

CHRISTINA WALD

“What discoveries do we bring back from that alien terrain?”¹

The Spatialisation of Trauma and the Exploration of the Paedophile’s Mind in Bryony Lavery’s *Frozen*

In Bryony Lavery’s award winning² play *Frozen*, the psychiatrist Dr Agnetha Gottmundsdottir considers herself to be on an expedition through “the Arctic sea of the criminal brain” (67). In her concluding lecture she asks: “What discoveries do we bring back from that alien terrain to help to make our inner and outer landscape warmer safer kinder better?” (67). This question puts in a nutshell central concerns and techniques of the play: *Frozen* understands and explores the psyche in terms of space and invests external spaces with psychic meaning. The play’s title announces the central metaphor of a frozen ocean, which synthesizes defining qualities of traumatised. If the ocean represents the overwhelming, violent quality of the traumatic experience, the *frozen* ocean indicates how much the characters remain captured in and paralysed by their past experiences. The psychiatric lectures of Agnetha suggest that the mind of the child abuser and serial killer Ralph is akin to

¹ *Frozen* 67. All other page references in brackets refer to *Frozen*.

² *Frozen* won a Theatrical Management Association Best New Play Award and the Eileen Anderson Central Television Award for Best Play in 1998.

the arctic because early childhood traumata had an arresting, “freezing” impact on Ralph’s neuronal structures. Nancy, the mother of one of his victims, for the greatest part of the play is suspended in “frozen mourning” for her lost daughter Rhona.³ The third on-stage character, Agnetha, is likewise in a state of traumatising, as she is unable to overcome the sudden death of her colleague and secret lover, David. In the play’s opening scene, the psychiatrist manages her break-down in an almost comically professional manner. Being split into therapist and traumatised patient, she tries to guide herself through her fits of crying and despair.

While the notion of a psychic topology has been a well-established figure of thought ever since Freud’s model of the layered self and his dictum that the ego is no longer the master in its own house⁴, the suggestion that the mind of the paedophile criminal is an “uncertain territory” that needs to be mapped means an innovation in terms of dramatic genre. *Frozen* can be situated in the context of a number of plays since the late 1980s which have tackled the issue of sexual child abuse. I will

³ Ever since Freud’s “Trauer und Melancholie” [“Mourning and Melancholia”], melancholy has been understood as a state of frozen mourning. Contemporary psychology labels melancholy “dysthymia” or “neurotic depression” and acknowledge that severe cases of frozen mourning, which are often triggered by the sudden loss of one’s own child, can involve post-traumatic stress disorders. Therefore, contemporary psychology and psychiatry differentiates between the neurotic aetiology of melancholy as described by Freud, and the psychotraumatic aetiology (cf. Fischer and Hammel 54), which I employ in the following.

⁴ Cf. Freud: “Die dritte und empfindlichste Kränkung aber soll die menschliche Größensucht durch die heutige psychologische Forschung erfahren, welche dem Ich nachweisen will, daß es nicht einmal Herr im eigenen Hause [ist]” (*Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse* 295) [the third and most severe offence for human megalomania is exerted by the psychological research which argues that the Ego is no longer the master in its own house]. Cf. also: “Die einzig typische, d.h. regelmäßige Darstellung der menschlichen Person als Ganzes ist die als Haus, wie Scherner erkannt hat” (154) [The only typical, i.e. common depiction of the human being as a whole is the house, as Scherner has recognised]. Freud refers to the dream scholar Karl Albert Scherner, who published *Das Leben des Traums* (*The Life of the Dream*) in 1861.

label this body of texts "Trauma Drama,"⁵ a body to which playwrights such as Sarah Daniels, Marina Carr, Phyllis Nagy, Mark Ravenhill, and Arnold Wesker contributed. Early plays of Trauma Drama focus on (predominantly female) victims of domestic and often incestuous child abuse. The plays can be contextualised in the intense public debate which followed the Cleveland affair in 1987. In these plays, the abuser tends to be either an off-stage character or a flat, static villain character, who serves as antagonist.

In addition to Lavery's *Frozen*, the male perpetrator⁶ has become the centre of interest for playwrights in a number of plays since the late 1990s, such as Alan Bennett's *Playing Sandwiches* (1998) and his latest stage play *The History Boys* (2004), Lucy Prebble's *The Sugar Syndrome* (2003), David Hines's *Nymphs and Shepherds* (2004), Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder's *Fresh Kills* (2004), and Kevin Elyot's *Forty Winks* (2004).⁷ These plays scrutinise a figure that, according to Ian Hacking, has become a touchstone of our moral standards: "our whole value system has been affected by the trajectory of child abuse in the past thirty years, with a compelling new constellation of absolute moral evil: child abuse" (259–60).⁸ Following Hacking's suggestion that the child abuser has

⁵ Anna Reading's *Kiss Punch Goodnight* (1988), Victoria Hardie's *Sleeping Nightie* (1989), David Spencer's *Killing the Cat* (1990), Sarah Daniels's *Beside Herself* (1990), *Head-Rot Holiday* (1992) and *The Madness of Esme and Shaz* (1994), Kay Trainor's *Bad Girl* (1992), Spin/Stir's show *Naming* (1994), Phyllis Nagy's *Butterfly Kiss* (1994), Dennis Lumborg's *One Fine Day* (1995), Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* (1996), Mike Cullen's *Anna Weiss* (1997), Claire Dowie's *Easy Access (for the Boys)* (1998), Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill* (2000), Shelagh Stephenson's *Five Kinds of Silence* (2000), Judith Jones and Beatrix Campbell's *And All the Children Cried* (2002), Claire McIntyre's *The Maths Tutor* (2003), and Debbie Tucker-Green's *Born Bad* (2003) belong to Trauma Drama.

⁶ While plays such as Dowie's *Easy Access* have come to represent male victims of sexual child abuse, the figure of the perpetrator remains male in Trauma Drama, with very few exceptions such as Clare Pollard's *The Weather* (2004).

⁷ Like Lavery's play, Simon Stephens's *One Minute* (2004), Robert Evans's *A Girl in a Car with a Man* (2004), Shelagh Stephenson's *Enlightenment* (2005) deal with the disappearance of children.

⁸ Cf. also Alan Bennett's remark in *Talking Heads 2* that according to the moral standards set by the tabloid press, "murder and grievous bodily harm are thought of as respectable crimes and sexual offences are not [...] the press hysteria over paedo-

become a pivotal point of our moral standards, the play's metaphor of the abuser's mind as the Northern Pole, the pivot of the earth, gains yet another meaning. However, notwithstanding that *Frozen* presents a particularly "evil" version of the child abuser, namely a serial killer, the play affords a differentiated and almost sympathetic perspective on this usually demonised figure.

Given the heightened public interest in cases of child abuse and murder, one could of course suspect Lavery, and indeed all playwrights of Trauma Drama, of sensationalism and of the cynic attempt to profit from the "trauma industry."⁹ However, Lavery's portrayal of the serial killer avoids sensationalism. Neither does the play dwell on the gruesome details of Ralph's murders or on his fantasies, nor does it glamorise the serial killer, presenting him as yet another version of the intellectually brilliant and charismatic serial killer in the manner of Hannibal Lecter.¹⁰

If the play spatialises trauma by referring to the frozen arctic sea, does it also traumatise space? Do productions of *Frozen* create on-stage spaces that can be aligned with the spatial logics of trauma? In order to address this question, I will focus on the original British production at the Birmingham Rep directed by Bill Alexander and designed by Ruari Murchison in 1998, which was revised at the National Theatre in 2002. Occasionally, I will also refer to the first American production by MCC (Manhattan Class Company) Theater, which was directed by Doug Hughes and designed by Hugh Landwehr. This production opened in New York City in 2004 and had a successful run at the Broadway, which earned the play four Tony nominations.

philia, and in particular offences that occurred long in the past, has reached dangerous proportions [...]" (16–17).

⁹ For a critical examination of the trauma industry, see Kilby, esp. 218.

¹⁰ Agnetha at one point refers to this type when she calls Ralph "manipulative and intense and kinda mesmerising like a rattlesnake" (41). Nonetheless, the play text represents Ralph as a rather dull and banal character rather than as a fascinating and charismatic killer. The performances of *Frozen* have not supported Agnetha's characterisation of Ralph, either.

The Traumatisation of Space

Frozen's temporal and spatial structure and its dramatic mode reflect its central topic of traumatisation. *Frozen* enacts the spatial logic of trauma, which is closely connected with trauma's temporal structure of belatedness. As most other plays of Trauma Drama,¹¹ it offers pre-traumatic and post-traumatic perspectives but does not stage the actual moments of trauma, such as Rhona's abuse and murder and the abuse and neglect Ralph allegedly suffered from as a child. The absence of the traumatic scene on stage matches the principle of trauma theory that the traumatic experience as such eludes narrative memory. An event has traumatic consequences if it is so intense and happens so sudden and unexpectedly that the subject is unable to grasp it psychically at the moment of occurrence but merely can register it physically. Only belatedly does the traumatic impact of the event become palpable through somatic symptoms, anxiety dreams, or flashbacks which make the traumatised subject repeatedly re-enact the traumatic scene. The paradoxical time structure of traumatisation hence implies that for the traumatised individual, the trauma happened in a past that can never be fully present.

The second scene of *Frozen* is a flashback in terms of *dramatic* time structure. It is set 25 years earlier than Scene One, namely on the day of Rhona's disappearance; it might, however, also be a *belatedly traumatic* flashback in Nancy's memory, the return to the day of Rhona's murder. If the scene can be understood as a compulsive flashback, *Frozen* stages a traumatic time structure, which blurs the boundary between subjective reality, when Nancy did not know what happened to Rhona, and objective reality, in which Rhona was already tortured and killed. The conflation of external and internal reality, which is a common device in Trauma Drama, not only affects the play's chronological order, but also its settings, blurring the spatial boundaries and causing a sense of dislocation that is typical of trauma: "the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its [...] refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time" (Caruth 9).

¹¹ Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill* is an exception to this pattern.

The stage designs of the British and the American production can be read both as the frozen *inner* landscape of the characters' minds and as external settings. While the American production uses a backdrop of dark blue ice to evoke the arctic wasteland, Bill Alexander's production is set on a white, empty, square platform, which subtly suggests an ice floe. The backside of the platform is limited by a curtain of light and smoke through which the characters enter and leave the stage. This curtain gives the production a surreal and dream-like quality, which is reinforced by suggestive piano and vibraphone live music as well as by recorded sound effects, such as girls' laughter.¹² The production does without detailed realistic scenery in its creation of the play's settings such as Nancy's house, Ralph's shed, the prison, and the lecture hall. The rooms and places are instead demarcated by means of light and are, in some scenes, specified through a characteristic prop or piece of furniture. The bare stage, the curtain of light and smoke, the live music, the sound effects as well as the evocative lighting reinforce the ambivalent setting between external space and psychic landscape.

For the first third of the play, the characters never meet in the arctic wasteland. The structure of interchanging monologues becomes predictable and makes the play appear almost as frozen in repetition compulsions as its protagonists. The production reinforces the structural repetitions through the actors' use of stage space. With very few exceptions, the actors enter the stage with a prop that defines their scene and utter their monologues facing the audience without further onstage movement. It is only after one third of the play, when Agnetha visits Ralph in prison, that two of the characters meet. Nancy does not enter the same space with another character until late in the play. However, the production suggests the interlocking of the characters' spaces from an earlier point onwards. Rather than reserving particular areas of the stage for each character, their onstage spaces overlap. For example, the large rectangle of light which creates Rhona's room transmutes into the smaller square room, which stands for the shed where Ralph files his videos of

¹² Although the original production did without the sounds of splintering ice described below, it realised those sound effects required by the text which evoke the characters' thoughts and memories; for example, the audience hears sounds of girls laughing as Ralph recalls the abductions (37).

child pornography. In the latter half of the show, the production reinforces the spatial association of the characters by staging scenes simultaneously, with having two or all characters on stage together. Thus, the dissociation of spaces in the first half of the play leads to a reassembling and integration in the second half. The use of stage space becomes a figure for the logics of the resolution of trauma.¹³

Psychotopographies I: Nancy

Moreover, *Frozen* establishes a close interaction between internal and external space through presenting specific rooms as “symptoms,” for example for Nancy’s psychic pain. During the twenty years that Nancy hopes that her missing daughter will return, she attempts to preserve Rhona’s room exactly as it was when she left. She forbids her husband Bob and her daughter Ingrid to change or even enter the room. Nancy’s desire to freeze her daughter’s realm reflects and fuels her fixation on Rhona’s return. However, the play introduces a catachresis on the level of metaphor, when Nancy begins to work for the organisation *Flame*, which is devoted to finding missing children. Nancy phrases the task of *Flame* in one of her public talks as follows: “FLAME is about / just that... / keeping that flame of hope alive / keep it burning / so that our missing children / can see its light / and feel its warmth / and come towards it” (24). In Nancy’s eyes, Rhona’s *frozen* room nourishes her *flame* of hope. Other than Nancy, Rhona’s elder sister Ingrid is preoccupied with imagery of frost and death. She has nightmares about a body she lost in the Arctic which gradually disappears under the ice, without Ingrid being able to save it.¹⁴ Ingrid’s anxiety dream presents a

¹³ Lavery emphasises that the eventual encounter of the three characters is more than a plot device but stands for a vision of social change: “The three characters are from separate worlds. At the opening of the play, they are frozen in their opinions and their isolation, but gradually they have to deal with one another [...]. If the victim and the perpetrator and science remain in separate worlds, it can never get better” (Wood).

¹⁴ Although she had decided on the play’s title beforehand, Lavery took this image over from Marian Partington, the sister of the murdered Lucy Partington. The Partington case was among the cases that influenced Lavery’s writing. Like the family depicted in *Frozen*, the Partingtons had not known what happened to Lucy for

displaced version of her experience of loss. Although Rhona is no longer present for the family, she stays as alive and fresh in their thoughts as the body preserved by ice. The image of the almost invisible body surrounded by impenetrable ice also appears as a metaphor for traumatisa-tion as such; like the original event that causes trauma, it is inaccessible for narrative memory, but at the same time it directs the lives of the family members, particularly of Nancy, in ways beyond their control.

Twenty years after Rhona's disappearance, Ralph is arrested and Rhona's family learns that she was abused, killed, and buried in a shed that is close to their home. While the sad certainty of loss makes the offstage characters Ingrid and Bob, Rhona's sister and father, slowly leave behind their frozen states of sustained hope and held-back grief, it does not have an equally mobilising impact on Nancy. It is only the quality of her paralysis that changes; rather than being fixated on the hope for Rhona's return, Nancy becomes absorbed in hatred of Ralph and fantasies of revenge:

I'd like to see him die
Watch him
Suffer

twenty years, until Fred West confessed her murder. In 1996, Marian Partington reflected on Lucy's loss in an article in *The Guardian* entitled "Salvaging the Sacred." Partington wrote:

It is very difficult to find the words or an image to describe the pain and disori-entation of one's sister simply disappearing without trace, for 20 years. It is a bit like trying to search for a body that is trapped somewhere beneath the frozen Arctic ocean, as the freeze continues and the ice thickens and there is no sign of a thaw, no sign of a seal hole. The features of that world become distorted as the seasons pass and the ice builds up, and you have to go inside to get warm if you want to survive and carry on. But you have to be ready for the thaw, for the res-cue. Somewhere inside I became disconnected from the past and disabled by the future. (Quoted in Gardner)

The play's scene in which Nancy caresses the skull of her dead daughter likewise draws on Partington's account of burying her sister's bones (cf. Gardner).

For her portrayal of Ralph, Lavery has conflated characteristics of several serial killers. She particularly mentions Frederick West and Robert Black (cf. Wood). Ralph's lines contain verbatim quotes from Black; like Black, Ralph describes the murders as a "rush of blood" (12) and claims that he just wants to "spend some time with" (12) the girls he abducts (for the phrases by Black see Gekowski).

He wouldn't suffer like she suffered
but it would be something
An eye for an eye (37)

Just as the preservation of Nancy's hope and her desperate holding on to the lost happy past was visualised in her freezing of Rhona's room, the play expresses Nancy's destructive and vengeful urge in her attitude towards the place of Rhona's death. In the original production, Nancy, played by Anita Dobson, re-enacts the shed's demolition as if she had taken it down herself with her fists, which shows her identification with the bulldozer's activity. Her feelings after the demolition demonstrate to which degree she had invested the place with psychic meaning: "within minutes / it was gone / it was like my heart torn out of my chest / and oh / there was nothing there any more / nothing at all / just nothingness" (43).

While the series of Nancy's monologues express increasing paralysis and numbness, the level of sound effects establishes a counter-narrative to Nancy's own experience of her inner states. After the scene in which Nancy learns that Rhona was killed, the audience hears "ice floes breaking up" (29). The sound effect retrospectively underlines that Nancy was frozen rather than alive in her hope for Rhona's return. After Nancy has articulated her feeling of emptiness and nothingness in the face of the demolished shed, the play inserts "a sound of splintering ice floes" (43) and later on "[f]ar away, something falls from a great height... fractures" (44), "[s]omewhere, some liquid starts dripping slowly" (51) and audiences hear the "sound of something breaking" (51).

While Nancy experiences herself as psychically dead — "I think I am as near to being not alive any more as I've ever been" (48) — the metaphorical level conveyed by sound suggests a process of melting, of recovery from "frozen mourning." Again, the metaphor of melting corresponds with concepts employed by trauma theory. The psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman describes the process of recovering from trauma as a form of melting: "Out of the fragmented components of frozen imaginary and sensation, patient and therapist slowly reassemble an organized, detailed, verbal account, oriented in time and historical context" (Herman 177). Nancy's process of recovery is guided by her daughter Ingrid, who provides her mother with esoteric advice, which

once again spatialises Nancy's psychic development. She says, "Mum... / You're in a Very Bad Space [...] Let It [her anger] Go. / Make Space for Other Things To Enter Your Heart" (55). The play introduces Ingrid's recommendations as comical elements, which Nancy initially dismisses: "She's got this new way of talking... / It's like listening to a Diet and Exercise Book" (55). Nonetheless, Nancy eventually takes serious Ingrid's advice to leave behind her grief for Rhona as well as her hatred of Ralph. In a scene called "The secret art of Feng-Shui," the play shows that Nancy's psychic effort of "making space" is closely connected to changes in actual rooms. As the doctrine of Feng-Shui allows for the flow of energy, Nancy's redecoration once again makes the flow of psychic energy possible; Rhona's room is "unfrozen," it again becomes part of the house of Nancy's psyche. Nancy feels that the "the whole house is bigger now" (65) and that she has "no malice" in her "No nothing. / Just space / for / something fresh" (66).

Psychotopographies II: Ralph

The opening quote introduced the psychotopography of the criminal brain as the frozen arctic sea. In her lectures to the audience, Agnetha claims that past childhood traumata had a damaging, freezing impact on Ralph. Presenting the perpetrator as an erstwhile victim of abuse, the play follows a well established explanatory pattern not only for sexual child abuse, but also for serial killing. Mark Seltzer states in his study on criminological and fictional portraits of serial killers that "child abuse — wounded as a child, wounding as an adult — is one of the foundational scripts in accounting for the serial killer" (1998: 4). Seltzer calls attention to the fact that the notion of the victim-turned-perpetrator has almost become a *conditio sine qua non* in our attempts to understand serial killers: "Such an explanation has become virtually automatic in literature (factual and fictional) on serial killing assuming a peculiarly a priori status, even where evidence for it is conspicuously absent" (257).¹⁵

¹⁵ For an example of the pattern in German literature on serial killers, see Paul Moor's study on Jürgen Bartsch with the programmatic title *Opfer und Täter* [Victim and Perpetrator] (Rowohlt 1991).

While Seltzer points out how difficult it is to determine what counts as the “real” foundation of trauma, *Frozen* offers such a proof of Ralph’s psychic damage by resorting to the “cold facts” of neurobiology. Lavery weaves results of current neurobiological research into Agnetha’s lectures, which trace the damaging impact of childhood traumata on the brain structure. Once again resorting to the play’s central metaphor, Agnetha suggests that Ralph’s neuronal structure is “ice-bound” (37) in the immature state of a child. Her argument is based on the assumption that severe childhood abuses impair the development of the brain, more specifically the cortex and the frontal lobes, which are responsible for key human abilities, such as empathy, moral judgement and adaptation to new situations:¹⁶

The cortex and the frontal lobes
are there to provide judgment,
to organise behaviour
and decision-making
to learn and stick to
rules of everyday life.
Ladies and Gentlemen...
they are responsible for making us human.
I intend here to examine
what goes wrong with that humanity
which can make certain individuals appear inhuman (35)

¹⁶ Lavery took so little poetic licence in using research on the corporeality of trauma that she was accused of plagiarism. Seeing *Frozen* during its run on Broadway last year, the psychiatrist Dr. Dorothy Otnow Lewis, professor at the New York City University School of Medicine, believed not only to have recognised central theses as published in her book *Guilty by Reason of Insanity* but she also claimed that Lavery used her biographical details for the character of Agnetha, such as about Lewis’s collaboration with her colleague Jonathan Pincus. See Thorpe and Gladwell for reports on the accusation and Lavery’s reaction.

Agnetha presents Ralph as a body of evidence within her lectures.¹⁷ She makes him undergo a number of physical tests which prove her theory. Not only Ralph's body language, but also his verbal statements seem to endorse Agnetha's theory. Ralph claims not to have perceived the pain and fear of his victims and even believes that they collaborated with his plans. He says about Rhona: "I think she quite liked me / oh yes / she was interested / [...] she's persuaded it's time to get in the van" (13–14). Unable to sense the wrongness of the murders, Ralph bluntly states: "The only thing I am sorry about is that it's not legal [...] Killing girls" (62).

Agnetha's use of Ralph's body as an exhibit in her lectures repeats the criminological practice, which likewise scrutinised Ralph's body as a body of evidence. Just as Agnetha traces the traumata that are tattooed onto Ralph's neuronal structures, the police examines the tattoos on Ralph's skin, which he proudly presents to the audience in one of his earlier monologues. He describes in detail in which tattoo shops he had them made. When again explaining their genesis to the police after his arrest, his body becomes a map, which allows tracing his movement through the country and establishes his criminal history. I would suggest that the tattooing also serves as a displacement activity, which once again connects outside and inside: as Ralph got a tattoo after each of the seven murders, the imprints on the surface of his body can be interpreted as a compensation for the lack of imprint which the murders made in terms of internal, psychobiological change.

As the play initially underpins Agnetha's vision of the criminal brain as the frozen arctic sea, it forecloses the dramatic possibilities of character development; for the greatest part of the play, Ralph remains a static character. On a larger scale, and this brings in the issue of theatre as a space for social negotiation, Ralph's characterisation raises the question of how we understand character, not only on but also beyond the stage.

¹⁷ Characterising Agnetha as a "psychiatric explorer," Lavery presents a female figure in the traditionally male position of the explorer and the psychiatrist. As Ralph becomes an exhibit in her lectures for the audience, the play inverts the gendered positions of patient and doctor, of body of evidence and scientist, of terra incognita and explorer as displayed, for example in Anna Furse's *Augustine (Big Hysteria)*, Kim Morrissey's *Dora: A Case of Hysteria*, Christopher Hampton's *The Talking Cure* and Snoo Wilson's *Sabina*.

If we are, as Agnetha thinks, determined by heredity and early childhood experiences and henceforth directed by “frozen” brain structures, moral responsibility is an obsolete concept. Accordingly, Agnetha considers Ralph’s murders to be symptoms rather than sins (67). However, her research is not at all concerned with curing these symptoms. Assuming irreparable early childhood damage to the brain, she forecloses the possibility that Ralph’s ice-bound personality might change.

Nevertheless, the play’s plot ultimately transcends Agnetha’s deterministic theory and allows for Ralph’s, if lethal, transformation into “a more human being.” The eventual confrontation of the killer and the victim’s mother leads to the play’s turning point. At the beginning of their conversation, Ralph refuses to believe that Rhona was afraid when he abducted, abused, and killed her. However, Nancy increasingly guides him towards empathy with his victim. When she makes Ralph talk about his own childhood, he begins to re-enact the verbal and physical abuses he suffered from as a child, playing the roles of both the victim and the perpetrator. Ralph imitates his father’s voice and re-lives the child’s bodily reactions to the father’s blows (72). The scene depicts Ralph’s memory as a flashback and acting out in the psychoanalytical sense, in which the overwhelming traumatic event is again lived through physically rather than understood psychically. As in the case of Nancy’s physical re-enactment of the demolition of the shed, the moment is given particular emphasis because it breaks with the play’s generally diegetic mode of telling rather than showing.

Ralph re-enacts the abuses, as he has not yet managed to place the traumatic memories into a narrative context, which would give them meaning. The subsequent exchange with Nancy offers Ralph a narrativisation and interpretation of his experiences, and hence bears the characteristics of a “talking cure.” With the help of Nancy, Ralph learns to categorise his own erstwhile feelings as pain and fear. When Nancy subsequently makes Ralph compare his own fear as a child with Rhona’s terror, Ralph starts to cry (72–73) and begins to feel intense pain in his chest. Unaccustomed to his own emotions, he interprets the pain as lung cancer rather than remorse, as suggested by Agnetha and through a later scene in which Ralph attempts to apologise to Nancy in a letter (74).

Ralph's letter and the psychosomatic symptom of chest pain contradict Agnetha's theory of frozen structures of thinking and feeling. Locating Ralph's emotion of remorse in his heart rather than his head, the play distances itself from the "cold facts" of neurobiology and once more rewrites the map of Ralph's body. While beforehand his damaged brain was cast as the "centre of operations" (17) which foreclosed feelings such as pity, the ending suggests an alternative centre which allows for remorse "from the bottom of [his] heart" (74). Attaining the ability of reflection and moral judgement, the very characteristics that Agnetha defined as human, Ralph realises how inhumane his past crimes were. Unable to deal with this insight, Ralph commits suicide. The play's ending endorses the versatility of its central metaphor: The melting of ice suggests seasonal change and has a positive note for Nancy, as it allows for a second spring. In Ralph's case, the thawing has lethal consequences. As the Arctic Ocean melts, Ralph drowns in a flood of remorse.

Agnetha's lecture on the difference between a crime of evil and a crime of illness asks for a reconsideration of the "distinctions between right and wrong / between the speakable and the unspeakable / between the forgivable and the unforgivable" (68). Through Ralph's eventual insight into the cruelty of his deeds, it even offers the consoling idea that Ralph's illness might be curable and that the cycle of abuse breeding abuse can be broken. In this respect, *Frozen* resembles Steven Fechter's play *The Woodsman*, which was recently released as a movie starring Kevin Bacon. *The Woodsman* depicts the struggle of Walter to reintegrate himself into society after having served twelve years in prison for child abuse. As Ralph, he initially believes not to have hurt his victims but gradually realises that he inflicted pain onto them. However, while the ending of *The Woodsman* suggests that Walter is eventually able to master his paedophilia, *Frozen* does not offer a similar ending for the abuser.¹⁸ Instead, it suggests that Ralph kills himself because his illness has become chronic. Dying, Ralph once more re-enacts his notorious address before abducting his victims: "Hello Hello Hello Hello He-."

¹⁸ However, a "happy ending" for the abuser in *Frozen* would be much more provocative, as Ralph is not only a child molester, but also a serial killer.

The play's ending offers narrative closure by rewarding the good and punishing the evil and thus re-establishes the moral distinction of right and wrong, which Agnetha questioned throughout the play.¹⁹ The other plays of Trauma Drama which attempt to explore the abuser-character from a more complex point-of-view than absolute moral condemnation, such as Lucy Prebble's *The Sugar Syndrome* and Alan Bennett's *Playing Sandwiches*, likewise offer such closure. Providing containment for a disturbing social problem, the plays offer a de-traumatising ending for the audience. The plays test and possibly expand the audience's borders of emotional and moral tolerance, but they do not trespass them,²⁰ as, for example, the plays of Sarah Kane do. The declared exploration of the frozen arctic sea of trauma hence at the same time is an escape into a utopian fantasy world, in which trauma can fully melt.

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¹⁹ Lavery sees it as the duty of every playwright to offer an encouraging rather than disturbing ending: "I think in *Frozen* the audience go on a most dreadful journey, but they do emerge into light [...]. I think theatre should be cathartic. I don't think allowing people to leave the theatre without hope is viable. [...] I want them to feel that they can surmount everything that is going to happen to them in their long and busy lives [...] It's a play about the courage of ordinary people" (Wood).

²⁰ Cf. O'Mealy (119) on *Playing Sandwiches*: "the viewing audience is moved a few, perhaps grudging, steps closer to recognizing a flawed human – not a monster – behind the tabloid headlines."

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