

INTERMISSION and ENTR_ACTE

Ashley Barr

INTERMISSION

An Interval is an Uninhabitable Space

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance):

Speaker: the presumed voice of the poem

Pavis: author of *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis* (1998)

The Audience: occupying the audience space

Subject-less-ness: a tenant and a sense of being nowhere

Amy Hollywood: author of "Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization" (2002)

The Concept of Habitus: an invitation to analysis

Spectators / The Spectator: sitting in the Audience's seat Lauren Berlant: author of *Cruel Optimism* (2011)

Critical Faculties: both dormant and awakened

Classical Dramaturgy: an (off)stage manager

Rightmove.co.uk: a purveyor of property news and occasional advice

Director: "we will simply say that the director exists and makes his presence felt"

Experimental Writing Prize - Shortlisted

Head Judge:

Clare Fisher

**The University of Sheffield's
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SETTING: *The shower as a place of subject-making and intermission of subject-making.*

STAGE DIRECTION: *“the anonymous speaking device mechanically produces affection implied in the form of addresses”*

SPEAKER

the longing blooms out my mouth
my mouth or sound modifier
that modifies sound as we speak

PAVIS

“The intermission is used to change the scenery during a long pause or blackouts; also, changes may be made in full view of the audience.”

SETTING: *An intermission (interval) that keeps being interrupted (not taken).*

PAVIS

or, a “lapse of time between acts in which the play is interrupted”

THE AUDIENCE *“leaves the house temporarily; a break that marks a return to social time, dis-illusion and reflection.”*

SUBJECT-LESS-NESS

This shower doesn't really feel like a good place to intermit.

SPEAKER

I structure myself in its direction without intending to

SETTING: *This shower scene is unlike the one in Carrie, those shown in soap commercials (although it might be said to feature anatomizing shots of the body), or any experience imagined by the writers focusing on the design and history of the shower. The SPEAKER does not seem to be using the shower for any purpose that is particular to the shower itself or its design. It also does not seem to be an especially comfortable or pleasurable space — the only physical description of it is that it has moldy walls. Instead, it is a time and space where the SPEAKER takes intermission from reproducing himself as a coherent, crystallized subject.*

THE AUDIENCE

“It was not intended to exist forever and may well stop existing as soon as tomorrow (resources). It's also prone to intermission.”

PAVIS

“It matters little how long the intermission lasts, as long as it is motivated by the action that continues off-stage.”

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SUBJECT-LESS-NESS

Basically, the landlords who installed this shower will never have to use it or live with it, and I don't imagine I'll have to live with it forever so my earliest relationship to it was just getting through it. Nothing is forever.

AMY HOLLYWOOD

"Resistance occurs in the space and time interval demanded by repetition"

PAVIS

"Its primary function, however, is a social one."

THE CONCEPT OF HABITUS *invites us to analyse the body.*

SETTING: *"Ways of Relating the Two Temporalities, all possible combinations are imaginable."*

STAGE DIRECTION: *"An examination together of these two temporalities, stage time and dramatic time, quickly leads to a confusion between the two."*

SPECTATORS *"meet and show off their outfits."*

STAGE DIRECTION *"Just as THE SPECTATOR's pleasure lies in confusing stage fiction and dramatic fiction (from the text), it also consists in not knowing where they are."*

THE SPECTATOR

A sufficiently immersive distraction left by my landlord in the centre of my room feels like a break in the fourth wall. I stop looking for things left where I'm meant to see.

STAGE DIRECTION: *"They live in a present but forget its immediacy to penetrate a different world of discourse, a different temporality."*

THE SPECTATOR

"That of the story told to me, to whose construction I contribute by looking forward to what comes next."

STAGE DIRECTION: *"In any case, stage time, i.e. present time, organizes the world on the basis of itself and dips into the reservoir of dramatic time, which flows into the stage enunciation."*

SUBJECT-LESS-NESS

But I guess I also find intermissions to be stressful, in general. For example, if you're not looking at the space where the performance will take place, where do you direct your eyes?

THE AUDIENCE

How to intermit is a question for the finance division.

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SUBJECT-LESS-NESS

I have to stand up in a small space, I have to hold the showerhead if I want it.
It's an activity, emphasis on *active*.

LAUREN BERLANT

"I am not asking to replace a notion of cognitive will with a notion of involuntary or unconscious activity. In the model I am articulating here, the body and a life are not only projects, but also sites of episodic intermission from personality, the burden of whose reproduction is part of the drag of practical sovereignty, of the obligation to be reliable."

SPEAKER

(with mouth to the showerhead, as if it were a microphone)

Who stops being
reliable
during an intermission?

PAVIS

"The intermission signals an awakening of the critical faculties"

STAGE DIRECTION: THE "CRITICAL FACULTIES" *awaken*.

SUBJECT-LESS-NESS

Pavis is talking about an opportunity for the audience to pause their immersion in the fictional world onstage, but I have never taken an intermission in which the first critical faculty to awaken was not the need to pee.

SETTING: THE CRITICAL FACULTIES *have been allowed for use, with certain conditions*.

THE SPECTATOR *remembers that this is supposed to be an intermission, and queues to awaken the critical faculties*.

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ENTR'ACTE ONE

A Room Opens for Improvisation

SPEAKER

my shower is a wet, wet room
my shower has a proscenium
spotlight on my shower platform
enter to perform myself
cleaning myself for myself

STAGE DIRECTION: "CLASSICAL DRAMATURGY [offstage] took over the intermission and tried to motivate it to serve the illusion."

CRITICAL FACULTIES

It is important to pay attention to the conceptual framing in order to think about the way ongoingness and intermission are happening here.

SUBJECT-LESS-NESS

So, in addition to being a project, the life and body are also occasionally "sites of episodic intermission from personality." Creating these sites of intermission becomes necessary because, in absence of adequate structures, reproducing oneself as a fully interiorized subject is, perhaps at best, exhausting, repetitive, and boring.

SPEAKER

so now all projects finished
I lay in bed and stroke my own
belly hair and take in the split
in the beam above my head

AMY HOLLYWOOD

"Resistance occurs in the space and time interval demanded by repetition."

SPEAKER

a crack runs through
the beam above my bed
I watch and wait for it
to snap

CRITICAL FACULTIES

The assumptions about how the future will uphold the present conditions is a *result* of the way modernization heralds itself as the spreading of inevitable evenness. There has never really been a point at which conditions were actually as frozen as predictions assume them to be.

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SPEAKER

recontextualize it as a skylight
through which I can bathe
in the light
Edenic in my bedsit

AMY HOLLYWOOD

“The room opened for improvisation within the ritual space marks it as a site
of both domination and resistance.”

STAGE DIRECTION: *A room opens for improvisation.*

SPEAKER

it's just that the future is something
I want to form
and I suppose I actively do
walking by your window

STAGE DIRECTION: *Not fully fitting is not a tragedy.*

SETTING: The shower as a place of subject-making and intermission of subject making becomes unruly.

SUBJECT-LESS-NESS

It might just better lubricate me for living in these conditions.

SPEAKER

potentially useful for directions
search that slugs can live
up to 6 years
“in favourable conditions”

CRITICAL FACULTIES

“The continued growth of cities forced the development of a common water-
borne sewage system, particularly after it was recognized that disease and
epidemics could spread rapidly throughout an urban population so long as
unsanitary conditions prevailed.”

SPEAKER

I move the shaving cream
I never use anyway
wipe down shower tiles
use cleaning spray

SUBJECT-LESS-NESS

What other help is there?

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SPEAKER

I have a hand towel from Ikea
I use to wipe down the tiles
after every shower I wipe
under the soap dish
around each bottle of shampoo

SUBJECT-LESS-NESS

What other help is there?

RIGHTMOVE.CO.UK

“You should speak to your letting agent or landlord as soon as possible.”

SPEAKER

lately I've been dreaming
about the arrangement
of the bathroom.

STAGE DIRECTION: *To give the last scene an odd, dreamlike quality, the DIRECTOR shot it with the actors moving and walking backwards, then playing the sequence in reverse.*

SPEAKER

in a dream,
the defence took place
in a series of large, tiled rooms
like the showers in a jr. high locker room
each with their own elaborate feast
I avoided speaking about my choices

SUBJECT-LESS-NESS

Are your dreams responsible for my shower? Is this your fault? Did you put
this here psychically?

SPEAKER

like, last night's bathroom had no shower
but was big enough to house many screens
or weeks ago now, I dreamed
my landlord dismantled my bathroom
to install a pizza oven for the house

RIGHTMOVE.CO.UK

“There is no specific plan that a landlord needs to agree to, so it's important
that you speak with your letting agent or landlord and explain your situation as
soon as you can.”

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Works Referenced

INTERMISSION

Quotes and references Mladen Dolar's *A Voice and Nothing More* (2006, 8); Patrice Pavis's *Dictionary of the Theatre* (1998, 186–87, 410); Kenneth Goldsmith's UbuWeb "About" page (2011); Amy Hollywood's "Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization" (2006, 254); Talal Asad's *Genealogies of Religion* (1993, 75); Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* (2011, 116).

ENTR'ACTE ONE

Quotes and references Patrice Pavis's *Dictionary of the Theatre* (1998, 104, 187); Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* (2011, 116); Amy Hollywood's "Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization" (2006, 254, 269); Alexander Kira's *The Bathroom* (1977, 8); a Rightmove.co.uk article on renting during the first Covid-19 lockdown (Gray 2020); an listicle on "17 things you probably never knew about *Carrie*" (Edwards 2016).

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