. America is the final space that anchors the audience in time. In the second to last scene, Kate talks about going to America. The scenes in America are located as happening after this scene, but before Joey's mother's death.

In the dialogue, references to certain locations position the action of the play even more precisely in time. Joey and Kate's trip to America ends with "the greatest bar on earth" where they can "have a cosmopolitan and watch all the helicopters flying around." (Eldridge 37) After the scene with the Bishop, when they are engaged, Kate asks Joey if he remembers "the lovely barman who served us the cosmopolitans." (Eldridge 65) Joey reminds her that they can't go back there now. This makes it clear that the bar they are referring to was the bar at the top of World Trade Centre. This locates the first scene as happening before 11 September 2001 and the second scene as happening after. Iraq is another location used as a temporal marker. The priest that Joey meets in Wales states that there is a big demonstration on in London that day. This identifies the date of the scene in Wales as Saturday 15 February 2003. In other scenes there are references to watching the war in Iraq on television. When Shanika comes to tell Joey about Trevor's death, he asks her if she is "following the war?" and whether she'd heard of "Umm Qasr" before. (Eldridge 42) This positions this scene as soon after the 21 March 2003, which was the day that Allies entered the town. Eldridge uses particular spaces not only to define the temporal order of the events, but also to locate these events at a precise point in historical time.

When time compresses to a perpetual present, Eldridge indicates that space becomes the principle by which people orient themselves. Space is compressed at the same time, in that many spaces are present within one physical space. In his travels, memories, and through the media, Joey travels quickly from space to space annihilating the distance between them. Iraq is in his living room and America in his head. Amidst all this chaos, Joey orientates himself through his relationships to space. He uses spaces of personal significance to anchor himself. He constantly repeats the facts he knows about Topanga Canyon.

> It begins in the San Fernando Valley.
>
> And runs to the Pacific Ocean.
>
> Some people think "Roadhouse Blues" was written there.
>
> No one knows Marvin Gaye was there.

> There are racoons.
>
> Sometimes there are mudslides.
>
> Sometimes there are UFOs.
>
> I never saw any. (Eldridge 20)

He repeats them at moments of stress. In a dream, he tells them to Trevor to comfort him as he cradles his dying body in his arms. Topanga canyon is a space in which Joey felt happy. It is this happy space to which he clings in his confusion and his distress.

In the play, it is clear that Joey's confusion and distress are part of a mental breakdown that he is suffering in the wake of the traumatic events of his mother's and Trevor's death. It can be argued, however, that the spatio-temporal aspects that shape Joey's experience of his mental breakdown reflect in a broader sense the crisis in spatio-temporal structures that Harvey links to the experience of financial capitalism. Thus, Eldridge's play captures the experience not only of mental distress but, in a wider sense, of the postmodern condition. Joey attempts to order his experience into the linear chronology, that he is told best represents it. His failure to fit his lived experience to this model of representation suggests a gap between the two. This gap between the representation of time and space and our lived experience of it is political. When our representations of how the world functions fail reflect the actuality of experience, then it becomes difficult to take effective action. We are disabled. In order to take effective action, we need new spatio-temporal models of the world that more accurately capture the ways in which contemporary society functions. Dramatic structure provides us with a tool that we can use to experiment with these.

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