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Bachelor Thesis

From Page to Stage

On the Externalisation of the Mind in the Theatre Adaptation of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Adaptation studies are currently gaining in both popularity and regard, which is illustrated by the fact that the academic field has developed greatly over the past few decades. Its importance is increasingly being acknowledged, as proven by the various notable scholars and publications focusing on adaptations today. R. Barton Palmer even states that "[a]rguably, the most important development during the last two decades in cultural studies has been the increasing focus on adaptation (which can now be claimed to be a separate field unto itself, worthy of the prominence that specialised journals would afford it)" (qtd. in Bruhn, Gjelsvik, and Hanssen 4).

Especially prevalent within adaptation studies these days are intermedial productions, a term that has been explained in detail by Chiel Kattenbelt and Irina Rajewsky, among others. Intermediality, though used by different scholars in different ways, refers to works of art that engage several media with each other, in such a way that these different media are mutually dependent on and influence each other. Intermedial productions have always made up a vast part of all adaptations, but now seem to be the absolute centre of attention, with 'media' being a very inclusive term. As Lars Elleström says, "[f]or the last two decades at least, art forms have been successfully subsumed under the heading of 'media', in the broadest sense of the notion, and the field of intermedial research is now well established" (113). Linda Hutcheon, too, emphasises the increasing importance of what she calls "transmedia storytelling" in the preface to the second edition of her *A Theory of Adaptation*. She describes this as a process in which a story is told through multiple delivery channels, which creates a unified entertainment experience, and notes that this form of adaptation has become "the new entertainment norm" (xxiii) in the six years after her book was first published in 2006.

In her book, Hutcheon employs a system to distinguish adaptations that she has called "modes of engagement" (22). She compares works of art on the way in which they engage their audience. According to her theory, there are three modes of engagement: telling (e.g. literature), showing (e.g. films and plays) and interacting (e.g. games and theme parks). She theorises adaptation within this framework, which, among other merits, is a useful way to stay away from the fidelity dogma. These modes, especially telling and showing, will come back in this study as well.

Intermediality in adaptation is not a new phenomenon: George Bluestone's canonical *Novels into Film* already extensively addressed one form of intermedial productions (according to the definition that says intermediality occurs when transposing a narrative from one medium to another; Kattenbelt

would probably call Bluestone's cases transmedial) in the 1950s. What *is* (relatively) new, however, is the growing attention for the use of media other than just novels and films. Adaptation studies' horizon is being broadened, and authors like Hutcheon and Elleström are expanding the field to include almost all art forms and other audience-driven manifestations, ranging from paintings to theme parks, both to adapt from and into. Chiel Kattenbelt devotes his work about the concept of intermediality to theatre and performance, specifically. However, even though some of these more experimental adaptations are recognised and discussed in academia nowadays, the main focus in adaptation studies scholarship still seems to lie on what Bluestone already covered all those years ago: even in contemporary adaptation scholarship, the big majority of publications still treats text-to-screen transitions, with Robert Stam and Thomas Leitch being well-known examples. This case study, therefore, will seek to make a contribution to the field of theatre studies rather than film studies, and do so in the wider context of adaptation discourse.

1.1 Introduction of the case study: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

The play that will be discussed in this thesis premiered at the Royal National Theatre in London on the second of August 2012, and is called *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, after the 2003 book of the same name by Mark Haddon. It was adapted by Simon Stephens, and directed by Marianne Elliott (who, among other things, also directed *War Horse*). Currently, the play is staged at the West End in London, on Broadway in New York, and touring around the United Kingdom, which means it is being performed by three different casts simultaneously. Apart from Stephens and Elliott, other important artists involved with the adaptation process were Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett, both part of the British theatre ensemble called *Frantic Assembly* (and authors of *The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre)*. For *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, they served as movement directors.

In London, the play won a record of seven Olivier Awards in 2013, including Best New Play. Recently (on June 7th 2015), the show won five Tony Awards in New York, namely Best Play, Best Director, Best Scenic Design, Best Light Design and Best Actor. Several acclaimed critics in both countries have lauded the play and given it five star reviews.

The book and the play centre on 15-year-old Christopher Boone, who, although never explicitly mentioned, has a form of autism. The plot is explained in more detail in appendix A, but it is useful to mention the book is categorised as a mystery novel, as Christopher goes on a journey to find out who

killed their neighbour's dog. The entire book is presented as Christopher's journal, in which he writes about his daily life, living with his father, attending a special needs school, sessions with his mentor, and the adventure he embarks on.

What makes the novel remarkable is the innovative way in which the workings of a different mind are portrayed. It has received praise from several autism experts (Thistlethwaite 815; Andrade 474), and young people with Asperger's have said it was like reading about themselves (DNA Learning Center), even though Haddon himself does not label the condition Christopher has, and said about doing research into Asperger's or autism that he did "absolutely none" (DNA Learning Center). Still, the book has been lauded for its "unrivalled fictional depiction of the inner workings of an autistic teenage boy" (Jane 87).

Linda Hutcheon describes the most frequent clichés pertaining to adaptation studies in her *A Theory of Adaptation*. One of those is that interiority is expressed better in the telling mode (e.g. literature) than in the showing mode (e.g. theatre). If this holds true, it would mean that Christopher's interior world would (partly) disappear when translating the story from page to stage. This review by Richard Zoglin for *TIME*, however, seems to argue differently, if not the opposite:

> One of the achievements of this stage adaptation of the best-selling 2003 novel by Mark Haddon is that it is a play about a disabled teenager that totally avoids medical explanations or conventional, courage-in-the-face-of-illness sentimentality […] But mostly it's a demonstration of the power of theater to transport us to exotic places, none more exotic than the inside workings of a discombobulated human mind.

According to Zoglin, the play *does* convey "the inside workings of a discombobulated human mind". Apparently, therefore, there are mechanisms at work that undermine the cliché that the showing mode is not (very) capable of portraying interiority. Somehow, the adapters have managed to counter the cliché. The question then is, how have they done so? When analysing the play, three main features stand out. The first one is the way the metadiegetic narrative of the book is adapted. The second is the use of physical theatre, and the third the high amount and the use of audio-visuals in the play, which, together with the physicality of the actors, gives it its intermedial quality. All these factors contribute much to the externalisation of interiority. This paper will therefore research how metatheatre, physical theatre and intermediality externalise the mind in the theatrical adaptation of *The Curious Incident of*

the Dog in the Night-Time.

The first part of this case study will deal with the transition of the story from novel to script, and with questions related to the differences and similarities in the narrative structures of both the book and the script. This part, in other words, focuses on the work of the playwright. To answer these questions, Mieke Bal's narratological theory will be useful, in combination with close reading and a comparative analysis of the novel and play script. The second part of the case study will analyse the shift from script to stage, and focus on two different subtopics: the first of these is the influence of the work of the *Frantic Assembly* on the staging of the play, and how physical theatre is employed to externalise an inner world. This, in other words, is the examination of the (movement) director's and actors' work. For this part, Simon Murray's and John Keefe's *Physical Theatres: A Critical Introduction* will be an important source, along with *The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre,* written by the movement directors of the play. Secondly in the part about the staging of the script, the use of audio-visuals throughout the play will be analysed, in order to determine their role in portraying Christopher's interiority in the showing mode. Of course, every piece of theatre inevitably makes use of audio (voices, sounds, the soundtrack) and visuals (whatever the audience looks at) - that is what makes it part of the showing mode, and distinguishes it from the telling one. However, in this particular case, these aspects of the play are notably interesting, because of the use of new (digital) technologies, such as projection mapping, moving images and screens as a part of the set. Here, Jon Whitmore's *Directing Postmodern Theatre* has been one of the points of reference, as have been Patrice Pavis's comments on the employment of sound and lighting and Greg Giesekam's work *Staging the Screen: The Use of Film and Video in Theatre*.

For all three parts of this analysis, the BBC's *From Page to Stage: The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* Learning Zone video clips have been of great help. They provided interviews with several members of the cast and crew of the production, including playwright Simon Stephens, director Marianne Elliott, movement director Scott Graham and several actors. These interviews have been analysed as secondary sources, and treated as narratives about the primary source.

1.2 Current paradigms in the field of adaptation studies

Before embarking on the case study's analysis, it is useful to briefly lay out some of the recent developments and ideas in the field of adaptation studies, and identify the specific theories used for this

paper.

In the opening chapter of their recent work *Adaptation Studies, New Challenges, New Directions*, Bruhn, Gjelsvik and Hanssen provide an overview of the current state of adaptation studies, through listing five "characteristic theoretical and analytical clusters" (4) that are prevalent in the field. The first one in this list of five typical adaptation studies 'clusters' is the (in)famous fidelity discourse, "which adaptation studies universally addresses" (4). Even though the fidelity approach is often regarded as something from the past, it is an evil that is hard to get rid of, the authors argue.

The second cluster deals with the horizon-broadening of the field: the notion of a need to broaden the field of adaptation studies to include more than just novel-to-film translations, as described in the above. "Traditionally, adaptation studies focuses on novels transferred to films" (6), the authors argue, too. This is partly because of the fact that literature, unlike cinema, is an "honorific", as Thomas Leitch argues (qtd. in Bruhn, Gjelsvik, and Hanssen 6), meaning that it is met with a generally high esteem. Another reason might be related to the fact that films attract a big audience, or "the popular mass", as Stam calls it (7). Whatever the arguments, however, fact remains that an (overly) big part of adaptation scholarship centres around text-to-screen (case) studies. Elleström offers a slightly different take on the widening of the adaptation studies field, and prioritises the application of intermediality discourse. "Before expanding adaptation studies, they should be placed in the wider context of intermediality", he argues (Bruhn, Gjelsvik, and Hanssen 114).

A third current trend in adaptation studies is the movement away from a one-to-one relationship, of *one* source leading to *one* adaptation. Since poststructuralism, it has often been argued that every source has been influenced by something in turn, whether it is another work, or cultural-historical context. According to poststructuralists, a work does not have one fixed origin, and adaptations are the result of a much longer string of reworkings, whether of different works, historical events, oral traditions, or other influences. An example of such a string of adaptations is any contemporary production that we attribute to Shakespeare, which might be a modern film adaptation of a screenplay that was adapted from a translation that was based on the First Folio version of an early Shakespeare play, the story of which was actually not originally by Shakespeare but a rewriting of an earlier folklore tale. Etcetera.

The fourth development mentioned in Bruhn, Gjelsvik, and Hanssen's overview of the field is the straying from an exclusively one-way notion of adaptations. Adaptation as a process (a notion that

Hutcheon very much advocates, 18) can be a two-way story as well, a give-and-take, a mutual relationship. An adaptation might influence its source again, and transport things back, in the way that the source is 'changed' through its adaptation. In Jørgen Bruhn's opinion, this 'might' is a 'does': "Any rewriting or adaptation of a text is always influencing the original work" (Bruhn, Gjelsvik, and Hanssen 70). The changes in the source material that Bruhn discusses can be divided in two parts: editorial/authorial ones, like changes in cover and description, and invisible changes, in reader's perception. This is "an undervalued aspect of the adaptation process", says Bruhn, who calls for an increase in what he defines as "dialogising adaptation studies" (73).

Finally, it is said that since recently, scholars who are not necessarily experts in the field of adaptation studies have developed an interest in the field, and link it to bigger, more overarching theories regarding cultural transfer, textuality, media-specificity, and again, intermediality. Hutcheon is mentioned here because of her emphasis on the importance of situating adaptations within a broader framework, relating to economics, politics or law, for example (10). Adaptation studies have become about much more than just a book and a film, and here, again, intermediality comes up as a central concept.

These, extremely briefly, are a few of the most important issues in contemporary adaptation studies. This thesis will extensively explore some of them, and only briefly touch upon others. The main focus will lie on the intermedial approach to adaptation studies and the widening of the field, since its case study will deal with a theatrical adaptation of a novel to a play, rather than a cinematic one. Of course, this is still not the most boundary-breaking possibility, and publications about these kinds of adaptations are already around. However, since it will still be a long time before theatrical adaptations can even aspire to match their filmic siblings in amount of academic attention, and theatre and film differ in so many aspects - not to mention the unimaginable differences among plays themselves - it is worthwhile to examine a recent Western theatrical adaptation of a novel in detail.

1.2 Current paradigms in the field of theatre adaptation studies

Because this thesis will deal with a theatrical adaptation, it is worthwhile to briefly consider the current paradigms in this sub-field of adaptation studies as well. In the theatre field, adaptation studies has even less of a history, as Radosavljevic relates. "Despite its significant place in the history of theatre and performance, adaptation as a subject has only recently become a specific focus of scholarly interest in

the field […] The study of adaptation had a much longer history in film and literary studies" (68). The insights gained by the cinematic branch of adaptation studies, however, can still be relevant for theatre studies, Radosavljevic argues, as goes for the debates it has risen.

An example of these insights is provided by Hayley Merchant in her PhD thesis *Mind to screen: the conveyance of disordered mental states in film*. Even though it studies film rather than theatre, her thesis offers a useful analysis for this case study, not only because it focuses on adaptations from Hutcheon's so-called telling mode (novels) to the showing mode (films), but it specifically studies the externalisation of a "troubled" (xii) mind in this transition. In her conclusion, Merchant states that "the medium [film] utilises the relationship between the moving image and sound (incorporating the verbal) to create a representation of disordered interiority" (386). The exact same can be said about this theatrical adaptation, as will be explained in more detail in chapter 3.

Chiel Kattenbelt, in his *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance*, notices that a paradigm shift is taking place in the discipline of theatre studies, and argues that "our contemporary culture has become a media culture", and "contemporary art practices are increasingly interdisciplinary practices" (20). Kattenbelt distinguishes three forms of interdisciplinary manifestations, or "three concepts of mediality" (20). The first one is 'multimediality', and involves incorporating several media in one work. The second one he calls 'transmediality': the transfer from one medium to another, a concept that echoes Hutcheon's "transmedia storytelling". The third one is 'intermediality', and refers to a co-relation: media that influence each other. Kattenbelt feels that these three concepts are often mixed up and used confusingly, with many scholars do not distinguishing between them at all: something that becomes clear from the overview presented in the above, as well. The amount of scholars writing about or using intermediality indeed is substantial. This results in the fact that the concept has become "an umbrella-term", according to Irina Rajewsky (44). She argues that there "is not one unifying theory of intermediality" (44), but rather "a proliferation of heterogeneous conceptions of intermediality and heterogeneous ways in which the term is used" (45). Because of that, she says "it becomes necessary to define one's own particular understanding of intermediality more precisely" (45), an argument that Kattenbelt repeats: "everybody who uses the concept intermediality is obliged to define it".

Therefore, it should be stated that in this paper the concept of intermediality will be used according to Kattenbelt's definition, with his distinction between multi- trans- and intermediality in mind. In addition, Greg Giesekam's explanation will be used, which sounds very similar to Kattenbelt's,

but focuses specifically on the use of video and film in theatre, an aspect that is relevant with regards to the case study. Giesekam, in his *Staging the Screen: The Use of Film and Video in Theatre,* explains the distinction between multi- and intermedia as follows: “the term multimedia is often applied indiscriminately to any sort of performance event that employs film, video or CGI (computer-generated imagery) alongside live performance”. In multimedial productions, he says, “video is employed in a manner analogous to the way in which lighting, set or costumes are used to locate the action and suggest particular interpretative approaches to it; video is one of the main apparatuses that collectively support performances that are otherwise built around fairly traditional understandings of the role of text and the creation of character” (11). In intermedial productions, on the other hand, “more extensive interaction between the performers and the various media reshapes notions of characters and acting, where neither the live material nor the recorded material would make much sense without the other, and where often the interaction between media substantially modifies how the respective media conventionally function and invites reflection upon their nature and methods” (11).

Both Kattenbelt’s and Giesekam’s definitions, then, focus on the relationship between the different media in a production, and the fact that in an intermedial work of art not only several kinds of media are simultaneously present, or have been transposed from other art works, but more importantly, these different media *influence* (Kattenbelt) or *interact* (Giesekam) with each other. This is the point of view that will be adopted and applied in this case study. In addition, this study adopts Rajewsky's approach to intermediality in the sense that the concept is used to focus on “concrete medial configurations and their specific intermedial qualities” (51), rather than general media developments or theories.

Arguably, the staging of every play is an adaptation in itself (Radosavljevi 69; Hutcheon 39). By transferring the written words in a script to a three-dimensional live performance, or in other words, by engaging in the ‘page to stage’ process, a work undergoes such transformation that it can rightfully be called an adaptation. Are these adaptations, from script to staged play, intermedial? One could argue that they are not, since they were both created for the medium of theatre. On the other hand, one could say that script is a written text, and therefore inevitably a different medium than a play. Linda Hutcheon would probably agree with the latter, since different modes of engagement are at work here: one reads a script, but views a play. A script tells, a play shows. Thomas Leitch’s point, however, that a dramatic script is merely a blueprint, or a “text that wants to be another text”, an argument inferred

from Pasolini's *The Screenplay as a "Structure That Wants to Be Another Structure"* (Bruhn, Gjelsvik, and Hanssen 160; Pasolini 53) implies that scripts are not really anything, but rather exist in a kind of limbo phase between conception and production, waiting to be 'changed' or 'adapted' into their final product. According to that argument, the staging of a play is not an intermedial adaptation, but rather an adaptation of itself, instead of that of an existing work in another medium, like novel-to-play reworkings are. Indeed, scripts are often not meant to be read, in the way plays are meant to be seen - something that many readers of Shakespeare tend to forget.

Whether a staging of any play is an adaptation or not, staging a play based on a book definitely is. The adaptation process then becomes a three-step one: from book to script to stage. These kinds of adaptations, from one finished work into another, should be analysed not only along the lines of adaptation studies theories, but also draw from theories related to the respective media that are part of the process, which is why authors like Bal, Scott and Hogget, and Pavis, among others, appear frequently in this study, too. Combined with intermediality theory, some conclusions can be drawn at the end of this paper about general novel-to-play adaptation processes, in addition to the findings about the research question related to the adaptation process in the case of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.

1. HOW IS THE MIND EXTERNALISED IN THE TRANSITION FROM BOOK TO SCRIPT?

Everybody who reads this book falls in love with the way Christopher thinks.

- Simon Stephens (playwright)

1.1 Introduction

Adapting a book into a theatre play is a challenge. The two media are completely different, and the adapter(s) will always face numerous dilemmas with regards to representation, not only concerning space and time, but also, perhaps even more crucially, the representation of characters. When shifting from a "telling" to a "showing" mode, as Linda Hutcheon (22) describes the transition from a book to a play, for instance, problems related to interiority arise. "In the telling mode – in narrative literature, for example – our engagement begins in the realm of imagination", Hutcheon says. The showing mode, on the other hand, belongs to "the realm of direct perception" (23). In the telling mode of this case, Haddon's book *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, interiority is exclusively verbalised through written narration. In a play script, however, narration as such is impossible: all the text that has to be communicated to the audience has to be vocalised. To establish how the play displays interiority, in other words, how it externalises this narration, it is useful to analyse the script, written by Simon Stephens, and compare it to Mark Haddon's book.

According to Linda Hutcheon, the limitations of the physical stage add even more restrictions to the possible action and characterisation in the showing mode, as compared to film, for instance. "All performance media are said to lose internal character motivation, but the stage's material constraints potentially intensify this loss" (42). In the case of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, furthermore, the portrayal of interiority is not only complicated by shifting from the literary to the theatrical medium, but additionally so by the complex make-up of its main character: the protagonist of Mark Haddon's book, Christopher, has 'Behavioural Problems' (Haddon 59). We can assume he has some form of autism, although Haddon has always avoided labelling him, and his medical condition is indeed not very relevant. What is relevant in this adaptation is the fact that the mind that needs to be externalised is a special one, and does not function in the same way most of the readers' or spectators' minds do. It is of even more importance, therefore, to succeed in displaying the interiority that is present in the book on the stage.

The first step in addressing this challenge, and in adapting any novel into a theatrical

performance, is translating the book into a script. It is the playwright who has to fulfil the important job of transcribing the original narrative to create a new one, suitable for a different medium. He (or she) therefore becomes an adapter as well as a playwright, which also results in the fact that s/he does not have the same creative freedom a normal playwright who devises a play from scratch. The limitations the adapting playwright has to deal with sometimes also include the presence of the original writer of the source text. Simon Stephens, playwright for *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, said in an interview that collaborating with other writers can be "really difficult" (Radosavljevic 207). For this play, however, he did not have to collaborate with the author very much, since Haddon trusted Stephens enough with his work to give him total freedom in adapting it.

The task for the adapting playwright, thus, is to create a script - which usually mainly consists of mono- and dialogue - that somehow also conveys the descriptive parts of the narrative in the original. The thoughts, emotions, and other non-vocalised aspects that most novels include must somehow be vocalised on stage. This is part of the process that Hutcheon describes when she says: "In the move from telling to showing, a performance adaptation must dramatise: description, narration, and represented thoughts must be transcoded into speech, actions, sounds, and visual images" (40). In scriptwriting practice, this often means that indirect speech is turned into direct speech, internal monologues into external ones, and the narrated events actions that 'happen' in the mind of a reader now actually happen in front of the spectators' eyes (hence the word 'spectator': "a person who watches an activity"[1]).

In the case of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, the novel-to-script process is extra interesting, because of the way in which the novel is written: Haddon creates the illusion that the reader is not reading his, but Christopher's book, by using the journal-keeping technique. Christopher's 'special' mind makes him think, speak and therefore write quite straightforwardly, with a lot of direct speech. He does not provide us with long descriptions or intricate metaphors, but rather a lot of his writing is about what he sees and hears. In fact, Mark Haddon has said that he came up with the book's 'voice' or way of speaking before he had come up with the character belonging to that voice (DNA Learning Center). The fact that Christopher uses this stripped-down language, the fact that he "shows", rather than "tells" already, makes the adapting playwright's work relatively easier. Whereas other books might include indirect dialogue with many intervening sentences describing the context of the

[1] The Cambridge Dictionary

conversation, manner of speaking, the underlying tone, unpronounced thoughts, etc., most dialogues in Christopher's journal look similar to this example:

> [S]he said, 'Have you told your father about this?'
>
> And I replied, 'No.'
>
> And she said, 'Are you going to tell your father about this?'
>
> And I replied, 'No.'
>
> And she said, 'Good. I think that's a good idea, Christopher.'
>
> And then she said, 'Did it make you sad to find this out?'
>
> And I asked, 'Find what out?'
>
> And she said, 'Did it make you upset to find out that your mother and Mr Shears had an affair?
>
> And I said, 'No.'
>
> And she said, 'Are you telling the truth, Christopher?'
>
> And then I said, 'I always tell the truth.'
>
> (Haddon 94)

The fragment above illustrates how Christopher's logical, almost mathematical way of thinking shows through in the way he writes his story down. These kinds of scenes are easy to transcribe to a play, of course, since they only and accurately transcribe a conversation. The playwright does not need to strip the passage in the book down; he does not have to cut out any intervening lines that are not direct speech. Not surprisingly, the corresponding scene in the script looks like this:

> **Ed** *finds* **Christopher***'s book on the kitchen table.*
>
> **Siobhan** Have you told your father about this?
>
> **Christopher** No.
>
> **Siobhan** Are you going to tell your father about this?
>
> **Christopher** No.
>
> **Ed** *goes to book.*
>
> *There is a tone.*

He begins reading **Christopher***'s book.*

Siobhan Did it make you sad to find this out?

Christopher Find what out?

Siobhan Did it make you sad to find out that your mother and Mr Shears had an affair?

Christopher No.

Siobhan Are you telling the truth Christopher?

Christopher I always tell the truth.

(Stephens 31)

Apart from the stage directions that describe a different event going on in a different place at a possibly different time, the dialogue in the play almost literally copies that of the book. This is not to say that *all* the dialogue in the book has been literally transposed to the play (although that was the first thing that Stephens did in the process of adapting the book[2]): as close as Stephens did stay to the novel, several parts have been compressed, switched around, and added, as well. What this example shows, however, is that some parts of the book lend themselves for adaptation to the theatre very well, since Christopher's brain works in a very logical way. The fact that Stephen's exploited this adaptability, and stayed very loyal to Haddon's source text, might seem to go against Stam's plea to move beyond the "ideal of fidelity" (14). However, as David Lane argues, "the restaging of a text can maintain fidelity to the spoken word – the text's literary qualities – but draws on the plastic and three-dimensional nature of performance to alter its meaning". In fact, he says, "this form of adaptation – transposing the setting but maintaining the text – exploits the existing openness and complexity of live performance further than a complete new piece of work" (161). The "plastic and three-dimensional nature of performance" will be explored in chapter 2.

1.2 Metafiction and metatheatre

Direct speech, as we have seen in the above, is relatively easy to transpose across media. The real challenge of any, and in particular this adaptation, however, lies in portraying Christopher's *mind* in a

[2] BBC

medium in which all the text usually needs to be spoken out loud. This is all the more important in this specific play, since, as Stephens said: "Everybody who reads this book falls in love with the way Christopher thinks" (BBC). One very fundamental issue in adapting the book was the fact that it is written as a metafiction. The term 'metafiction' was described by Gérard Genette in his work *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* as "a narrative in the second degree" or "a narrative within the narrative" (228). Mieke Bal explains the concept of metadiscourse as "a discourse in which a discourse is embedded" (*Notes* 42). This is the case in *The Curious Incident*: the whole of Haddon's text represents a journal that Christopher has been keeping over a course of several weeks. Christopher is both the narrator and the focaliser of all the events. Therefore, in the telling mode, the book is one big display of interiority, since everything is seen from Christopher's point of view.

The question that arises here, is how does one transpose a book within a book to the stage? The fact that Haddon wrote his book as a fictional autobiography allows for more immediacy and less distance between the reader and the protagonist, which means the amount of interiority that is portrayed in the book is very high (even compared to other novels). In the play, however, this mechanism is harder to create, because the medium changes, and it is more complicated to make Christopher the 'author' of a theatre production than of a journal. Stephens's did, however, stick to the formula: he wrote *The Curious Incident* script as if it were a play within a play. However, the meta-aspect of the narration is less clear or present in the play, compared with the book. This lack of clarity might partly be due to the complex nature of metatheatre (Pérez-Simón 3). In general, the definition of metatheatre is not quite fixed. According to Andrés Pérez-Simón, it is "a question of theatrical levels" (3). He quotes Lionel Abel, who coined the term 'metatheatre' and defined it as "a comparatively philosophic form of drama" (3). Several aspects in the story of *The Curious Incident* could be called 'philosophical' indeed, especially with regards to Christopher's contemplations on numerous aspects of life and on the writing of his journal. Some scholars have called for the term 'metatheatrical' to be replaced by 'theatrical', arguing that "there is no need to present a play within a play in order to emphasize the artificiality of the theatrical stage" (Pérez-Simón 3). However, this *is* the case in *The Curious Incident,* even though it might not be clear from the start. In combination with Abel's definition, therefore, the play can deservedly be analysed as a form of metatheatre.

Its metatheatrical nature does not become evident from the start, however. In fact, the first mentioning of the meta-level in the play only comes up in the first scene of Part Two of the script, when

Siobhan tells Christopher that the headmistress of their school has asked her to organise a school play. She then says to him: "I was wondering if you'd like to make a play out of your book" (Stephens 50). However, Christopher answers with a blunt "No", and does not bulge under Siobhan's attempts to persuade him. The conversation ends with another character who is not present in the scene, Reverend Peters, suddenly appearing and saying "I think I'd rather like to take the part of a policeman", and Christopher responding "You're too old to be a policeman". This suggests that the audience *is* indeed looking at a meta-drama, and "breaks the illusion of reality" (Pérez-Simón 2), especially when the same actor actually does play a policeman during a later stage in the play, and the following dialogue occurs:

> **Station Policeman** Are you all right, young man?
>
> **Christopher** You're too old.
>
> **Station Policeman** Are you all right, young man?
>
> **Christopher** You're too old to play a policeman.
>
> **Station Policeman** Are you all right, young man?
>
> **Christopher** No.
>
> (Stephens 55-56)

This short dialogue, which is part of a much longer 'realistic' scene, implies that, despite Christopher's initial objections, this is a play within a play. The first few scenes of the show (in which Christopher finds the dead dog and has an unpleasant meeting with another policeman) in fact do quite look like a school play, in the way they are staged and acted out. On the other hand, the unaltered repetition of the policeman's line "Are you alright, young man?" in the fragment above might also suggest we are witnessing a figment of Christopher's imagination. On the final page, the question is solved once and for all, during the last conversation between Christopher and Siobhan, which are the final lines of the play as well (with the exception of the appendix):

> **Christopher** […] Then I will become a scientist. I can do these things.
>
> **Siobhan** I hope so.
>
> **Christopher** I can because I went to London on my own.

She looks at him.

I solved the mystery of Who Killed Wellington.

She looks at him.

I found my mother. I was brave.

Siobhan You were.

Christopher And I wrote a book.

Siobhan I know. I read it. We turned it into a play.

Christopher Yes. Does that mean I can do anything do you think?

Does that mean I can do anything Siobhan?

Does that mean I can do anything?

The two look at each other for a while.

Lights black.

(Stephens 99)

"We turned it into a play." "Yes.": the answer is clear. Christopher is indeed "conscious of the part he himself plays in constructing the drama that unfolds around him" (Abel, qtd. in Pérez-Simón 3), making the play metatheatre. Stephens has employed the same trick as Mark Haddon to 'justify' the story that is being told: it is not Haddon's book we are reading, it is Christopher's, and therefore it is 'real'. It is not Stephens's play we are watching, it is Siobhan's and Christopher's, which creates the illusion that the events that are portrayed were once real, too. The meta-diegesis serves as a kind of disclaimer, telling the audience: "we are only retelling/re-enacting the story as well". These constructions appeal to the audience's suspension of disbelief, and try to convey a sense of 'reality' by already proclaiming that the story they are reading or watching is fictional (but based on a 'real' one). It almost seems an urge to defend the fictional arts. What this metatheatricality also does, however, is enhance the audience's experience of Christopher's interiority: since the play is now 'written' by Christopher, everything that is

shown on stage is automatically Christopher's point of view, and not the playwright's or some other source's. The plot is shown through his eyes and ears completely.

1.3 Narrator and focaliser

The meta- or hypodiegetic aspects of the play are not the only narratological methods that are used to convey Christopher's interiority in the play, however. For even if the audience knows it is watching a play within a play, and perceiving Christopher's account of events, his thoughts and emotions that are so prevalent on the pages of the book still need to be externalised: as explained above, the theatre medium tends to present its information through audial and visual signs, rather than written words. The fact that Christopher's perception of the world and the motivations for his sometimes seemingly inexplicable habits and behaviour are hard to extricate from the page and bring onto the stage indeed presented a problem for Stephens. As he explained:

> I think theatre can only ever be in the third person. Mark [Haddon]'s great genius was to create a first person voice that people can really relate to. But the stage doesn't work like that. What I had to do, was find a way to make Christopher's voice dramatic. So making that voice about somebody behaving. (BBC)

The mechanism Stephens invented to overcome the problem of dramatising Christopher's voice was to bestow different narratological functions on one of the other characters in the play, in comparison with the book. This character is Siobhan. Christopher's mentor takes up an interesting position in the play, since she does not only represent one of the characters in the story, but also operates as the narrator, and even Christopher himself alternatively. Stephens:

> I made the decision that Siobhan should be the narrator of Christopher's book. It was important that Christopher's narration was revealed somehow. But I didn't want to break the rules of Mark's book, and one of the rules of Mark's book was that Siobhan gets to read Christopher's book. She *gets* stuff, that Christopher doesn't get, and the book works for us as a reader, because *we* get stuff that Christopher doesn't get, and she's the bridge through that dramatic irony. She's a really invaluable dramatic character. For me she became the fulcrum of the entire adaptation. (BBC)

In the book, Christopher is a character-bound narrator, according to Bal's definition: the 'I' can be identified with a character in the fabula it itself narrates (*Narratology* 22). Moreover, as she explains, "[a] CN [character-bound narrator] usually proclaims that it recounts true facts about her- or himself. 'It' pretends to be writing 'her' autobiography" (22). This very much applies to the case of *The Curious Incident*: Christopher is writing a true account of events that happened to him. In addition, in the book Christopher is the focaliser as well as the narrator. A focaliser is defined by Jonathan Culler as the difference between "who speaks?" and "who sees?" (88). Bal calls focalisation "the represented 'colouring' of the fabula by a specific agent of perception" (*Narratology* 19). In the book, it is indeed Christopher's eyes and ears through which the reader perceives the events that are happening.

In the play, the narrative situation is not constant, but changes with different scenes. Both Christopher and Siobhan appear as literal narrators: they narrate parts of the book by speaking them out loud, for the audience to hear. Both are character-bound narrators, according to Bal's first definition (they identify with a character in the fabula they themselves narrate). The difference between the two, however, is that Siobhan is not recounting "true facts about her- or himself" when she is in her narrating role, even though she speaks in the 'I'-form. In those instances, her 'I' does not represent herself, but Christopher. As Niamh Cusack, the actress who plays Siobhan in the National Theatre's production, puts it:

> She becomes his sort of inner voice, at times, which is a very clever idea of Simon Stephens, the adapter. Some of the times Christopher […] is telling the story, [but] then he actually is acting the story – and he does the most wonderful physical things when he's on stage – and I'm sort of describing what's going on in his head. (A little OBASC fun)

Indeed, sometimes the instances in which Siobhan narrates are long graphs taken directly from Christopher's book: Christopher then acts out the events being related by Siobhan on stage. At other times, however, Siobhan's narration interrupts scenes or dialogues, and Siobhan represents Christopher's thoughts at a given moment. Cusack:

> [Siobhan] then in the play becomes the narrator for some of the time. And then she gets so in tune with him that she actually becomes him at times […] I would like to describe her as his soul, or his imagination. I think the biggest challenge for Siobhan in the play is finding out when she's

> Siobhan, when she's the narrator, and when she's Christopher, and making very definite choices about that. (BBC)

To illustrate the way in which Siobhan intrudes scenes, and represents Christopher's voice (in thoughts as well as speech) instead of her own at times, it is useful to take a look at an example from the play:

> **Ed** […] I am going to make you promise me Christopher. And you know what it means when I make you promise.
>
> **Christopher** I know.
>
> **Ed** Promise me that you will give up this ridiculous game right now, OK?
>
> **Christopher** I promise.
>
> **Siobhan** I think I would make a very good astronaut.
>
> **Ed** Yes mate. You probably would.
>
> **Siobhan** To be a good astronaut you have to be intelligent and I'm intelligent. You also have to understand how machines work and I'm good at understanding how machines work.
>
> **Christopher** You also have to be someone who would like being on their own in a tiny spacecraft thousands and thousands of miles away from the surface of the earth and not panic or get claustrophobia or homesick or insane. And I really like little spaces so long as there is no one else in them with me.
>
> **Ed** I noticed.
>
> (Stephens 23-24)

The equivalence of this fragment and the rest of the scene appears in the book as an uninterrupted train of thought at the opening of chapter 83 (Haddon 65). It is not part of a dialogue, and Siobhan is not present, although, according to the story of Christopher writing the book as an assignment for her, she does read it at some point. In the script, Siobhan takes over some of Christopher's lines, becoming him for a while, before Christopher himself takes over again.

Although the distinction between the different levels on which Siobhan operates is not always

clear (as Niamh Cusack testifies by saying it is one of her biggest challenges to find out when she is what), one thing can be established: although Siobhan acts as a narrator at times, she never becomes a focaliser. It is never through her senses that the audience learns about the events, for she is speaking lines written by Christopher, from his point of view. The situation in the 'astronaut' scene cited above, then, is as follows: Siobhan and Christopher alternately act as the narrator, but even when Siobhan speaks, Christopher is the focaliser. Christopher is also the actor (in Bal's explanation of the word), since he imagines (focalises) an event in which he himself is involved ('acts'). In Bal's formulaic language, the astronaut passage would look like this: CN (Siobhan) [CF (Christopher)-astronaut].

1.4 Conclusion

To sum up, Stephens has changed the novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* in such a way that Christopher's internal voice on the page is externalised on the stage. He has done that in two main ways: firstly, he transferred a metafictional story of a book within a book to a metatheatrical performance that describes a play within a play. Even though this metadiegetic aspect is not as prominently present in the play, it does create a model that allows for much self-expression. In addition, Stephens gave Siobhan the function of a narrator, which allowed her to provide a big amount of information about Christopher's mind, either by narrating bits from his book, in which he explains some of his motivations or trains of thoughts, or by literally voicing his thoughts in the present, first-level narrative. Because of the switch from telling to showing mode, this change was necessary to externalise Christopher's inner world. Creating an actual (vocal) narrator on stage as the equivalent to Christopher's narration in his journal entries is one of the ways in which Stephens countered the cliché that Hutcheon poses about interiority in the telling mode.

However great Stephens's efforts and inventive ideas, it must be noted that the script does not always completely match the amount of interiority displayed in the book. There are still instances during which readers of the book will miss a motivation to say a certain line, an explanation for a specific action, etc. This is to be expected, given the fact that Stephens condensed a 272-page book into a 102-page script, and, according to some, given the media of the two art works (Hutcheon 56). This is also not necessarily bad, since the medium of theatre can portray interiority in more ways than just through the actors' lines, as will be demonstrated in chapter 2 and 3. The occasional gap or information that is lacking in the script, therefore, is often complemented by other elements in the second step of the

process: the actual staging of the show. However, Stephens has succeeded in conveying much of Christopher's mind in 102 pages of script already, through the mechanisms described above.

2. HOW IS THE MIND EXTERNALISED THROUGH THE USE OF PHYSICAL THEATRE?

Every movement on stage tells us a story. It places words in our heads, just like text.

- Scott Graham (movement director)

2.1 Introduction

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time was created in collaboration with a British theatre company called Frantic Assembly, specifically by Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett, who functioned as 'movement directors'. The Frantic Assembly was founded by Scott Graham, Steven Hoggett and Vicki Middleton in 1994, right after they finished their English Literature degrees at Swansea University. They were inspired by Volcano Theatre Company, and without any formal theatre background set up their own theatre group, finding out their method and approach to theatre along the way. Currently, they are an internationally renowned company, having produced a range of productions themselves, both original ones and adaptations. The company uses a physical style of theatre that combines movement, design, music and text. As Scott Graham said about the devising process of *The Curious Incident*: "I'm very interested in movement within theatre, and by that I mean how it tells stories" (BBC).

According to *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance,* physical theatre is a term that has been and is being used for different things. The term is problematic because it is "tautological" (226): every kind of theatre is necessarily physical to some extent. In fact, performance is often defined as "the movement of bodies in space and through time" (Allain and Harvie 209). However, as Paul Allain and Jen Harvie argue, "[a]ll directors, teachers and performers inevitably explore movement in their work, but some do so more deliberately than others" (209). They also state that "physical theatre is a much used but problematic term with an uncertain history" (225). It probably originated in the 1970s in the United Kingdom, from where it spread globally, although the term is still mainly used in a British context. Physical theatre performances often "evolve from adapting a story or other non-dramatic text" (225), and include much movement or dance. In these performances, "material and physical aspects, such as the body, the scenography or elements like objects and puppetry are foregrounded rather than a structured pre-written text" (225).

In *The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre*, Graham and Hoggett, too, write that they find it difficult to answer the question of what exactly makes physical theatre (29). "'Physical theatre' is actually a quite frustrating phrase", they state (29), and they are consciously hesitant to define the

concept, since it is “an umbrella term”. They do write that it describes performances with “an enormous range of ‘physicality’ from the limb-threateningly expressive to the delicate and demonstrative” (30).

Volcano Theatre Company (the company that inspired the Frantic Assembly), while also acknowledging the difficulty of defining the concept, write that in physical theatre “an emphasis on choreography, film, video and music, live or recorded, will often prove to be of equal significance to any text that may play a part in the performance”, and add that “physical theatre is really about the reinvigoration of theatre practice - and (occasionally) the practice or experience of the audience” (Davies 1).

One of the first and most famous performance artists Marina Abramović for has for years been advocating the power of “being present”, and using her body as the prime medium for her art (see *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present*). Although contemporary physical theatre companies hardly ever use their bodies in such daring and dangerous ways, Abramović was one of the first to use her body as her prime ‘medium’ of art. In her work *Theatre & the Body*, Colette Conroy writes: “Ideas about the relationship between the inert body and its movement or action are crucial to the ways that we watch and appreciate theatre and performance” (4).

Simon Murray and John Keefe, in their *Physical Theatres: A Critical Introduction* describe these as forms of theatre in which “physical and visual performance languages are privileged to articulate, refine and drive the narrative of the piece in question” (93). They, too, acknowledge in their introduction that the term has “paradoxically […] become embedded in the language of educationalists, actor trainers and their students” (2). They also agree with the truism that any kind of theatre, from Shakespeare to Chekhov, is inherently physical. However:

> Too often this physicality is relegated to a mere supporting role to the word, is regarded as vulgar or simply a means to an end – at its worst being a vehicle by which the words are delivered or moved around the stage; or reduced to the routine gestures and mannerisms sufficient to convey the stock character inhabiting and making familiar the world of the play. (Murray and Keefe 3)

There are also, however, “new and discrete theatre genres which are indeed peculiarly physical and gestural” (4), which are the kinds of works they treat in their book. Murray and Keefe insist on using the plural in analysing physical theatres, since they believe their manifestations are very diverse and stem

from different roots and technical traditions (4).

Regardless of its exact definition, it is safe to say that the kind of theatre that Frantic Assembly practices can be called physical (and they do so themselves as well, 30), and this form has become increasingly popular over the past few decades, and is progressively being recognised in especially British theatre. Michael Billington, in the final chapter of his comprehensive work *State of the Nation: British Theatre since 1945*, writes that "the authority of text-based work has been increasingly challenged in recent years by the growth of what is variously described as 'physical' or 'visual' theatre" (395). To get an idea of how physical theatre is used in this case, and how it aids externalising a 'different' mind, it is useful to analyse a few specific scenes from the play.

2.2 Physical and ensemble theatre

Marianne Elliott, director of *The Curious Incident*, said she asked Graham and Hoggett to become involved because she knew the physicality of the actors would become an important factor in adapting the book:

> We wanted to make it emotional, poetic and interesting without it being realistic. So that means you show things in a way that is physical, rather than somebody actually walks through the door or puts the key in the door and opens it and puts the key on the side. You actually do something which is much more gestural. (BBC)

In other words, Elliott argues that by straying from absolute realism, the emotional effect on the audience can be increased. Instead, then, of having an elaborate set, full of props and intricate changes, the stage is kept simple (more about the set in chapter 3), and the actors in the ensemble adopt different 'roles' throughout the show, ranging from pieces of furniture to actual people.

Physical theatre often goes hand in hand with ensemble theatre, a form of theatre in which the so-called 'company' or 'ensemble' often acts as a whole, but also comprises of actors who impersonate different characters. Murray and Keefe, in their chapter called 'Physicalising narrative', list a number of elements often present in physical theatre (or theatres, as they call it), including "an explicit and celebratory sense of ensemble in both the process of making and performance" (93). In *The Curious Incident*, about thirty different characters appear throughout the show, all portrayed by the same group of ten actors. In this production, moreover, the characters do not leave the stage. When they do not partake in a certain scene, they sit on the sides of the stage and watch, ready to jump in at any moment

to take up a certain role again (BBC). This makes it possible to have really fast and smooth transitions between scenes. Often, a conversation has hardly finished before actor Luke Treadaway (Christopher) turns around and starts talking to someone else, enacting a scene that takes place at an entirely different time and location. This, according to Murray and Keefe, also is a characteristic of physical theatre: "[t]he actors exist in a state of perpetual fluidity and readiness for a transition from one performance mode to another" (105). This jumping in and out of ensemble members and the abrupt transitions between scenes create a very fragmented representation of events, resulting in two things: first of all, it allows for a rather filmic rendition of the story, which corresponds to Meyerhold's idea of "the cinematification of theatre" (qtd. in Kattenbelt 24), which Kattenbelt explains means "a high speed alternation of individual scenes". This filmic representation recalls the short chapters of Christopher's journal, which also jump back and forth in time and place. In addition, this "cinematification" or abrupt transitioning between scenes foregrounds Christopher's "busy" mind. As designer Bunny Christie puts it: "Inside Christopher's head, we can go anywhere. So we can shoot off into the atmosphere and across the stars" (BBC). The fragmentation of scenes thus represents his fragmented mind, which also constantly jumps back and forth, between different times and different lines of thought.

The scene that Elliott describes above relates to a monologue in the script (Stephens 12) in which Christopher's activities after coming home from school one day are described. In the book, this passage is a descriptive one by Christopher: they are thoughts that are written down by him in his journal. In the play, Siobhan performs the text, which is a condensed version of the corresponding passage in the book (Haddon 28). Her monologue is as follows:

> **Siobhan** Mother died two years ago.
>
> I came home from school one day and no one answered the door, so I went and found the secret key that we keep under a flowerpot outside the kitchen window. I let myself into the house and wiped my feet on the mat. I put the key in the bowl on the table. I took my coat off and hung it by the side of the fridge so it would be ready for school the next day and gave three pellets of rat food to Toby who is my pet rat. I made myself a raspberry milkshake and heated it up in the microwave. Then I went up to my bedroom and turned on my bedroom light and played six games of Tetris and got to level 38 which is my fourth best ever score. (Stephens 12)

The scene's transition from script to stage is a big one. There is not only a change of narrator (from Christopher to Siobhan; see chapter 1), but more importantly, there is a physical aspect added onto it, which ties in with Elliott's vision of 'poetic' theatre. While this sequence is narrated by Siobhan, the lines she reads are simultaneously acted out by Christopher and the company, in a very specific way. The stage is completely empty but for a chair on which Siobhan is sitting as she reads from Christopher's book, and for the actors' bodies. With every single action that Siobhan describes, Christopher moves through the space and mimes movements corresponding to those actions. The word 'miming' is problematic here. One the one hand there are no props or other items on stage that Christopher can employ to enact the sequence, so one could say he must be miming. However, the different members of the company assist him in performing his actions by continuously moulding their bodies into different shapes in space, impersonating the door, the flowerpot, the mat, Toby, and all the other objects he interacts with. The sequence ends with Christopher lying on his back on his 'bed' – another actor's back – miming playing Tetris on a computer screen in the air. This scene is an example of another frequently occurring element in physical theatre, according to Murray and Keefe, namely "actors/performers possessing skill and disposition to transform bodies – often drawing upon mime techniques – into physical objects and other non-human forms" (93).

This approach to visualising a descriptive scene with a rapidly changing decor is quite unique. As actor Nick Sidi (playing Roger and an ensemble member) said: "You got to be really bold, and quite brave, because when someone is saying to you 'be a chair or a light', you do feel, to begin with, that you're looking slightly foolish" (BBC). The technique works well, however, to visualise, and therefore externalise, a passage in the book that contains no spoken text, but is just a descriptive memory of a string of events: a memory that is merely in his mind. This visualisation is not necessarily completely realistic, but rather poetic, as Elliott calls for. It is even a bit strange, but, as Sidi says, "[b]ecause everybody [is] doing the language, it works. And what happens with that is that you then are seeing the world, hopefully, through Christopher's mind."

Physical theatre also helps to emphasise crucial moments in the plot. One of those is when Christopher finds a shoebox full of letters from his mother, who he until then had assumed was dead. This kind of discovery would have been a shock to anyone, but even more so for Christopher, who becomes physically ill afterwards. In the play, the moment Christopher discovers the letters is emphasised by the ensemble: all company members are standing in a semi-circle behind Christopher,

holding letters and slowly pulling them away from him (appendix B.1), thereby creating a moment that is not only aesthetically pleasing, but through these aesthetics, the slow motion and amount of involvement, places emphasis on the event, demonstrating its importance for Christopher. Because the audience cannot read Christopher's thoughts and emotions at this crucial moment, as the reader of the book can, physical theatre is used to externalise these feelings in a poetic way.

A different example of physical theatre that effectively shows the world through Christopher's point of view is a long scene that occurs in the second act of the play. One of the most crucial parts of both the book and the play in terms of plot is Christopher's decision to travel from Swindon to London on his own, to go live with his mother. Presenting such a journey within the very limited space of a theatre stage is of course difficult enough in itself (in the words of Scott Graham: "It was awful, to read on the page"[3]). However, in the case of Christopher, an extra dimension to this problem is added, because for him, such a journey is a very different than for most people. Christopher becomes completely overwhelmed by all the sensory triggers that public transport elicits in him, and all the impulses he receives and cannot deal with. His distress is so big, that he eventually goes into a certain state of shock and becomes numb. Since the average audience will not be able to relate very well to the experience a boy like Christopher has in an everyday-like situation, executing this scene well is of even more importance. Francesca Faridany, the actress who plays Siobhan in the Broadway show, said:

> The main objective of the production is everything is through Christopher's eyes or his other senses. What does it feel like to hear shouting words outside the room, what does it feel like to come across a train for the first time in your life. (BBC)

Graham, after reading the book, said his initial instinct was that it was not going to work on stage (BBC). He did manage to solve the problem, however. As playwright Simon Stephens remarked: "One of the brilliant things about having Frantic on board is that they were able to bring some very pragmatic solutions to some quite particular problems" (BBC).

In the book, it must be said, the journey from Swindon to London is not described solely textually. Instead, the visual overload of signs at Paddington station is represented through an uninterrupted list of different fonts, icons and small pictures printed on the page. These visual entities (which occur in more chapters) already try to illustrate Christopher's viewpoint in a way that is not just

[3] BBC

textual (Haddon's work has even been compared to Danielewski's *House of Leaves* because of its non-conventional use of graphics and puzzles[4]). Instead of a flowing narrative, the page merely lists all the things Christopher hears and sees. This illustrates something about Christopher's mind that he explains earlier in the book and play, namely the fact that he cannot overlook things: "I see everything […] most people are lazy. They never look at anything. They do what is called *glancing*" (Haddon, 174; Stephens 61). In the book, the list of words gets all mixed up after a while, for as Christopher writes, "there were too many and my brain wasn't working properly" (Haddon 209). He also describes a feeling "like a balloon inside my chest and it hurt" (Haddon 208).

In the play, this scene lasts for approximately twenty minutes. Several devices are used to create the atmosphere as Christopher experiences it. One of those is physical theatre (for audial and visual effects, see chapter 3). During the scene, the ensemble, impersonating the London public transport crowd, moves in a very particular way: their rehearsed walk makes it seem they are one homogenous group. The pattern to their walking implies they are covering big distances (by switching direction, walking backwards or walking fast, for example – all simultaneously), but also like they all know where they are going. The choreography is carefully executed to convey a sense of routine. Christopher, then, is in the middle of all this, trying to make out what he has to do or where he has to go, completely lost. He frantically moves around, and at some point during the course of the scene, ensemble members start toying with him: picking him up, twirling him around, bumping into him, tugging at his clothes, even helping him do summersaults (appendix B.2). This, of course, is no realistic representation of the events at a London train station. However, it is an attempt at clarifying and demonstrating Christopher's emotions, figuratively. Christopher's mental experience is externalised by the choreography of the company, and their physical interactions with him. Susan Leigh Foster argues that an audience shares in the mental experience of the actors (or, as she calls it: dancers) through their physicality. She calls this "movement's contagion" and "the kinesthetic impact of performance." According to her:

> Viewer's bodies, even in their seated stillness, nonetheless feel what the dancing body is feeling – the tensions or expansiveness, the floating or driving momentums that compose the dancer's motion. Then, because such muscular sensations are inextricably linked to emotions, the viewer also feels the choreographer's desires and intentions. (Davis 49)

[4] Wurth 106

Moreover, she says, "[c]horeography, not unlike psychoanalysis, may shed light on the inner workings of the psyche" (Davis 50).

A final example of physical theatre used to externalise Christopher's sensations is the scene that starts with "I think I would make a very good astronaut" (see chapter 1). In the script this part develops into a monologue by Siobhan (Stephens 24-25), which is based on a chapter in the book (Haddon 65-66) in which Christopher fantasises about being in space. The scene is realised on stage through a collaborative effort from the ensemble. Christopher, while Siobhan is reading out his fantasies about being an astronaut, is being lifted by members of the ensemble to create the impression that he is flying, either being upright (imitating a jetpack-like movement), or floating completely horizontally on the hands of his co-actors, who move him through space. He also 'walks' on walls horizontally through these kind of tricks, all the while acting as if he can feel no gravity (appendix B.3, B.4). The company is perfectly visible lifting him, but the ease with which these tricks are performed, combined with Luke Treadaway's acting, make the scene a convincing visualisation of Christopher's (day)dream.

One of the most important physical aspects of the play, however, is much more basic: it is the way Christopher behaves on stage. Every movement Christopher makes on stage already signifies much about his character and inner world. As movement analyst Rudolf Laban said: "Every phrase of movement, the least transfer of weight, any gesture by one of the parts of the body, reveals some feature of our inner lives" (qtd. in Pavis 224). Luke Treadaway explained he has been to schools for children with autism to get a better understanding about the condition (BBC). When closely analysing his movements, it can be observed that he articulates his words with extreme care (stretching his facial muscles), often fidgets with his hands, and that all his movements are clear-cut, with a distinct beginning, middle and end (appendix B.5). These provide a visual insight into his interior world: the fact that he takes extreme care in executing all his movements foregrounds some of his character traits, such as a need of control and fixed patterns in his life. These characteristics or traits in his personality are things that the audience will probably connect to his mental condition (autism). Some of these are verbalised by him himself, as well, whereas others are not, which is why his physicality is important as well. As director Marianne Elliott said about the casting of Christopher: "I knew that the boy playing Christopher would need to be a very physical actor and be able to express things physically in a way […] that he possibly can't articulate verbally."

Not only Christopher's own physicality is important in externalising his inner word, however. According to Simon Stephens, the way the characters *around* him behave can signify equally much:

> One of the challenges that I faced was developing Christopher's character. For me that came not necessarily through what Christopher was saying, but what the characters were doing to one another. By watching Ed Boone for example, who is Christopher's dad, share a space with Christopher, and the way Ed moves, and the way Ed behaves around him, by showing how difficult it is for Ed to touch Christopher, just those little physical moments allow us an insight into Christopher's mind that Christopher can't allow us into, because he can't identify those emotional experiences. (BBC)

And:

> The sense I had was that the way Christopher thinks […] is balletic. The agility with which he moves from thought to thought to thought is the agility of a dancer. [The book] lent itself to that physical kind of dance. And all of those ideas together were an attempt to dramatise that which the novel creates, which is absolutely excavating the interior of Christopher Boone's brain. So it was really central to the whole thing. It was how you get what's in *there* [pointing to head] outside, in his behaviour. (Theater Talk)

2.3 Conclusion

To conclude, the Frantic Assembly played a big part in the externalisation of Christopher's mind in *The Curious Incident*. By using physical theatre in the performance, Graham Scott and Steven Hoggett managed to portray Christopher's point of view through the actors' bodies during various important scenes. They did so by creating an ensemble that helps visualise memories and fantasies, thereby visualising his thoughts, and which enables the play to make swift transitions between scenes, foregrounding Christopher's way of writing and thinking. In addition, the important role of Scott and Hoggett as movement directors becomes clear through Christopher's own physicality and the way he and the characters around him move: analysing those can tell a lot about Christopher's interior workings, too.

3. HOW IS THE MIND EXTERNALISED THROUGH AUDIO-VISUAL ELEMENTS?

That was very much how we decided to design the show. Like a laboratory of his brain.

- Marianne Elliott (director)

3.1 Introduction

Susan Broadhurst, in an article called *Neuroaesthetics, Technoembodiment,* explores and analyses the effects new technologies have on the physical body in performance. She says:

> Technology can […] imply a reconfiguration of our embodied experience. When, to use the word non-semiotically, the meaning aimed at cannot be reached by the body alone, the body builds its own instruments and projects around itself a mediated world. Rather than being separate from the body, technology becomes part of that body, so altering and re-creating our experience in the world. (Reynolds 65-66)

Apart from looking at the physical performance of the actors in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, to create a full understanding of the play's effects and workings on the audience, and how it externalises the interiority portrayed in its source text, the technological components of the show must be considered as well. During the entire performance of *The Curious Incident,* audial and visual sign systems are at work, next to those inevitably evoked by the actors' physical presence. The set, digital images, music and sounds are at employed in abundance. Apart from being aesthetically pleasing, these audio-visual layers have other functions at well, that are often related to externalising Christopher's inner world. As Allain and Harvie say, "theatre is a sort of 'feeling-machine', an apparatus designed to stimulate feelings through such triggers as lighting, sound, movement […] and more" (149). In this case, the emotions the audience is supposed to feel coincide with Christopher's: since the whole story is shown and told from his perspective, the audience experiences it 'with' him. They also say that "lighting and sound may be indispensable elements of performance events but they are often overlooked by the public, critics and academics alike" (201). Émile Zola even argues that scenery can be "a continuous description that may be much more accurate than the novel" (qtd. in Pavis 322).

Even though visuals and audio are of course crucial parts of any performance, there is surprisingly little literature on these elements of the theatrical experience. Allain and Harvie state: "The ability of sound and lighting to make an impact on the spectator or auditor, evident in especially in large-

scale concerts, raves, or events like the Olympic ceremonies and parades, seems inversely proportional to the interest they attract within theatre and performance studies" (202). Patrice Pavis argues that "[w]hat remains to be established – and this is much more difficult than in film, where they were created separately – is how the visual and auditory work together" (226). Although there is not an overload of theory on the concepts, in the following, this is exactly what will be researched: how the visual and the auditory work together to create Christopher's mind in the eyes and ears of the audience.

3.2 Visuals

The first thing that stands out when watching the play is the stage itself. The audience looks at a literal black box, but with an often illuminated, bleak-looking white grid on it (appendix B.6). This is related to the notion that director Marianne Elliott and designer Bunny Christie had, to make the stage represent the inside of Christopher's mind. Christie:

> We wanted to make it as if we were in Christopher's head, as if we were in his imagination. In order for that to feel comfortable for Christopher, it was clear that that had to be somewhere that was very ordered, and very clean, and mathematical. When I was doing the design I went and bought the A-level [mathematics] papers, and took a lot of the diagrams and the grids, and looked at some of the questions. So a lot of the design came directly from A-level maths. (BBC)

This ties in with Pavis's argument that one of the functions of the theatre set or the scenery is that it "gives the illusion of mimetically representing the framework of the dramatic world" (322). In this case, the dramatic world is Christopher's: since he experiences life in such a different way, his 'world' is sometimes as different as an extra-terrestrial one might be. The set displays, and thus externalises, this by reflecting his brain.

The walls and floor that look like mathematics paper are multi-functional: Christopher can draw on either of them with blackboard chalk, there are little cabinets in the side walls in which the few props that are used (such as a model train set) are stored, and all the surfaces are suitable for projecting images. Christopher often uses the fact that he can draw all around him during his sessions with Siobhan, in which he explains why he finds it hard to read people's emotions for instance (by drawing faces) or how he plans to solve the mystery of who killed Wellington (by drawing a chart on the floor, which is through technique simultaneously drawn on the back wall as well) (appendix B.7). This creative use of the stage materialises some of his trains of thought, in other words: his interiority.

The set, as said, is kept very minimal, with little props or demarcations. This also has to do with the fact that the play was co-created by the Frantic Assembly. As Tina Bicat explains in *Costume and Design for Devised and Physical Theatre:* "Physical theatre tends to make the most of any available space stage space for the movement of the actors. The setting has to allow for this, which can mean that there is not much room for the actual set" (15). Despite the set being almost empty at most times, there are many transitions between different spaces and times in *The Curious Incident*. As discussed in chapter 2, the book is set up in anti-chronological and short chapters, and in adapting it, Simon Stephens has translated these to short scenes that start and end very abruptly, imitating both the journal's chapters as Christopher's own mind. Although these transitions in environment might seem hard to achieve on an empty stage, director Peter Brook argues opposite, and says that an empty stage aids, rather than limits, the possibilities: "In a space swept clear from all superfluities, it is possible to inhabit several different "times" at once" (qtd. in Whitmore 114). Director Marianne Elliott agrees:

> If you'd had a set trundling on of a realistic kitchen, doing a realistic set, and then the set trundling off and suddenly we're in a garden, you wouldn't be following him [Christopher] at the speed that his brain goes. (BBC)

Furthermore, a realistic set would not fit the play, she says:

> The design had to be a piece of imagination. The more realistic you made it, the more domestic and clunky and heavy it felt. It had to be light and agile and highly imaginative. […] that was very much how we decided to design the show. Like a laboratory of his brain. (BBC)

This notion ties in with a more general development in theatre history. According to Pavis, "[a] healthy trend has shaped up since the turn of the century […] Not only has the scenery been freed of its imitative role, it has taken charge of the performance as a whole, becoming its internal engine" (322).

Because the play is so fragmented, but the set does not give any clues as to where and when a scene is situated either, lighting becomes extremely important. As Jon Whitmore says in his book *Directing Postmodern Theater: Shaping Significance in Performance*, "[l]ighting is a dynamic tool for touching the spectator's emotions. […] A director can use lightning […] to reflect the ever-changing moods and emotions of a performance" (158). Allain and Harvie argue that lighting, as well as sound, often has a supplementary or supporting rather than dominant role, which could be an explanation for the fact it is so often overlooked (201). In *The Curious Incident*, however, lighting is employed in a way to

help the audience make sense of the context in which a scene is set, and used very consciously. As Patrice Pavis says:

> Light is not simply a decorative element; it participates in the meaning-producing efforts of the performance. Its dramaturgical and semiological potential is infinite. It can clarify or comment on an action, isolate an actor or an element on the stage, create an atmosphere, pace the performance, help interpret development of arguments and emotions, and so on (197).

Many of these functions of lighting are present in *The Curious Incident,* in which they add to the externalisation of Christopher's thoughts or emotions. Lighting for instance often demarcates different confined spaces (which is one of its functions mentioned by Allain and Harvie, as well 201) and does so from Christopher's point of view. Lighting designer Paule Constable explains: "the lighting was just what Christopher saw" (BBC). To give an example, after Christopher's confusion while finding the right train at Swindon station, during which the whole set is chaotically full of people, sounds, and visual images, a very sharp transition is made by changing the lighting completely to create an illuminated rectangle that Christopher then enters: people are sitting in it on blocks (which are one of the few props in the play, and very multi-functional), and it is immediately clear that he has boarded the train, though nothing on stage looks even slightly like a realistic train. Shortly after this, the non-existent train starts to move. This is made clear by a simultaneous physical movement of the actors, but also by a very intricate projection on the sides of the rectangle, which, through some abstract grey shapes moving, makes it seem like the train is moving. In addition, on the back wall an abstract and grey film of scenery passing is displayed. In short, the lighting in this example 'narrates' events: when it switches to the rectangle, it tells that Christopher boarded the train, something that he narrates himself in the book. Lighting therefore replaces the narrative.

Another example of the lighting portraying not only what Christopher sees or does, but also how he *feels*, occurs at a later moment in the show, when Christopher is put to sleep in a bedroom in his mother's house. After she leaves he is seen lying in a little square of light, surrounded by darkness, which represents him being scared of being in a new place and of Mr Shears, Constable explained (BBC). The lighting here thus foregrounds Christopher's emotions. Patrice Pavis agrees that lighting has "expressive power" (197). As R. E. Jones puts it: "We use light as we use words, to elucidate ideas and emotions. Light becomes a tool, an instrument of expression" (qtd. in Whitmore 154).

Throughout the entire play, the lighting aids the fragmentary representation of events mentioned in chapter 2, or the "pacing", in Pavis's words. In order to make the distinction between two events or dialogues taking place at different times and in different spaces clear, not only the ensemble and their physicality are important, but lighting is needed as well. During the play, the abrupt switching of the lighting plan coincides with the abrupt switches of actors and scenes, and thus supports the fragmented relation of events and 'externalises' Christopher's anti-chronological writing in his journal. As Allain and Harvie also explain, stage technologies can be important in conveying "illogical shifts in space and time" (202). These are just a few examples from the play in which light serves more than just a practical or aesthetic purpose (in line with Pavis's argument), but creates meaning, too. In this case, this is Christopher's 'meaning', and how he makes sense of things happening to him.

Next to lighting, other visual techniques are employed in the play as well. The Frantic Assembly are "obsessed with using the stylistic devices and techniques of film making and trying to create work on stage that embraces these practices" (Scott and Hoggett 50) (a statement that reminds of Meyerhold's 'cinematification' of the theatre). The images they use, however, often are "something closer to moving projections and transcribed text rather than film" (52).

This leads to a technique that is frequently featured in this production: projection mapping. At several occasions still or moving images are projected on the walls and the floor, sometimes even people. When Christopher is looking for the train station in Swindon, or his mother's house in London, for example, literal maps are projected on the wall(s) and sometimes floor (appendix B.8, B.9). In the first instance, the streets of Swindon (represented by lines and dots) light up in red as Christopher walks over them in a specific spiral in order to find the train station, thereby demonstrating the method he describes in his book. In the book, he already adds a drawn map to his description of his 'spiralling'-method (Haddon 172), but in the performance the use of visuals is developed and increased enormously. Since the possibilities for images on stage are much bigger than on a page (in this case: the spiral actually moves according to Christopher's movements) the effect is bigger. This use of technology, and especially video, is part of a larger trend in recent theatre productions. Chiel Kattenbelt notes that "[t]echnological innovations have played and are still playing a prominent part in the development of arts and media and in the interaction between all modern and postmodern media" (21), and Greg Giesekam recognises its presence especially in physical theatre: "Leading companies in dance and physical theatre, which normally place a premium on the presence and physicality of the live performer,

are experimenting with video within their performances" (8). Robert Edward Jones in the 1940s already advocated the use of film to depict the subjectivity of onstage figures, and their dreams, fantasies and memories (Giesekam 12). This is exactly what happens in *The Curious Incident*: the use of video often not only visualises Christopher's mind at the present (as with the maps), it also relates memories (a shape of a dog, reminding of the opening scene, is projected at the wall at later moments in the play, for instance), and fantasies or dreams, as also happens during the scene in which Christopher pictures himself as an astronaut, and all the walls around him turn into galaxies. The use of projection mapping therefore visually externalises these inner thoughts, memories and wishes.

Another example of the use of moving images in combination with other media in de play occurs right after the crucial moment in which Christopher finds his mother's letters (see chapter 2). To illustrate the state of shock Christopher goes into because of the vast amount of information and revealing news he receives, a moment is created on stage that involves the falling down of actual paper letters (representing his mother's letters) from the ceiling, in combination with projected, moving alphabetical letters on all the walls and the floor. Christopher has passed out on the floor in the middle of the scene, and the lighting centres on him (appendix B.10). The combination of Christopher's action, the material letters falling down, the lighting plan, the projections on the screens and the sound accompanying it, makes this scene a perfect example of intermediality according to Kattenbelt's and Giesekam's definitions: not only are different media used, and used simultaneously, but they also reinforce and intensify each other: together, they convey meaning. In other words, they are in a co-relationship. The scene ties in well with a general observation about intermediality in theatre that Kattenbelt makes:

> Contemporary art practices are increasingly interdisciplinary practices. As has happened so often in the past, artists who are working in the different disciplines are today working with each other – particularly in the domain of theatre – their creative work is "finding each other" – not only metaphorically but also literally on the performance space of the stage, and I suggest that this is because theatre provides a space in which different art forms can affect each other quite profoundly. Maybe we could even say: when two or more different art forms come together a process of theatricalization occurs. This is not only because theatre is able to incorporate all other art forms, but also because theatre is the "art of the performer' and so constitutes the basic pattern of all the arts. (20)

Theatre is pre-eminently suitable for intermedial practices because of its incorporation of different artistic practices. Indeed, this scene can only be established through a collaboration of actors, lighting and video artists, sound composers, and set designers (not to mention the director, stage manager, playwright, etc.). This collaboration, making the scene intermedial, also contributes to the level of interiority displayed in this crucial moment of the plot. Because of the mix of different media, the audience gets an idea of the amount of stimuli that Christopher experiences, and how overwhelming and dazzling the discovery must feel for him - in a poetic way.

Projection mapping also occurs in the scene in which Christopher travels to London, by showing different moving images (text, advertisements and signs) he sees at the train station on all the flat surfaces of the stage, which creates an intense visual experience. When Christopher is waiting for the train – and feeling very anxious – the illusion of trains passing by is created visually by flickering lights and shadow-like images displayed on the stage *and* the actors. In addition, the tracks in which the train is about to arrive are created by using light to create optical illusions of depth. Perhaps the most entertaining or audience-pleasing instance of projection mapping (in combination with another technical trick) occurs when Christopher seems to be walking down an escalator at the train station, along the back wall of the stage. Luke Treadaway is walking on an – invisible to the audience – construction, while the moving image of an escalator is projected on behind him, creating a playful image (appendix B.11). All of these visuals help portray the view Christopher gets of the station and its different parts.

Apart from these projection mapping examples, many other digital images are displayed on the stage throughout the play, ranging from words that are emphasised in the actors' lines to the outline of a dog and intergalactic constellations: all in a similar neon-coloured, non-realistic fashion (appendix B.12, B.13). Many of these visual techniques foreground underlying emotions, feelings or thoughts that are not explicitly mentioned in the text. The fact that the word 'caution' appears so big on the back wall when Christopher mentions it to a policeman - a reference to the caution he got for hitting another policeman in the opening scene of the play - emphasises the importance of this caution in Christopher's mind, for instance. As Whitmore argues, the visual composition of a theatre performance has its own "aesthetic value and meanings". He compares the visual aspect of theatre to dance and mime, in which "the visual experience alone provides the event's meaning" (128). The meaning in this case, again, being Christopher's experience.

4.2 Audio

The soundtrack of a production can serve similar purposes as the visuals can: "[s]ound evokes that part of […] our experience which cannot be controlled by or reduced to verbal explanations" (Sellars qtd. in Whitmore 173). Sound, as well as visuals, is used for more than just its aesthetic power. As Whitmore says, "[t]rough live, electronic, or mechanical means the director and sound designer/technician can produce an infinite array of sounds to communicate meanings to spectators" (173). He includes characters' personalities and moods in his list of these possible meanings. "Theatre sound presupposes our emotional and cognitive engagement: our sensual immersion in the event and reflection on its possible meaning" (12), Mladen Ovadija argues, too, in his book *Dramaturgy of Sound in the Avant-Garde and Postdramatic Theatre*. Moreover, according to him, "the rhythmic, musical organization of the mise en scène […] activates the "paralinguistic" dimension of the piece embedded in the script" (196). In other words: music and sound can transcend what is being expressed verbally. This is an important notion when discussing the concept of interiority on stage.

Sound is a very important medium for the Frantic Assembly. "Music sits at the very heart of our creative process", Scott and Hoggett write (50). The musical score for *The Curious Incident*, which was composed by Adrian Sutton, reflects Christopher's obsession with mathematics, as it was designed with prime numbers in mind. Prime numbers are a recurring theme in the story in general: Christopher numbered the chapters of his book according to consecutive prime numbers, and he says them out loud whenever he gets too stressed, to help him calm down. In the National Theatre production, this is a fact that is exploited: audience seats that correspond to one of the prime numbers are dubbed 'prime seats', and visitors who booked such a seat find a special leaflet in their chair. The lighting, next to the shades of white and black, contains only two real colours: red and blue (both prime colours). Finally, the music then, too, foregrounds the mathematical quality of Christopher's mind. It adheres to Christopher's world rhythmically, by using prime numbers as "building blocks" (Sutton) for the score. Moreover, it sounds very computer-like, in a "glitch/techno" style (Sutton), reflecting Christopher's fascination with machines and other controllable things. This musical style also helps to keep some distance, as Adrian Sutton says:

> With a show like this I think there's a real danger that music could be used to get to sentimental. It would be so easy just to say 'oh you know, we could do some bits of music that would say how

> sad is it to be Christopher.' Which would be the wrong thing do to, or we decided was the wrong thing to do. […] Christopher really likes maths, machines, and things he knows he can control. Of course that's great for somebody like me as a composer, because I can pick up on 'oh he likes maths, so he likes machines. How can we use those concepts to build a score? To build a piece of music with?' So I thought we're going to use very computer-y sounds and bleeps and that sort of stuff. (BBC)

The point Sutton makes here is that instead of using music to portray how the outer world looks upon Christopher, music is used to portray how Christopher looks upon the outer world. This echoes Ross Brown's view, who writes in his *Sound: A Reader in Theatre Practice* that "[i]n theatre, then, mood music might be used to create a mood in the audience so that they interpret the narrative or scene in a different way" (145). In this case, instead of framing Christopher's story as a sad and sentimental one, the music helps to frame the story from Christopher's point of view.

Next to reflecting Christopher's obsession with mathematics, the music often also mirrors Christopher's state of mind, especially in scenes in which he is in distress. Whereas the electronic score can sound very ambient and in a way even peaceful sometimes, during moments in which Christopher does not feel at ease it rises to become chaotic or even threatening. As Brown explains, theatre sound can "patently change the audience's perception of a play" and "enhance meaning and manipulate emotional response". This emotional response is often linked to the emotional state of the character(s) on stage. Paule Constable said: "One of the things we were constantly trying to look for with the play was a sense of Christopher controlling things until they got out of control" (BBC). When they do (tend to) tip over, this is not only foregrounded by the lighting scheme, but also by the audio. This co-relationship, between lighting and music, is an important argument for intermediality theory. In fact, not only lighting and music work together to foreground Christopher's state of mind, according to Pavis, actors come into play in the meaning-making procedure of theatre as well. "Music provides an emotional atmosphere that sheds light on the actor's gestures and movements; inversely, gesture and dance can 'open up' the music" (227). The relationship between all the elements, and not just the fact that they are all present, gives the work its intermedial quality, which in turn, as seen in the above, aids in the externalisation of the book's narrative.

Sound and visuals come together in a climactic way during the scene at Paddington station, when Christopher has just arrived in London. In addition to physically portraying Christopher's feeling of being overpowered (see chapter 2), the scene also is an explosion of audial and visual stimuli, to demonstrate what a busy train station in London feels like for him. It is difficult to describe all the things that are happening during the performance, but the most important ones are listed here. First of all, there is a soundtrack of different voices saying (some of) the words and sentences from the book, like "Freshly Baked Cookies and Muffins", "Local information", "Sainsbury's", "Closed" and "Heathrow Express" (Stephens 65-67). This technique is very briefly mentioned by Pavis, who calls this "voice modelling" (225). Merged with this are electronic-sounding music and noises, representing station sounds, but also less realistic, and more threatening noises. On the visual side, images of texts, signs, pictures are projected on all of the walls and the floor of the cubic-shaped stage, often covering people as well. In addition, the lighting flickers and changes in intensity during the whole of the chaotic sequence. Both sound and lighting, therefore, are not used in a subliminal way, as in most productions (Allain and Harvie 201), but very overtly. This concoction of images and sounds constitutes an instance of what David Bolter and Richard Grusin would call "hypermedia" (12). All the aural and visual stimuli, including the rushing actors on the stage, indeed create a very chaotic and somewhat daunting atmosphere. Because the words that Christopher 'reads' are displayed literally everywhere in the space, moving, overlapping, and because the sounds are not the realistic station ones, but increased in volume, intensity and quality, and because the actors, as described in chapter 2, toy with Christopher in a non-realistic way, this scene adequately portrays the way Christopher experiences Paddington station, as opposed to how most normal people would.

Returning to Kattenbelt's definition of intermediality and its distinction from multi- and transmediality, one could argue that *The Curious Incident* falls into all three categories: it is multimedial because it employs several media (theatre, music, film, visual art, etc.) in one art work. It is also a transmedial production, since the play is the result of a transposition from one medium to another (a book to a play). Its intermedial qualities can be found in scenes like the one described above: in the Paddington station scene, the different media do not *co-exist,* but *co-relate.* These media would not function as well as they do now if they were acting in isolation. They need each other to create their overwhelming experience, thereby externalising Christopher's perception. Allain and Harvie also say about lighting and sound in theatre that "[t]hey […] need to be considered in relation to other aspects of the mise en scène or

production rather than just by themselves" (201). An argument that echoes Giesekam's "more extensive interaction" (11) and Kattenbelt's "mutual relations" (27) in intermediality.

3.4 Conclusion

All of the scenes described above provide examples of theatre displaying interiority in a different way than through text. In fact, they illustrate situations in which theatre is not only capable of externalising thoughts, but adds more layers to the original narration: in this case, the theatrical experience develops the literary one by adding audio-visual dimensions to a passage that used to only exist on a page. Because of this, the level of interiority perceived by the audience is raised, since the audience does not experience situations in a way they would normally do, but instead get an idea of how these often every-day like events are felt, seen and enjoyed by Christopher.

CONCLUSION

In *A Theory of Adaptation,* Linda Hutcheon quotes director Jonathan Miller, who said that "most novels are irreversibly damaged by being dramatized, as they were written without any sort of performance in mind at all" (36). A viewpoint he is not alone in holding, concluding from the list of clichés Hutcheon describes, which all in some way or another laud the telling mode for achieving things the other modes cannot (52-71).

What this thesis, in line with Hutcheon, has aimed to demonstrate, however, is the fact that clichés are there to be countered, preferably with observable and convincing examples. The National Theatre's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* is such an example. The preceding chapters have illustrated the power of theatre to tell a story. This research has not been done with the goal of making an evaluative claim regarding either the book of the play, but rather with the aim of exploring the range of possibilities a theatrical production can employ in adapting a literary work, especially regarding the portrayal of interiority.

Chapters 1 to 3 have established several devices that were used in this particular case to transport the mind of a 15-year-old autistic boy from the page to the stage. These can be divided into three categories: first of all, in the process of adapting the book to a script, the story itself was changed in such a way that its metadiegesis was preserved, enabling the entire play to convey the protagonist's perspective, because of the play-within-a-play structure. The narratological structure, on the other hand, was changed to enable two different narrators to operate on stage, with the striking case of a narrator who never becomes a focaliser allowing for literal narration from the original book, as well as the voicing of the protagonist's thoughts. Both these changes add to the level of interiority experienced by the audience, as they frame the entire play from the protagonist's point of view.

The second instrument that was utilised to transfer the mind to the stage manifested itself in the use of so-called physical theatre. Through the creation of an ensemble, descriptive passages from the book, such as memories or fantasies, were visualised poetically on stage. In addition, the ensemble allowed for the fragmentary presentation of the play, reflecting the structure of the book as well as the protagonist's mind. The physicality of the actors, in both the main and other roles, furthermore, also contributed to the conveyance of the workings of the mind.

Finally, an array of audial and visuals mechanisms was employed that changed the reading experience of the book into a multi-sensory viewing of the play, making the audience hear and watch

the protagonist's experiences, in addition to having them described. Two main techniques that were used to achieve this were projection mapping and the specific soundtrack, both of which were specifically created for the 'special' mind of the protagonist. A mind which was also literally visualised on stage through the set and lighting design.

Although in the previous chapters these theatrical devices have been examined in relative isolation, what has also been illustrated is that it is through their combination that the play succeeds in what it set out to do. Because all the different factors analysed have been employed not only simultaneously, but also in ways that are both influencing and mutually dependent on each other, the picture becomes complete, and the message is conveyed. Although the play meets the requirements for Kattenbelt's definitions of both multi- and transmediality (since it uses several media in one show, and transposes a book to a play, respectively), and these elements are indeed entertaining and elegant to watch, it is because of its intermedial qualities that the play is convincing in its transition of the mind from page to stage. Neither the script, choreography, lighting, design, nor soundtrack alone could have achieved translating an autistic teenage brain to the stage. They are all intertwined and rely upon each other. Therefore, it is the intermediality, in Kattenbelt's and Giesekam's definitions, inherent in this production that makes it a successful adaptation.

The findings in this thesis can be applied to a wider scope of novel-to-theatre adaptations. All the instruments laid out in the above can be utilised by any play, not just this specific one. What this study demonstrates is that any source text can be taken up by theatre practitioners for adapting purposes, and is not necessarily "damaged" by being adapted: their range of possibilities is vast, not only for narrating plot, but for portraying inner worlds, as well. Merchant's dissertation comes to mind here again here, in which she concludes: "My research has also proposed that the medium [film] may be particularly suitable for communicating mental experiences because of the fact that those experiences themselves are often visual, verbal and audio in their nature" (386). Add to this conclusion about the visual, verbal and audial aspects of film the three-dimensional quality and 'liveness' (Georgi) of the theatre, and it becomes hard to insist that interiority belongs to the telling mode alone.

Some disclaimers or limitations about this study should be laid out here, as well, though. First of all, this thesis is based on one viewing of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Other casts or other performance nights might have provided for a different impression of the physicality of the play, for instance. On the other hand, many of the analysed characteristics of the play in this paper are

unfluctuating, such as its script, the visuals and the soundtrack.

Secondly, although much of the play has been discussed in the previous chapters, there is an equal lot that, due to constraints of time and space, but also memory, have not been examined. The most important parts have all been covered, but it is nevertheless important to be aware of this.

Finally, it must also be said that the play does not transmit the same amount of interiority as the book in terms of *quantity*. As mentioned in the conclusion of chapter 1, a spectator familiar with the book is likely to miss some motivations or clarifications that are present in the novel but not in the play. This is not surprising, given the amount of text in the book as compared to the novel. However, through the creative use of the numerous other media involved in the play, interiority is still experienced, even to a great extent, but in a different way. Quantity does not always outdo quality, as *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* has illustrated. Simon Stephens sums it up perfectly when he says:

> I think this is an experience. The experience of watching this play you can't get in any other form. You couldn't have this experience watching a movie, you couldn't have it watching a television series, you couldn't have it reading a novel, actually. The whole play is a celebration of theatre. In the way that Mark Haddon's novel was a celebration of writing, and of reading, I think this night in the theatre is a celebration of theatre. And I think that's extraordinary. (BBC)

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APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

Christopher, a fifteen-year-old British boy with alleged (although this is never mentioned in the book) autism, lives in Swindon with his father Ed; his mother Judy has died two years ago. At the start of the book he discovers their neighbour Mrs Shears's dog Wellington, who has been killed with a garden fork. He is first suspected of the murder himself as a police man finds him with the dog, but he is not the murderer. After a short episode at the police station, Christopher, who is a big Sherlock Holmes fan (in fact, the title of the book is a direct quote from one of the Sherlock Holmes stories), decides to investigate the case himself, and find out who killed Wellington – even though his father has clearly forbidden him to do so.

He keeps track of his progress through a note book, which also serves as a kind of diary, and is part of an assignment he does with his mentor at school, Siobhan. Thus, the book one reads is in fact Christopher's book (which dictates its style and content). In between the chapters which describe his life and detective-like search, Christopher also writes factual chapters about mathematical or logical problems, Sherlock Holmes, school, or his own condition and habits.

After his father finds and confiscates his book, Christopher secretly searches the house for it. While doing so, he finds a box stuffed with letters in his father's room. The letters are all addressed to him, and turn out to be from his mother. They all come from London and date from the past two years, which means his mother is still alive, and Christopher's father has been hiding the letters from him. Upon this realisation, Christopher goes into a kind of shock state, which is how his father finds him. Ed tries to have a talk with Christopher, in which he also confesses that he (Ed) killed Wellington. His motive for doing so was the fact that Mrs Shears, who had frequented their household after Judy's death/departure, had eventually left again, and in a foul mood Ed had given the dog a blow.

After this episode, Christopher is genuinely afraid of his father, who not only lied to him about his mother's death, but is also a murderer (of the dog). Christopher realises he is in danger by being in the same house as his father, and, after considering his options, decides that there's only one thing he can do: go to his mother in London.

The second half of the book then describes the incredible journey of an autistic boy who has never been as far as the corner of his own street travelling to London by himself (with his pet rat). This of course makes for many scary, awkward and funny situations, but eventually he does succeed in finding his mother, who lives there with her new boyfriend, the former Mr Shears (Christopher's neighbour).

Their reunion is not as wonderful and loving as one would expect, however, for Christopher is a difficult child and especially Mr Shears cannot handle him well. After staying at his mother's house for a few days, in which Ed comes by and argues with both the other adults, things get out of hand with Mr Shears, and Judy and Christopher leave in the middle of the night, back to Swindon, where she is going to find a new place to live and Christopher has to learn to trust his father again. The book ends with Christopher being able to take his math A levels (and scoring an A+) and getting a puppy from his father.

This is a distilled representation of the major events in the book. It should be mentioned here, however, that what makes the book so engaging is not necessarily the plot, but the way in which it is written: by Christopher. This provides for an extraordinary insight in the ways of people on the autist spectrum, and makes the book simultaneously humorous, sad, and entertaining.

APPENDIX B: IMAGES OF THE PLAY

B.1

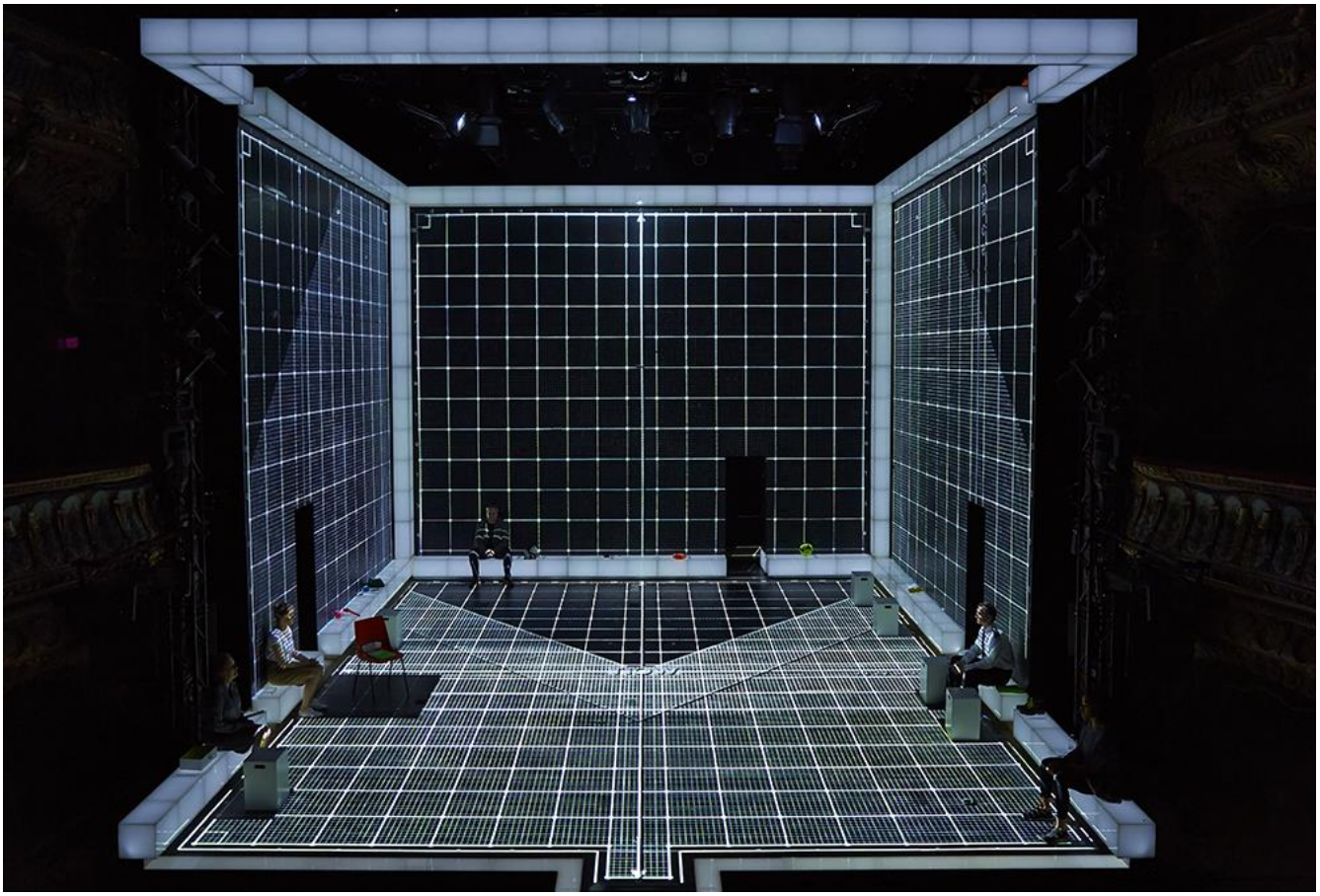
B.2

B.3

B.4

B.5

B.6



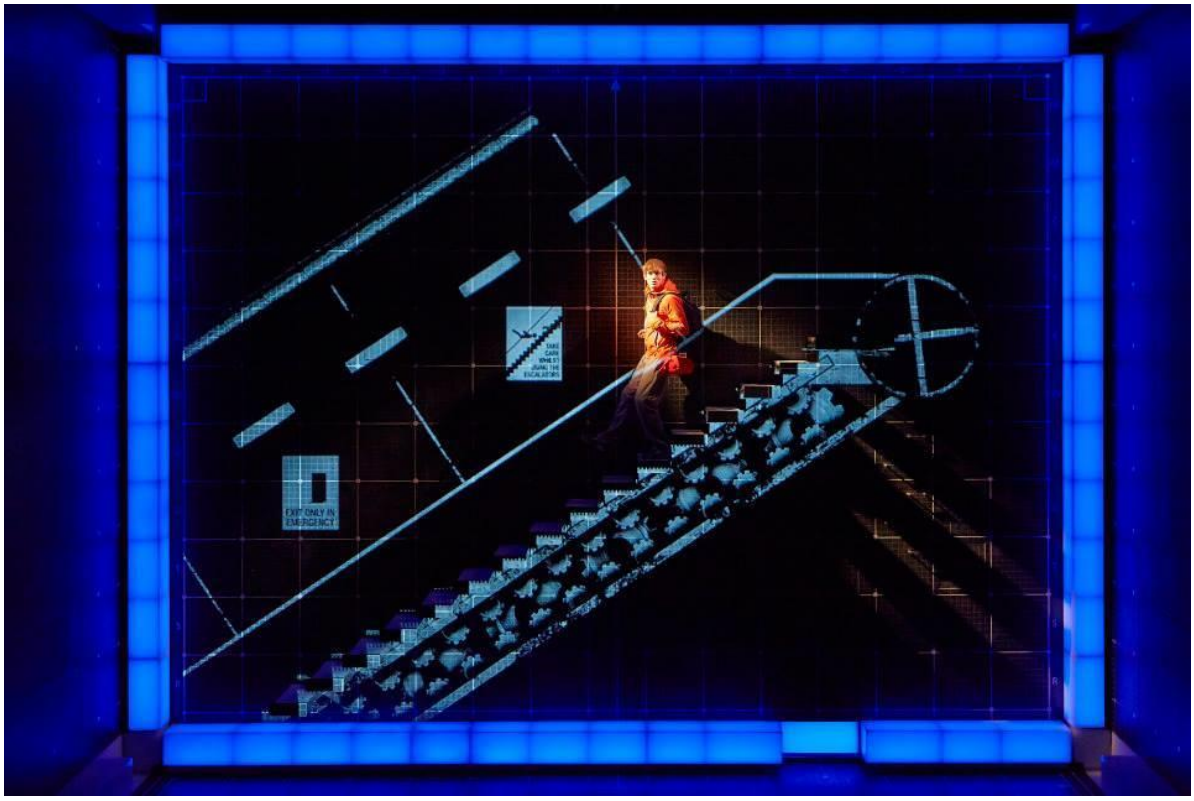
B.7

B.8

B.9

B.10

B.11



B.12

B.13

These are some images of performances of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. It must be emphasised that these are merely stills of the show, and serve solely to provide an idea of its visual characteristics. It is difficult, if not impossible, to convey the specifics and the experience of the movement and sound in the performance through a written paper. In addition, it must be noted that not all the scenes described in this paper were available in photographs (and two of those that were, only in a lower quality).

To get a (brief) idea of the movement (of people as well as images) and soundtrack of the show, the official trailer for the play, to be found in the media list, is a good reference point.