

The Poet's Theater of Fiona Templeton: An Environmental View
James Sherry

I was sat with a malevolent question... but now I am more or less riotous and bounded, because, well duh, the encounter between spectator-subject and image-object is a process of frivolous interference or mutual indignant mutation! I hope this doesn't sound too confrontational.

—Nada Gordon, *Scented Rushes*

1. Environmental Theater

Fiona Templeton's *YOU—The City* is an intimate play for an audience of one initially staged in 1988 in the mid-town neighborhood of New York and later published by Roof Books as a script along with photographs of the performance event.¹ In its original performance, on keeping an appointment at an office in Times Square, a “client” (the sole member of the audience) is passed through a series of mainly scripted encounters at both indoor and outdoor locations, including a church, an apartment, and a gypsy cab ride. The action reaches a climax when the client realizes that she has become the object of one of the transitions or hand-offs in a Hell's Kitchen playground. The narrative of *YOU—The City* is therefore not a story but a sequence of separate scenes, linked by one or more of the actors guiding the client from one event to the next. Each of these encounters takes place in a separate, typical city niche: an office with a secretary and an executive, a church with a defrocked priest, a sidewalk worked by a prostitute, a gypsy cab, a tenement apartment in which two lovers argue. Throughout the play's 15 different scenes—each in its own local ecosystem—Templeton established, in a guided tour of over two hours, a work of environmental theater. The client's encounters are environmentally linked by their location in the same neighborhood and as part of the continuous experience of any city dweller. The play focuses on environmental issues also in the way that the sequence of encounters changes the client's idea of the self from that of an isolated individual in an unfamiliar and unsettling situation to someone who has become acutely aware of how he or she shares identity as well as space with the actors. The client realizes she is a component of a larger environment.

This use of real-life surroundings, the loosely coupled relationships of one scene to another, and the way performers, both actor and client, identify with each other are the means by which Templeton realizes an environmental theater. By using theatrical strategies that extend the stage and the play into a living, diverse surrounding, Templeton has created interactive associations among actors, audience, settings, and text. I call this environmentally aware theater where the audience's consciousness of its participation in the play overrides the artifice of the theatrical experience in some important ways. Environmentally aware theater presents an alternative to an absorptive theatrical experience that usually presents its artificiality intra-textually. *YOU—The City* transforms dramatic theater's emphasis on the individual (going back to Aeschylus) into an awareness of one's collaborative engagement in a network of beings. By extension, environmentalism (individual and network in dual agency) reinforces culture, in this case a poetics, in helping society to understand the interrelated conditions of the planet threatened by climate change. In this essay, I suggest that *YOU—The City* shows how Templeton's poet's theater contributes to an environmental poetics that proposes a significant modification of our engagement with the world. Understanding poet's theater environmentally

also allows us to link effectively with other disciplines to reveal an environmentally informed epistemology.

2. Environmental Perspectives

There is a growing literature around the practice and definition of ecopoetics that debates and enacts writing in relation to ecology, broadly conceived. One of the goals of ecopoetics is to engage with other disciplines. The relative weight granted language, and what is meant by ecosystem, varies greatly depending on the point of view of the writer. No single definition of ecosystem has emerged from ecopoetics. Further, Jonathan Skinner asks in his editor's notes to the latest issue of *ecopoetics* "that the term [ecopoetics] continue to be used with uncertainty and circumspection. That it ask and be asked the hard questions about language, representation, efficacy, ethics, community and identity . . . That it entail some real effort at interdisciplinary thinking" (*ecopoetics* 06/07 9).² For these reasons and for the purposes of this essay, I apply the McGraw Hill life sciences glossary definition of ecosystem to Templeton's work: "A unit of interaction among organisms and their surroundings, including all life in a defined area." I use this definition because it comes from outside literature and extends the connections from poetics beyond the discipline of poetry. Such extension to multiple disciplines is consistent with most of the diverse perspectives around ecopoetics, environmentalism, and systems theory. Further, using the McGraw Hill definition supports my aim to connect poet's theater to other disciplines. Finally and most importantly, this definition helps to clarify Templeton's environmental work and encourages us to think of the play as a series of linking mechanisms both between actor and audience (self and other) as well as linkages among scenes.

In *YOU—The City* the environmental perspectives among these 15 urban "unit[s] of interaction among organisms and their surroundings" are shaped on many levels of the theatrical experience. From the characters played by the actors or the audience to subject positions within the system, the audience member experiences an oddly disjointed and re-hinged experience of the self. For example, the Manhattan neighborhood becomes an objectified space (ecosystem) in which actors appear and reappear, sometimes changing character between appearances. Many of the actors are seen only once. This continuous variation among actors' appearances and reappearances in the environmental setting, and on a smaller scale within the various scenes, allows Templeton to treat the individual—actor or performer or accidental neighborhood onlooker—as a metaphor for how the individual organism operates in any ecosystem. The play's focus on connections helps one understand how an environmentally aware culture that objectifies our interdependence with other organisms and processes might differ from the human-centered perspective that dominates intellectual life. In order to establish a culture for environmentalism, to view our world environmentally, such a poetics can establish a framework in which humanity and nature are understood as a single complex system, a social model of environment. The individuals in Templeton's play are engaged not just in their own dramatic action; they also "perform" their status as organisms situated as part of complex sets of relationships (human and non-human, subject and object). While this social model of environment may be said to be part of a systems approach to our condition, I only tangentially engage systems theory here in order to prevent a systems view from overdetermining poet's theater's environmentalism. *YOU—The City* reveals and focuses us on the qualitative events that emerge from these complex quantitative interactions within urban ecosystems. Templeton uses these quantities to build a framework supporting multiple cultural practices rather than any one monolithic culture. Her metaphor of the city and the city as content thrive in the structure of the play, engaging diverse relationships

among audience and actors, and allowing us to understand, repeat, and adjust our relationships with the ecosystems that the play presents. Templeton avoids the doctrine by treating rhetorical positions as aspects of a larger continuity rather than as ideals to be guarded. Inclusiveness is paramount, attending to what is, if the environmental metaphor is to be successful in representing the similarities of organisms, places, and things at different scales.

In this essay I look at how *YOU—The City* and some of Templeton's other works of poet's theater address issues of environmental inclusiveness and ideological balancing. These issues include the integrity of the individual organism, subject/object relations, the definition of cognition as taking place only within the mind, and the status-oriented hierarchies of literary judgments. Instead of a binary kind of hierarchy, subject over object, Templeton traces subject/object relations through the non-status-oriented matrix of set theory. Templeton builds perspectives through a diverse set of issues rather than striving for a singular objective. Her scenes are structured as sets of encounters and modeled so that the themes mentioned above can be understood as they occur. Finally, I turn to set theory to demonstrate the interdisciplinary poetics sought by both ecopoetics and environmentalism. Set theory links disciplines and helps differentiate poet's theater from other theaters by showing how to model communication between genres, depicting where connections are facilitated and where communication becomes more difficult.

3. Poet's Theater

Templeton is not alone in her attempt to rework the shape of theater. Many works of modern theater have addressed non-environmentally aware theater's over-simplification of relationships and have sought a structurally more realistic stage. Jean Genet's *The Maids* plays with the hierarchy of the domestic relationships between a madam and her two maids as they vie for control of the roost. The Living Theater and other theatrical troupes poured off the stage into the audience and then invited the audience onto the stage in order to undercut an unproductive separation of actors and audience. Alan Kaprow's "Happenings" proposed an integrated environment that was inclusive of subject and object in an event-driven model that helped renew relationships between the actors and audience. Jerzy Grotowski's "Poor Theater" used actors as props in *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, exposed culture as a disguise for genocidal architecture in *Akropolis*, and created an integrated "total act" of components in his final work *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*. These and many other efforts have attempted to reformulate subject/object relations in theater, but mostly in the context of an experience related to the stage and encapsulated in a building. Centralizing the action on the proscenium stage requires suspension of disbelief that takes us away from daily experience. *YOU—The City* addresses this subject/object problem by taking the theater to multiple locations, disturbing the action to create quotidian stresses and make us question our surroundings. Rather than showing expected relationships between characters ensconced in different locations as happens in the movies, Templeton multiplies the idea of subject in the way the characters relate to each other and to the audience depending on location—that is, relations are ecosystem dependent.

Poet's theater explicitly calls attention to this relationship between the audience and the performers as a structure of its own (a common poetic device, which will be seen below in the discussions of actors and audience). While much innovative theater uses some poetic practices, Templeton's effort tightly binds theater and language-oriented poetics. I use the term poet's theater to link Templeton's theatrical and poetic work in *YOU—The City*. I also treat Templeton's work as a special case of an environmentally oriented poet's theater because

environmentalism can contain many other ideas of what poet's theater can be; its taxonomy is dynamic. Further, I use the term environmental with respect to poet's theater to emphasize the mechanisms by which components of the theater are linked rather than the stories of each scene. Concepts and practices like staging, characterization, and plot are not supplanted by environmental horizontality. Their connections map the ecosystems of poet's theater and open a window onto how the larger culture can begin to take an environmental perspective into account. Poet's theater's inclusiveness retrieves the larger context of theater as a ritual connected with actual social structures (as in Greek theatre), not simply an artifact of culture commenting on society. The context of Templeton's poet's theater is structured with a comprehensive set of social concerns and constituencies: the workplace, the family, and the way individuals and roles outside the mainstream are understood and addressed. Like other theatrical experiences, it includes the stage, actors, text, props, but it also includes a range of technical components and ideas about environment in a way that throws into contrast our own propensity for understanding our lives environmentally. While this environmental propensity is constantly undermined by specialist claims of individual uniqueness, adaptive solutions must be recognized as the driving force behind our construction of social life and society itself.

4. The Environmental Construction of Poet's Theater

In *YOU—The City*, Templeton puts the audience in direct one-on-one contact with the actors in their surroundings. Each audience member either travels alone or is escorted from location to location, meeting each actor in a series of mainly scripted encounters in and around Times Square, New York. The audience-of-one participates in the play according to a general set of rules and logistics established for the performance as a whole. Appendices to the play specify the instructions given to the actors prior to performance on such topics as client flow through the scenes, shuttling performers back and forth between the scenes, a gender alternation chart when performers must stand in for other performers, the role of monitor performers who track the flow, and how to handle fake clients, standby appointments, and blanks if a client fails to show up for an appointments. The addenda read like a battle plan: everything accounted for including chance. A more detailed map can be drawn over Templeton's work by listing and describing some of the components of the ecosystem of *YOU—The City*, beginning with the role of cognition through to the play's text, its stage, its performers, its audience, and its criticism. This map will represent its construction and performance in a way that highlights the work itself as an ecosystem participating in an environmental poetics. Once we have a clearer idea of what is inside each of these components, I will show how to rebuild them into a loosely coupled whole with set theory.

One of the primary problems for the environmental movement in general to solve is how we overcome the way that ideologies isolate and separate people who actually may have many related interests and intentions. Theater's traditional distance between stage and audience reifies this alienation as well. Identifying all participants and relationships in a performance event except oneself as the other in the structure of theater (audience to actor and by extension actor to actor) accents difference in a way that does not reflect the essential symbiosis and cooperation required to create and produce theater and to manage its resources. It also fails to reflect the social cohesion that frequently results from these experiences. Artists of all persuasions have often supported such ideological thinking by focusing on the differences between individuals, between schools of art or poetry, and by treating the work as the production of an individual. The

problem is rooted in Descartes' *cogito* where comprehension takes place all at once in the mind as if on a mental stage.

In the environmental model of poet's theater, mind participates in a more integrated manner with bodily activities. Environmental cognition shows thought extending, in certain instances, beyond the organism. Mark Rowlands, professor of philosophy at the University of Miami, suggests that cognition can be said to take place inside the body and also the "manipulation and transformation of information bearing structures" (16). Several functions, especially the function of memory, take place externally, like an external disk array on your computer. "In certain circumstances," Rowlands writes, "acting upon external structures is a form of information processing" (19). For example, in non-environmental cognition when we want to find something, what we call thinking takes place. Then with the idea constituted in the mind and our thought completed, we look for the thing, i.e. we act, while presumably thinking about something else or repeating the initiating thought, "I want thyme," obsessively as a litany or mantra to confirm our belief in the thought. Our actions are detached from the thought process. Moreover, the very distinction in question is that between thought and action. In the environmental model, thinking extends to the process of looking as well as creating the image (signified) of what we want to look for. Thinking and acting are symbiotes. Let's say you want to find the thyme. You think of the thyme and open the spice rack. To paraphrase Rowlands' description of the process: You run your finger along the bottles until you find the label that matches the image that you have in mind: thyme. The matching process is as much a part of environmental cognition as conceptualizing thyme in the first place or, in a more complex situation, as reading the word thyme in the recipe. The thinking process extends throughout the event, beyond the mind and into action. We can also cite language as a relevant cultural example of external cognition that we are using together now as I write and you read these words asynchronously. Thus thinking also takes place over extended time, establishing a four-dimensional topology for thought. Extending thought to language, to its uses, and to the external world, we can think about our environment in the process of acting on it. Defining cognition environmentally, we can value the external world in a way that's consistent with how we value ourselves.

Setting appropriate initial conditions, such as environmental cognition, for a self in relation to another component of the environment moves us toward establishing the sustainable interactions idealized by environmentalism. Extended cognition also helps avoid the trap of subject/object relations that separates the self from its surroundings in a way that allows us to detach ourselves from where we are, a detachment that can lead to such counterproductive behaviors as throwing a candy wrapper on the street or failing to secure a deep water drilling rig to improve profitability. The assumption that we can select a single perspective, either our own or that of the things we're talking about (our discipline), from which to view the world and then apply that perspective to all events exemplifies the inflation of the subject, driven by the ego, from which humanity is environmentally suffering. Without extended cognition, we are conflicted every time we see a situation that presents more than one perspective. The mind-centered approach colors our entire world view even in its consideration of the body. Non-environmentally aware theaters model the theatrical experience as a set of unidirectional and sometimes bidirectional connections between actor and audience, between actor and actor on the stage, between author and audience, between director and actor. We often talk about these connections separately and analyze them within our specialized disciplines, because our assumptions about thinking inhibit a more inclusive approach. These point-to-point connections

become confused as the assignment of a central perspective shifts between author, actors, and audience. The simplification that seems so effective in its first instance builds unnecessarily complex models as we proceed from one use case to another.

As an alternative to these point-to-point communications, we might construct sets of perspectives. In the case of *YOU—The City*, the scenes represent multiple perspectives for the audience. Individual processes such as character and thematics can be traced through the sets showing the accessibility of paths with greater or lesser difficulty of communication. These paths become narratives of relations that are dynamically inter-subjective and so model our world more effectively (an approach I will revisit at the end of the essay in a consideration of q-analysis). Templeton questions traditional ideas, conventions, and standards of theater in ways that model environmental cognition and sustainable interactions, as when she writes:

Well, who goes to the theater to sit and have catharsis any more, but this very experimental form provided you with the kind of rush the conventional theater no longer does. The only difference between that and catharsis is the distance issue. But whilst problematizing the relationship between performer and performee, and between theater and reality, *YOU* does this by indulging you. It's like Genet's *Balcony*; it's a place of your own enactment. What if somebody doesn't get it that there's a distance and takes it for real? Well, some people almost did. And the performers had to see that and play. (*YOU* 133)

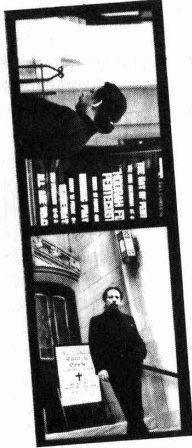
The distance between actor and client in *YOU—The City* becomes proportional to the distance between performers, sometimes nearer, sometimes farther, but always interactive. Catharsis is no longer a characteristic of the audience; it is a performance in itself, another interaction on the stage. In another example, Templeton attenuates the distance between the actor and client. “If the client picks up the telephone, the monitor performer should be aware of the name of the client who is in that scene at that point and should ask: *Are you [client's name]? Sorry to bother you*” (134). By now the client has clearly joined the cast. This process expands the idea of intention to a matrix and introduces extended cognition, a key concept of a culture that supports environmental change.

The Text / Documentation as Ecosystem

In the published book, the text of *YOU—The City* is divided into three columns, a collaborative design between Templeton and myself (in my role as press editor for Roof Books) that treats the writing as an ecosystem. The left-hand page is divided into two columns, one offering documentation of the event including photographs, and the second listing the instructions to actors (see Fig. 1 below). On the right-hand page, the play's “dialogue” stands more or less alone. This architecture differs from the organic compound that most published plays use, for example, in the French's editions where all text is printed in a linear format that accumulates over time.

ACT I

Scene v – St. Luke's



We were peering through the locked glass door of the church, as I breathed the line, "You don't exist." And crash, there was a perfectly timed rumble of thunder accompanied by lightning and hail.

32

Performer F

EXCOMMUNICADO CONFESSOR

Male. Very discreet.

Interruption/Improvisation Strategy

Since your speaking tends to be intoned rather than the discursive, your replies could stick to the gestural (closing of eyes, inclination of head, intake of breath, smile). Bent head, folded hands, inaudible murmur, and liturgical humming (preferably appropriately worded or reworded hymn lines, that is, with "you", such as: *O Godhead Hid... as failing quite in contemplating thee.*

... Thy Name Shall be Heard) may give thinking time. Instil silences. Only as last resort, use Latin (in of course the second person) like: *Dominus vobiscum. Et cum spiritu tuo.*

Choose your spot for a moment of silence.

Action—(just under) 10 minutes

You intervene gently between Performer E and the client on the church steps, raising a tolerant hand to Performer E. Then quietly:

Your voice rarely rises above deep and low, occasionally a whisper, except perhaps for some emphatic intonation.

ACT I – Scene v



If you can't know if you mustn't ask, why look?

Your power is the mark of my death, and yet you need me as your living fur
You don't exist. You are a pain behind my eye from looking till you're
anything I see. I might accept you, but so I would destroy you as I said you
were mine. Why should I describe you to yourself? Because you don't believe
me? Or because to anyone else you are no matter? You open your mouth to

33

Fig. 1. Page layout from *YOU—The City* (New York: Roof, 1990). 32-33.

By separating the components, this publication attempts to make the reader aware of separate species of text, to treat them both independently and together, and at the same time to make it really easy to read the spoken words without interruption, as a kind of poetry. Templeton was forceful in her insistence that the performers speak poetry, a subset of the textual materials in the book. In some sense, then, I have begun to think of the other material and the connections among them as its poetics. By highlighting this textual taxonomy we can see both the independence of the components and the necessity of their interaction to complete the performance. In theatrical texts that are not environmentally aware, this interaction is assumed, thus glossing over the interactions of the various species of text—spoken word, directions to the actor, and documentation of the performance, including pictures and comments. In contrast, the divided

text of *YOU—The City* highlights how our thinking extends beyond the spoken word to location to comment to a wide variety of components of the ecosystem.

Environmental poetics is inherent in Templeton's text as "you" is repositioned through constant repetition and continuous presence in the same way that nature appears to dissolve through our manipulation of it. The self dissolves, and second person and first person comeingle. Integrating the ego into the world helps us treat humanity and nature together as a single complex unit. The notion of externalized cognition, where thinking takes place not only in the mind but extending beyond it as a connection between the world and the mind, reveals, Templeton asserts, the fundamental social condition of the person:

Because the text on the page is not actually being addressed to you, it may be read as though something were missing, which it is, because you have to add your subjectivity, in a more active sense than the page usually demands . . . the you disappears from the text. Because you is passed on. The word you changed from being egoistic to being social. You had learned the second person. (*YOU* 135)

Environmentalism implies that we model events as relationships between entities (actors, client, props) rather than as isolated nodes operating via communication to each other. Templeton moves back and forth between the performers, sometimes equating them, sometimes separating them until that path is well defined, the relationship materialized. Templeton takes the notion a step further by pointing out that the primary objects of an ecosystem (as in the McGraw Hill definition) may be those interfaces between two organisms as much as the organisms themselves. And *YOU* attempts to show precisely that, for as Templeton writes:

The experience of art is in relationship, meaning being born where intention and interpretation meet. Theater is the art of relationship. A performance is the product of as many points of view as there are creators; a realized moment of performance is the meeting of as many as are present, performers and audience . . . 'you' assumes and creates relationship. (*YOU* 139)

But lest the inveterate traditionalist slip into a state of terror at having her identity stolen by forces akin to the Soviet threat or *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *YOU* reassures the reader that since *YOU* deals with relationship, it also evokes privacy. But not the privacy of reaction of the individual in one of a thousand theater seats, protected in anonymity and in numbers . . . the gaze is returned, client and performer sustain between them the performance of the performance, because there is only them—a deflection of the attention of either and reality is redefined . . . The performance is a relationship, "you" is a relationship, meaning is made between speaker and hearer. *You's* privacy is that of the individuality of any relationship. (*YOU* 139)

YOU takes exception to theater's separation of performer and audience by creating a renewed relationship between them. Furthermore, Templeton argues that "[t]he relationship [between performer and audience] was located in the same place where the meaning of the text was made" (140). The question of difference, of uniqueness in the arts, does not disappear. Differentiating features remain within the larger context of relationship. But the contours of the self blur, and environment, instead of being defined as the place where the subject resides, becomes ecosystem inclusive of the self.

The energy created by the edges of selves in contact replaces the reality of the self *in situ* with an environmental set of relationships. Templeton notes that this change can present difficulty for performers: "The performance defined itself close to the edge of the real, but in order to use and to make visible the chosen side of it. For one performer, the edge was not clear

enough in that his performance spilled into his life, and so the clients' lives, our lives, mine" (*YOU* 140). Here is a clear representation of an environmentally defined world where the edges of the different selves in contact with each other become the bodies of the ecosystem. The performers did not find it quite so easy to return to the imaginary world that humanism creates of bodies moving through space. Seen in this light of fricative edges, the edges of the text run off the page, "the Aristotelian unities became logistic rather than narrative concerns" (*YOU* 141). And this textual logistic is represented by staging as well as by a schedule of performers and performees interacting. *YOU—The City* documents the text, the action of the events, and commentary about both. Providing a more complete document of the work than the usual publication, the book published by Roof attempted to prevent the reader from becoming lost in the text, hypnotized by artistic technique. The text itself is one stage of meaning among others, not the whole meaning. For example, Templeton comments that "the cab ride not only separates the play's two geographical sets of locations, but also separates the introductory linear series of scenes from the loop of the rest of the piece" (*YOU* 149). Meaning in poet's theater is located repeatedly at every level of scale and in each facet of the text.

The Stage

The staging of *YOU—The City* has received more attention than most of the other parts of the performance because it is the distinguishing feature of the work. Yet viewed in parallel with the other components of the theater, its unique values also contribute to a comprehensive environment. *YOU—The City* moves from the usual closed space of theater to the streets. Templeton made the city like a movie set, sans cameras, in order to "switch from close up to long shot to a level of reality—because it was so completely site specific. And not just site specific, but without the feeling of other people watching—it was just your experience" ("Presence Project"). These sites are a distraction from the work's themes and disarming at the same time, because the client is constantly trying to understand what to do, how to behave. If it were located in a theater, with its familiar conventions of audience behavior, the presence of other audience members would likely encourage you to sit quietly. If you were alone in the city and contacted some strangers, you would also likely follow behavioral conventions, interacting according to the needs of the exchange, whether someone is asking directions or stealing your purse. But in this case, where audience and performers are constantly negotiating the space between them, audience-performer interaction both unsettles familiar behaviors and suppresses normal protective instincts because the safety of the performance remains operational, even on the mean streets. Standing in a scene, if you are only in the role of watching performers, you might be able to separate yourself from the action. But if the performers are constantly telling things to "you" while you are watching the scene, saying "you" over and over, inviting your engagement, but not indicating in any clear way how to react or even whether to react, your sense of self begins to break down. In that chaotic moment, more and more information is exchanged between audience and performers, which increases your understanding of what is going on—not just in your mind but around you, through the transmission of language and bodily cues taking place between you and the performers. However, most clients become confused because of this chaotic plethora of data (although I spoke to one woman who found it perfectly natural).

The staging of Templeton's poet's theater also poses questions about the impact of structure, because "framing the artificial makes it seem real," as Nick Kaye says in one interview ("Presence Project"). Templeton thinks "it's a question of whether you can take it that far,"

which I take to mean that whether framing the artificial actually goes so far as to change the perception of reality, or whether it simply highlights the fact of artificiality, is a matter still open to debate. Templeton's incredulity about the easy identification of framing with transformation extends to human interaction by making it difficult for the performers to find a consistent frame:

I talk about framing to the performers a lot. And often you think about framing as something you do when you observe, but I talked to them about framing as something that they had to do to themselves. For example, when they were, in fact, saying a script, they had to present it in such a way that it seemed natural—yes, as acting, which was to do with the way in which they set up their relationship with the other person [client]. (“Presence Project”)

In this sense the performers use the confusion of location to confuse the idea of role. Enacting the frame is actually breaking the frame as it makes us aware of the frame and drags us into it. External cognition re-establishes a larger frame, making the relationship both less confusing and more comprehensive. Like the performers and audience, the stage is mutable and not entirely under control. People from the street intrude into the set and participate in the performance. As Kaye points out in his interview with Templeton, “There seems to be a very close link between this attention to site and an overlaying of these roles and positions. I wonder if you think of those things as being indelibly intertwined” (“Presence Project”). The stage becomes an unpredictable environment, or nearly so, because Templeton continues the distinction between real and artificial even while questioning it.

The environmental aspects of the piece are revealed in its symmetry and complexity, as opposed to the dramatized asymmetry of modernist and postmodern productions. Actors enter at alternating symmetrical points and leave in the same alternative symmetry, but the entries and exits do not coincide. Thus there is a perceivable order but it is not predictable for the audience; the performers are only kept on track by a series of complex instructions and schedules documented in the book, but not readily apparent to the client. As Templeton has already pointed out, here logistics replaces the narrative and hence informs the theatrical structure. Whereas narrative is often associated with the story of an individual or the collective story of multiple individuals, by using logistics to replace a story line that runs from the beginning of the play to its end, Templeton again points out that relationships rather than individuals lie at the core of any understanding of our environment. How we feel about a specific interaction with the environment is not as important as understanding the results of that relationship. Of course ignoring human behavior would be impractical, but its psychological aspects must be balanced with the effects of our relationship to the environment. Logistics points out one way of dealing with the incredible complexity of environmental changes or problems, be they climatic or social; within *YOU—The City*, it also reduces the effects of individual psychology and emphasizes the interactions between multiple performers and the audience of one. These interactions are visible in the diagram below (see Fig. 2), which shows the logistics of the shuttles that performers have to follow in staging the work. Out of this schedule a temporal aspect of the work emerges, besides its duration or the duration of its scenes; here again the performer becomes a metaphor as well as the carrier of the text to the audience. The systematic and external sense of timing in logistics is not arbitrary but is, instead, required to move people to the right place at the right time. Essentialism in narrative--the plot, if you will--is replaced by the necessity of logistics.

Performer Shuttles:
diagram of total form showing shuttles for clients 5-8

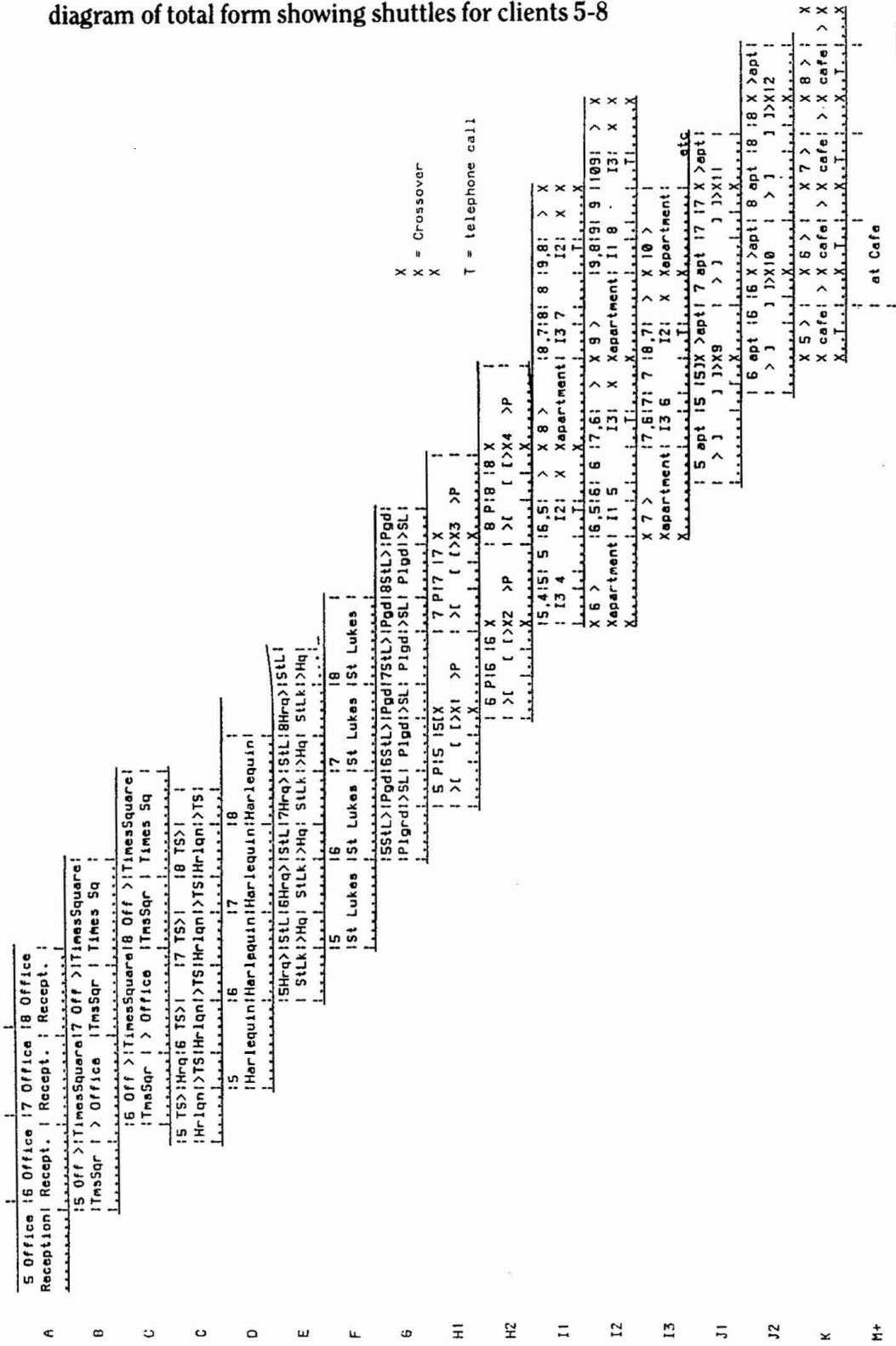


Fig. 2. Diagram of Performer Shuttles for *YOU—The City*. (YOU 164)

The Performers

The relationship between the performers and the other components of the theater displays an environmental bias to Templeton's work. As Templeton writes about the process of realizing the play again and again *in situ*:

While re-creating *YOU—The City* in various versions, I became interested in further layers of participants besides official audience and performers—the inhabitants of the various neighborhoods, who gradually knew what was happening as pairs of audience and performer passed many times daily. These layers became both audience and performers themselves, either choosing to watch, simply to appear, to offer comments, or to intervene. This inspired how *L'Ile* (The Island [2003]) works, using multiple layers of audience and performers as its base and structure. (“A Poetics” 7)

This evolving approach to structure contrasts with a structure where complex frameworks are stripped of components until they can be modeled in a linear fashion. Care is usually taken in scientific and artistic endeavors to assure that the components eliminated do not significantly alter the net value of the materials or calculation.³ Nevertheless, complex layering produces emergent properties that can change the results and certainly change the tone and atmosphere of those results. In Templeton's case those interactions resulting from complexity tend to be the content of the work as much as its presumed theme. I would hazard that even the term “poet's theater” titles the genre as a complex layering of roles, and in fact, the very title *YOU—The City* implies a dual agency that rapidly develops beyond the usual subject-object relations in theater.

This technique of dual agency is modeled most famously perhaps in The Living Theater's late 1960s productions. Presenting inter-subjectivity as an action highlights the set of relationships between audience and performer so that the self is extended into the surroundings. This extended performer is tough to define and behaves more like a performer in an ecosystem, taking on different attitudes depending on what role she takes with respect to others in the niche: performer, guide, client, or monitor. A tree, for example, can provide shade for a ruminant, a home for a sparrow, flowers for a bee, block nutrients from smaller plants, and act as a landmark for a human. The performer, too, is mutable and defined by his/her role within each context. In one case, an actor changes roles from one scene to the next. In another example, an actor in one scene becomes a client in a subsequent scene. In *YOU—The City*, the larger ecosystem, the city, becomes an actor as well, causing many difficulties for the performers and the audience. The character designated in the text as the “46th Street Person” says

I have to be polite to you, when what I really want to do is rip you apart. No, of course not, because then you wouldn't be you anymore, and anyway, no, I don't want to see your insides. . . . So you can't be what? Be you? Let me be you. Let me be you to you? Or see yourself for *him*? (YOU 29)

This speech suggests that humans are not all of one sort. Some operate independently while some are capable of only acting within a well-defined context. Changing roles change people's values. In another case, the Excommunicado Confessor chastises the audience: “Fearless invention before a crowd of madmen and scared to say it. Your own forged bills pour in. Forge a presence an absence can quench. . . . You're spun to face yourself. Don't say yes” (35). Here is a man who has intentionally stepped out of his role, reinvented himself in opposition to his prior role and in opposition to the vagrant in the prior scene. The priest points to the forgery/forging of the self in

a reflexive mode. Ultimately, the anti-deistic diatribe focuses on resistance (“Don’t say yes”) to being one person, but being many, a truer relationship with the world.

In her “Notes to the Directions (On Performance)” Templeton describes the actor’s method as changing from pretending to be a different person than you actually are to an unspecified something else which I assume is accessing multiple roles together. Templeton’s process structures Puckishness. The linking of the actor and audience makes the distinction even more difficult to deal with when Templeton says to the actor, “Where does you live? This guy lives somewhere between the speaker and the hearer” in the connector (*YOU* 145). And this thought takes us from the topic of the performer to that of the audience.

The Audience/Client

Poet’s theater questions the self as it rewrites the relationship between performer and audience. This characteristic mechanism of modern poetry becomes a *cause célèbre* in postmodernism. Arthur Rimbaud used the second person to mean the first person. In John Ashbery’s “Pyrography,” the postmodern speaker shifts from I to they to we to you and all are conflated to describe the present tense where our existences are structured together in an ecosystem of selves (8-11). *YOU—The City* keeps the social being, the person, in flux as a client moves through the locations confronting different performers, taking a different role with each while trying all the while to retain a consistent picture of the self to align with her overall impression of the event. In some cases the client is an observer with the scene going on around her, as in the apartment. But suddenly the client is called to the phone, injected into the action. The client also revisits the apartment, taking on a different role. In other locations, the client is addressed but not told what to do. She is left to her own devices, freed to act according to her interest. In some scenes, like the playground handoff, the client becomes part of the scene and cannot avoid participation. These different roles do not create a conflict so much as they identify the person as a conglomerate of intentions and relations with the other participants of the action. It took me many days to realize that what I had experienced as a client myself was not conflict but transformation from one to many.

In this way *YOU* materializes the person as a sequence of roles and the self as one’s collective awareness of those roles. Brevity in poetry (its ecology)--or condensation, as Pound would have it--is insufficient at this point. Environmental culture cannot be reduced to conservation, although that role is relevant. The poet aligns her role with the others that she takes on in writing, directing, and producing the work. In this way environmental poetics is expansive as well as conserving of resources. The role or the job of the poet does not scale out as in mass media, but upward in sets at every level from poetry writing, to poetry reading, to poetry publishing, to poetry community... Each set of activities includes the prior one so that the hierarchy implied is inclusive rather than oriented to the status of the set or person. The boundaries of a work of poetry are extended in the way the self has been shown to be mutable. The common artistic assumption of uniqueness does not scale up and so needs to be augmented by these common elements. Together these elements create the network context that we have described as an ecosystem, the plane of our poetic geometry. That plane is then juxtaposed to the person for the purpose of establishing value in the space between them. In her essay “A Poetics of Performance Relevant to a Particular Definition of the Word,” Templeton says,

executing something, doing what the thing is supposed to do, but specifically in relation to a standard of measurement, efficiency. . . . Performance is doing something, but there is still a standard involved. Not simply how well someone

plays the flute, or acts in a character, in terms of efficiency (how would that be measured anyway), but in terms of its effect. Performance in the arts is not simply knowing all the notes, but the context in which it happens. Performance necessarily has a context. (1)

Templeton is well aware of the western tradition of “the individual as the unit of thought” (“A Poetics” 5), and intentionally extends the self beyond the individual through the context of performance. Thinking in poet’s theater is externalized in an environmental way and extends between the performer and the audience, not simply as communication of messages, but as a transformation that modifies both the original work and the people who attend the presentation. “You” become part of the larger whole. The spiritual notion of uncontaminated purity, theatrically represented in a monologue, disappears. Communication exchanges text and presence with the audience rather than speaking at the audience. But dialogue with the audience is continuous to the point of exhaustion in *YOU—The City*.

In the apartment scene of *YOU—The City*, Templeton exhibits this complexity of self and relationship. She calls this scene “the most distancing Act” (*YOU* 142), while for me the space is more easily seen as an ecosystem of relations.

Suddenly there is more than one performer, and costumes, and dialogue, and distance within enclosure, and more than one client, them and us now as well as you and me, these objectifying signs are undermined in their very theatricality. The performers are not speaking to each other, though the dialogue replies to itself, but they are looking at each other’s clients in a schema of deferred otherness. (1)

The niche defined by the apartment enclosure exposes an environmental way of thinking. Templeton’s version of environment is oddly resonant: “Meaning is not an answer but an apprehension of successive forms, their retention, protention and compatibility for coexistence in the mind” (*YOU* 143). The mind space is getting rather crowded in her formulation and it might be easier to open outward to include those external elements. Poet’s theater participates in externalized cognition by the interaction between the performer and the audience. By breaking down the separation between audience and performer, by changing the ratio from many-to-many to one-on-one, *YOU* enables cognition to take place between the audience of one and a performer in the first part of the event. In the second part, interactions of one to many are explored. Looking at these multiple ratios emphasizes a dynamic structure for the performance that addresses the matrix of environmental poetics. In both cases, the thought process takes place via interaction between audience and performer as well as by comparison between scenes. Templeton uses these philosophies of relationship in her work as well as in her personal experience: “a moment of hesitation I experienced as a child on realizing that the bus driver could be called by the same name as my mother, ‘you’. It is the pronoun of recognition, of exchange . . .” (“Interview” 3).

YOU—The City frequently addresses the dissolving ego of environmental poetics to make citizens less apt to despoil the nest. The Meterless Charioteer (gypsy cab driver) looks over his shoulder at the audience, “I can look back at you. Of course you can see through me. I have to be an impostor, though you don’t know of what. But you do. And where do you fit in?” (39). The gypsy cab driver is a three-in-one imposter: one person posing as another and then acting in that role. The client is then asked directly by this poseur how she fits into the role-playing, highlighting the client’s desire to retain a singular identity (“you”) throughout this stretching and fragmenting process of self. The stage instructions in this scene add to the dissolution; “Your

‘you,’” Templeton writes, “is often ‘one’, so sometimes ‘I’, meaning you” (*YOU* 40). These instructions not only reinforce the shifting roles by using the pronouns, but they also point to how pronouns shift in grammar. This cascading of similar shapes at different scales, the person in the cab and the play with grammar, reinforces the play of dynamic systems so important in understanding the complexity of environment. With such self-shifting, Templeton turns locations inside out. The cab driver looks over his shoulder at you and says, “Watch where you’re going. I don’t want to be stuck with you forever. Aren’t you hungry to move on? If I look away are you free? Now you can see more than two sides of life, like leaning into the mirror after your night on the tiles. What’s in it when you’re not? Out there is your way in” (41). Now at the *n*th case the driver suggests a view of the action beyond the usual polarity of self and other. “Out there,” outside the cab, outside the self you find a method of understanding the world as a series of relations. The organism, you, exists. It doesn’t dissolve but exists in its relations rather than in the fixed role where our culture tends to place it. As the Coca Cola commercials opine, “You’re the one.” Templeton provides an alternative.

In some ways the metaphor of Templeton’s work and the metaphor of poet’s theater get carried too far and aren’t successfully restructured. In/out, you/me, the shifting dissolves and you’re lost: “I know you’re not me. Who am I, you want to know? I’m who’s talking to you. Oh, of course, I always change, I change toward you. . . . From who you are or seem to be to me. . . . You’re not discussed” (*YOU* 41). But even these confusing identities are entertaining if they are not too threatening. The replacement of plot by logistics isn’t carried through to a more complete definition of self, although we realize it as we negotiate our passage through the event. Simply reading the text it is somewhat difficult to imagine.

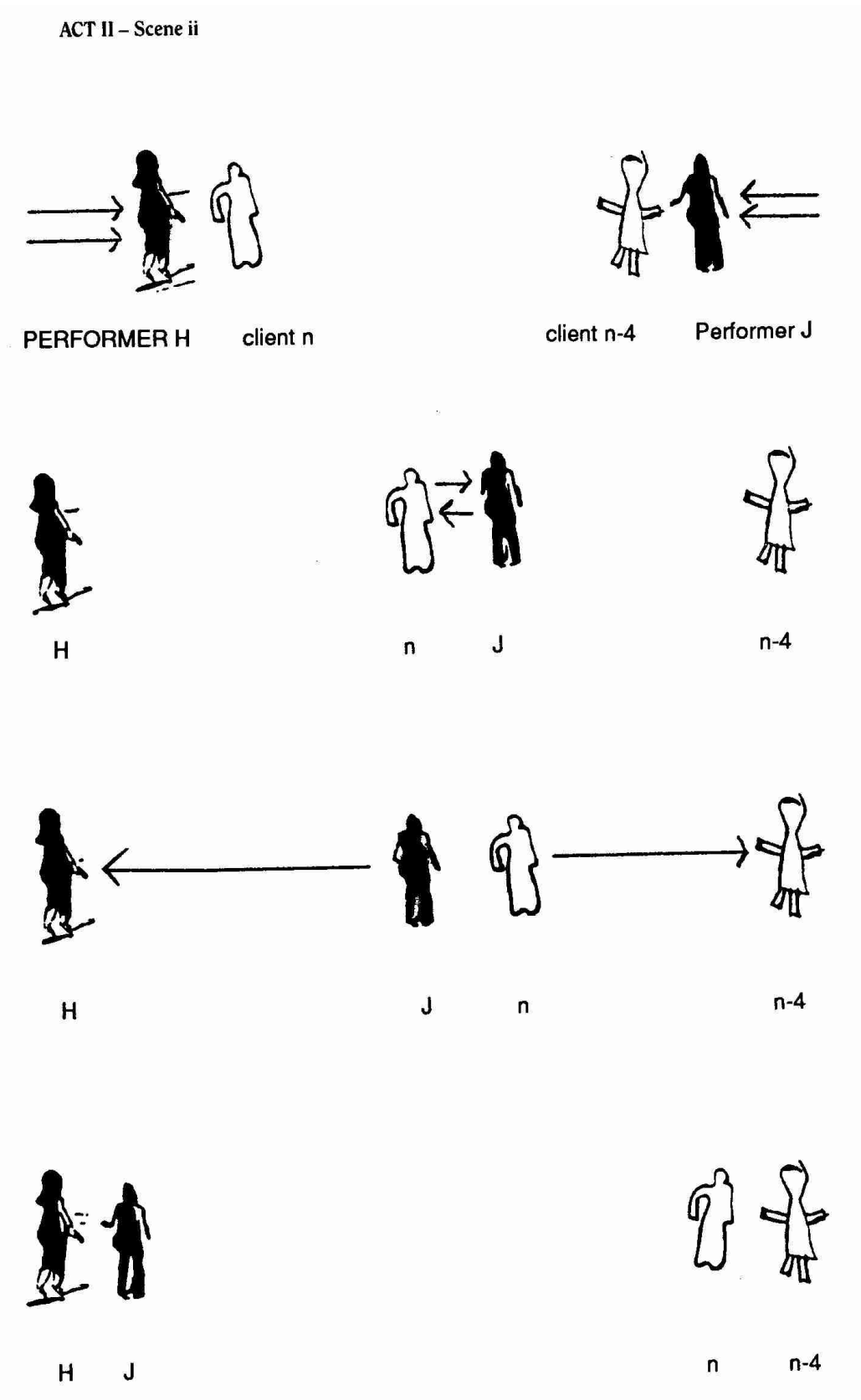


Fig. 3. Act II.ii from *YOU—The City*. (*YOU* 55)

As the expected notion of self transforms Templeton emphasizes presence as much as person. As she explains, “I am actually very happy to watch shows that are nothing but attention to the moment—whatever that is—but . . . attention for me is what creates presence—and that’s what’s evoked in audience transaction” (“Interview” 5). Such a commitment to presence approaches Robert Wilson’s austere presentations of a person and a vegetable on stage and may be said to be about negotiating the moment. And beyond that, we must include memory in poetry.

And Criticism (post-event activities of writing and publishing)

Establishing an environmental poetics would be incomplete without positioning the work you are reading now in the ecosystem of the play. While this may be a separate topic in its own right, our ecosystem of poet’s theater includes talking about it. In the published performance of *YOU—The City*, a wider context is already established by including photographs and comments, as discussed above. While each of the sets we have discussed is incomplete, the focus remains on the relationships between them. And what establishes that relationship more than critical writing about the play? Environmental poetics focuses attention at every point in the process, from intention through critical interpretation. Additional meaning is imparted in the formats of publication and venues where the work is distributed. As already cited, Templeton points out that “Meaning is not an answer but an apprehension of successive forms . . . The movement of the mind through meaning after meaning, the series of their landscapes, is meaningful. For example, here the meaning is clear, here obscure, here conclusive . . .” (*YOU* 143). One of the forms included in the performance is writing about it; the published performance includes columns of comments and contextualizing remarks. Interestingly, this environmental approach of including its own commentary has a precursor in Dante’s *Vita Nuova*, where each poem about Beatrice is followed by a commentary on the poem in its context with prosodic notes and biographical information. In this sense Templeton’s poet’s theater and environmental poetics present themselves as species of criticism, a horizontal force across the silos of epistemology.

5. Set Theory and Environment: What’s Different About Poet’s Theater

By changing the relationship between actors and audience, Templeton increases our awareness of each of them. By increasing the amount of detail through heightened awareness she helps us see how the components can be modeled both independently and together. By arranging the text in several columns, our collaborative publication defines another set of components that can be modeled together rather than seen as an indissoluble organic unit. We need an interdisciplinary tool to allow us to look at both the similarities and differences in a relatively value-free structure. Set theory provides such a modeling process; as a tool, it is specifically suited to depict both what distinguishes poet’s theater from other theaters and their common elements. Through the use of set theory we can compare poet’s theater to non-environmentally aware theater. We approach the problem of differentiation by defining the sets of components of *YOU—The City* so that they may be compared to other forms of theater--Shakespeare, for example--or even to non-art events, like social structure. Whereas most art writing thrives on differences reinforced by self-interest and contemporary culture, set theory models both common and unique elements. If we apply this tool to poet’s theater, I think we may also establish a method that can be carried forward to other disciplines. My aspirations for this theory exceed somewhat the scope of poet’s theater, but the ethos of using poetry to create an environmental culture is equally unreasonable.⁴

Set theory is that branch of mathematics that treats collections of things. The physicist Ron Atkin, through what he calls q-analysis, uses set theory to create non-evaluative hierarchies that show how components of a system like theater can be linked and how they communicate.⁵ If we structure poet's theater using the approach that we took in the prior sections--that is, as text, performers, audience, etc.--we can represent it as a hierarchy of levels. Hierarchy here does not mean superior and inferior like castes, but rather higher levels that include lower levels like a garden includes flowers, shrubs, trees, and lawn: a hierarchy of scale. This kind of precision may seem obsessive to the poet and fuzzy to the mathematician, but taking a line of reasoning from the political realm, the fact that both disciplines find difficulties with it makes it a potentially useful tool. Q-analysis helps us to look at different disciplines in relation to each other, and set theory fits well with many modes of discourse. Q-analysis engages methods from algebraic topology to help understand metaphoric structures such as theater and poetry and as a cross disciplinary tool readily aligns with environmental poetics. Using q-analysis we have organized Templeton's work to show how poet's theater is both like and unlike its non-environmentally aware counterparts. Q-analysis also helps us understand how communication is achieved. In poet's theater the stage, the actors, the audience, the text are all in place; only their positions are somewhat shifted from where they would be on, for example, the Shakespearean stage.

To apply set theory to *YOU—The City*, start with the level of the play or work of poet's theater as the most inclusive level of our hierarchy. (We might also conceptualize more inclusive levels such as Templeton's entire oeuvre or the even more inclusive category of poet's theater. It is immediately obvious that q-analysis is a flexible analytic tool.) At this level we also include the neighborhood of Times Square or a neighborhood of London, or of any other city where the event has been performed, since the play itself does not encompass the physical location. We include these at the same level because together they cover all aspects of the physical and conceptual work. Call this level N+2. In the ways they connect, the play and the neighborhood together comprise the ecosystem of the work.

At the level included in level N+2, call it N+1, and including all levels beneath, is the sequencing of scenes and characters. We find at the same level a single member of the audience, the client, who moves through all scenes from first to last. Also at the N+1 level are the transits between scenes, the logistics, where the audience/client is conducted or moves alone from scene to scene. This N+1 level also includes general instructions to the performers and other textual components described above. (See Fig. 2's diagram of transits above.)

At level N are the individual scenes and their narratives. For *YOU—The City* the scene is the primary niche in its ecosystem. (We can easily recall many pieces of poet's theater where actors and locations extend beyond the scene, but that is not the case here.) The play as described earlier was actually generated from a set of relationships between a client and a performer. These relationships were later constituted as scenes. Here we can see how the matrix of intention (described earlier in this essay) more accurately describes the net result of the completed event even though it differs from the initial intention. These relationships construct the scenes. At this level we also have the specific locations where each scene is being performed—the apartment, the office, the cab.

At the N-1 level are individual locations, actors/characters, and text within each scene. Actors in this play are usually only in one scene and only present in a scene one at a time. The first five scenes establish this standard. After the taxi ride a more complex mixture of ingredients is applied. After the cab rides actors extend across two scenes, and including one case where an actor appears in scenes that are not sequential. At one point in the apartment scene, several actors

appear together and in that scene two audience members are together and may relate to each other. At this level several important differences between poet's theater and non-environmentally aware theater are evident. First the plots and subplots all take place within a scene; they rarely cross even as themes, except the theme of identity, of course. In fact *YOU—The City* isolates themes within a scene; they don't survive outside the borders of the niche of the scene, another biomorphic metaphor. The characters too, with the exceptions listed above, do not survive the limits of the niche of the scene. This is not true in the apartment which is visited twice.

At the N-2 level we can place the details of the text for each scene, how the performers speak their lines, how they relate to the client. These performative aspects of the piece are isolated as well within the scene. Intention for the author, as pointed out, began here, but is not readily visible in the performance where the structure of the scenes commands our attention.

Here is a summary of the levels for *YOU—The City*. The play offers three groups of sets, somewhat simplified:

Group A represents the theater: the play, the scenes, the transits, the neighborhood and specific locations.

Group B represents the participants: the characters/actors, the audience/client, neighborhood people who intrude into the scenes.

Group C represents the text: the commentary in the play, the spoken text, the narratives in each scene, the speeches.

Leaving out the commentary for the time being, although we have seen above how it participates, we can fit the groups into a hierarchical schema where each level contains the level below it:

N+2 The play as in groups A and C, the neighborhood as in group A

N+1 The audience/client as in group B, transits and logistics as in group A

N The scenes as in group A, the narratives as in group C, the characters in more than one scene, the specific locations of the scenes

N-1 Locations, text, and participants of each scene (characters and client).

We could go on from here to show textual and performance details, but for the purposes of this analysis, we have probably gone far enough to clarify how q-analysis might organize the theater. Ron Atkin uses a similar approach to *Midsummer Night's Dream* (131-141). Here, for comparison, is Atkin's q-analysis of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The groups have a similar structure with different and similar contents:

Group A: the play, the acts, the scenes, the subscenes

Group B: the characters

Group C: the commentary, the play, the plots, the subplots, the speeches...

And here is the schema:

N+2 The play (as in group A), and also the play (as in group C)

N+1 The acts (A), the plots (C) [plots refer to the different strands of the story the lovers, the faeries, and the workingman's theater troupe]

N The scenes (A), the characters (B), and the subplots (C)

N-1 The sub-scenes (A), the speeches (C) (Atkin 131)

The differences and similarities are immediately apparent. Templeton simplifies the narrative structure but adds location-specific information that Atkin with his more traditional aesthetics assumes. Rather than multiple scenes within the narrative, and plots and subplots,

Templeton's poet's theater focuses on how the stories are played out within each scene or niche. Templeton separates narrative, the sequence of scenes, from the stories within each scene. If we identify story with the self, then poet's theater becomes a critique of the identification of narrative (structure) with story (self) in prior theaters. Narrative becomes logistical. Although not all poet's theater has this specific structure, poet's theater as a general case revises the structure of prior theater. Poet's theater changes the idea of self; the subject/object problem is also dealt with differently as discussed above. Now it is easier to see the power of the structure assumed in prior theater and what results by changing that structure in poet's theater. The top level contains the play in both cases, but in *YOU—The City* the location becomes an active participant whereas in the prior theater the locations are assumed as the stage. The transits exist as blocking in Shakespeare but are not considered in Atkin's hierarchy, because they are assumed by humanist culture as Atkin sees it. Shakespeare's is a human-centered approach in that it avoids a narrative of logistics, preferring to focus on character. If we look closely at Shakespeare we see that relationships are often established by logistics--who is where when--and happenstance is a key player in the narrative. But Shakespeare primarily sequences the narrative using stories or plots. Also different between environmentally focused poet's theater and prior theater is the active presence of the audience or client as a dynamic contributor to the action. While scenes and plots are present in both, their locations are somewhat different. The details of each scene show a similar structure between Templeton and Shakespeare but in Templeton's poet's theater there are no sub-scenes, and plots are encapsulated within scenes. From another viewpoint the plays are similar. We still have the play, the text, the actors, and the audience. They have different roles in each type of theater, but the components are quite the same. Consider the biological analogies. What separates environmentalism from humanism in part is how environmental poetics treats both similarities and differences in identifying the two theatrical structures. Environmental poetics allows interactive positioning rather than taking an ideological stance that isolates different perspectives. Humanism's fixed hierarchy is still defined in Genesis.

When looking at these similarities and differences together, notice the balance between them. While we continue to distinguish one part of the modeling tool from another as in any hierarchy, we are also confronted with large-scale similarities between the plays. Looking at this contextualized set of factors forces a comparative view of these plays. Again, as in Templeton's blurring of the borders of the individuals, the reader is driven to value a larger sphere than the self, and we begin to identify with the structure of the environment as well as the self as part of it. Q-analysis would allow us to go further, too, in mapping the topology of the play, as Atkin does in his book-length treatment. Doing so would show the specific communications that are facilitated by being in the same dimension of the ecosystem. It would also show those that are made more difficult by being in another level or dimension, such as the difficulty of understanding the entire play at level $N+2$ from the point of view of the client moving consecutively through the scenes at level $N+1$. The client has to go through all the scenes and debriefing by the director in a café at the end before having enough information to grasp the concept even though the client is constantly trying to understand her situation. In Templeton's poet's theater the location varies from scene to scene and locations recur only once with the client in a different role, whereas in proscenium theater almost all action takes place on the same stage with some action understood to have taken place offstage. Props and actors are treated as resources to be moved on and off the stage as the action directs. The distributed architecture of poet's theater is used even where there is only one location as poet's theater frequently re-orientes the coordinates of the audience and the staging.

But what does this analysis do for us that justifies extending the creative impulse to the structure of set theory? What do we learn from applying topology to art? In the environmental model, human biological and mechanical systems as well as systems of ideas can be considered ecosystems, i.e., as we have said, a set of relationships and as such can be treated together. Q-analysis organizes any of these complex structures in an unambiguous way that is expected in science and politics, but remains unusual, even difficult, for art. In fact, this method can be said to restrict one of the primary values of poetry--ambiguity--replacing it instead with several well-delineated logistical processes. But there's plenty of ambiguity left to go around; it occurs at different points in the artistic process. We learn to accommodate change and dynamism in our actions and thoughts. Q-analysis supplies a structural description of the linkages among these components, allowing us to see that our environment is not simply an extension of our will. It separates the semantic relationships from the syntactic (ordering, logistic) relationships but treats them at the same level so that they communicate. And I mean to use it and external cognition as levers to change our view of environment from a bucket into which we can throw objects and ideas with predictable results to a set of relationships with edges defining events. We learn how components of our lives communicate or distance themselves, both human and non-human entities.

How can we establish an environmentally oriented methodology by mixing mathematical and literary tools as Templeton implies and I have made explicit here? One goal is to establish that independent modes of discourse separated by great intellectual distances can live side by side, even thrive symbiotically and consequently encourage environmental thinking in the arts. Q-analysis shows that difficulty in communication across dimensional boundaries appears even among related ideas such as understanding the whole play while in it. In its method of construction, q-analysis works environmentally. Its complex structures are focused on linkages, as in Templeton's work, where a system has "considered parts standing in interaction because the state of each part is dependent on the state of other parts via a directed influence/dependence linkage" (Legrand). The topological process of connectivity in q-analysis allows the data to be inspected with less distortion than with a narrative. Again, I point to the need for artists to consider how non-evaluative hierarchy can exist alongside narrative and tone in a normally ambiguous text or even in a polysemic innovative text. Q-analysis is useful in diagnosing the failure of large-scale systems like works of art or social structures. We can see where communication works, where it breaks down, and where it is duplicated (Ishida). For example, communication works easily where the levels are connected downward. It's easy to understand grass and flowers in the garden. Going upward levels of greater inclusiveness are more difficult to communicate in that it's harder to understand the garden from the point of view of one flower. It's difficult to understand the relationship of the individual in society if relationships are not emphasized. The individual doing the thinking becomes easily confused and marginalized. Q-analysis' value as a social science tool makes it an appropriate linking agent between arts and sciences.

Atkin's q-analysis is known for showing the limits of communication. By applying it to poet's theater, an art often concerned with the indefinable and personal analogy, we are able to show that things we expect to combine in a specified way might combine differently, and that they don't successfully combine in yet other ways. Q-analysis emphasizes the experimental aspect of poet's theater; things don't always work as planned, and events in the performance are highlighted as tentative and provisional. Atkin shows this through a geometrical analysis of a hierarchical environment, inclusive of subject and object and capable of becoming a lens through

which to view across disciplinary lines. Templeton's work enables us to view ecosystems similarly by establishing a concrete structure where all the parts are defined in the poet's theater semantically, and are then structured syntactically in such a way that the hierarchy works to direct the audience's path through the ecosystem. In this process, Templeton's work is both exploratory as a kind of trial and error process, and produces artistic and ambiguous results (although this process is not unique to art). Social structure can now be read as an ecosystem of relationships.

Works Cited

- Ashbery, John. *Houseboat Days*. New York: Penguin, 1977. Print.
- Atkin, Ron. *Multidimensional Man*. New York: Penguin, 1981. Print.
- Ishida, Y., N. Adachi and H. Tokumaru. "A topological approach to failure diagnosis of large-scale systems." *IEEE Transactions on systems, man, and cybernetics* 15.3 (1985): 327-333. Print.
- Kuhns, Richard. "Criticism and the Problem of Intention." *Journal of Philosophy* 57 (1960): 5-23. Print.
- Legrand, Jacky. "How far can Q-analysis go into social systems understanding?" *Res-Systemica*. Special issue: Proceedings of the fifth European Systems Science Congress. 2 (2002): 1-10. Web. 24 Oct. 2010.
- McGraw Hill Life Sciences Glossary*. n.d. Web. 23 Nov. 2008.
- Olson, Charles. *Collected Prose*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1997. Print.
- Rowlands, Mark, "Environmental Epistemology." *Ethics & the Environment* 10.2 (2005): 5-27. Print.
- Skinner, Jonathan. "EcoPoetics Question Mark." Message to the author. 1 Dec. 2009. Email.
- Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Duke UP, 2003. Print.
- Templeton, Fiona. "The Presence Project Interviews Fiona Templeton." Interview by Gabriella Giannachi and Nick Kaye. *The Presence Project*. 24 May 2006. Web. 24 Oct. 2010.
- . "A Poetics of Performance Relevant to a Particular Definition of the Word." Birkbeck College at Royal Holloway University, University of London. Talks organized by Robert Hampson. London. Apr. 2007.
- . *YOU—The City*. New York: Roof, 1990. Print.

¹ *YOU—The City* was first produced in New York City (USA), 1988; London (England), 1989; Ljubljana (Slovenia), 1990; Den Haag, (Netherlands), 1990; Zurich (Switzerland), 1990; Munich (Germany), 1991; Hamburg (Germany), 1999; Rotterdam (Netherlands), 2001.

As editor and publisher of Roof Books I consider this essay a conflict of interest. It may also be that few people besides the actors themselves have gotten as close to the work as I did as editor. As a result I have taken on the risk of conflict of interest in order to pursue the environmental perspectives of material I know quite well. The conflict has prevented me from writing about it for 20 years. It has also impelled me to take a non-evaluative view of the piece, since I clearly like it, having put a lot of energy into it and being shy of praising it too highly. Finally, my conflict of interest is exacerbated by the fact that I have emphasized certain aspects of Templeton's work to support my own interests.

While an environmentalist as I have been describing, Templeton's intention from the author's point of view was not focused on creating the environmental person I have described in this essay, but rather on a socially constructed person, an alternative to that monadic organism often critiqued by postmodernism. That alternative derived from the thrust of critical thought turns out to have been environmentally oriented. And in the intervening years environment and planetary considerations have overwhelmed the issue of personal identity. The critic's intention merges with the proto-environmental alternative Templeton created as I have described in paragraphs about intention above. As publisher and critic I am at once spectator and creator in this essay and by extension publisher and actor in *YOU—The City*. The extended environmental person appears everywhere.

² Jonathan Skinner, founder and editor of the journal *ecopoetics*, refers to ecosystem in similar terms to the McGraw Hill definition in a recent email to me. "You use the term 'ecosystem' in the essay in a way that certainly fits in with a lot of what *ecopoetics* has proposed (and in a way that is neither more nor less defined than 'ecopoetics')." But Skinner thinks we need to be careful in the metaphorical use of the term ecosystem. He suggests putting "energy into a critique of the metaphorical use of . . . 'ecosystem' which is a core work of *ecopoetics*." While this subject is a bit outside the scope of this essay on poet's theater, *ecopoetics* is consistent with the thrust of this essay. Each effort to transform a metaphor for poet's theater across disciplines has to be carefully undertaken. Images arise in the mind from a breakdown in linguistic logic and hence are a biological outcome of uncertainty and problematic conditions. Poetry has long established this link to biology. And in some ways the obviousness of our effort increases its difficulty. A discussion of the differences between *ecopoetics* and my view of environmental poetics would focus on how *ecopoetics* presents a new nature poetry while environmental poetics focuses more on using natural methods to create innovative writing that may not have nature as the subject.

³ Of course, many recent writers (such as language poets) and scientists (such as those seeking to solve real world problems of turbulence) also address complex systems directly without simplifying to linear problems.

⁴ As an aside, considering how these imbalances work through the theory of complexity, we can see how nature uses similar structures at all scales of the environment, from a thought to a planet.

⁵ The impulse behind using set theory to talk about different disciplines comes from Atkin's *Multidimensional Man*.

Copyright (c) 2011 by James Sherry.

James Sherry is a poet, and the publisher of Roof Books, which has published over 100 titles of contemporary poetry and criticism. In the late 1970s, he founded the Segue Foundation, began publishing the poetry journal *Roof*, and distributed the critical journal *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, two of the early seminal publications of the Language poetry movement. His interest in environmental poetics is explored in his new book of poetry, *Sorry*. Among his previous books are *Part Songs*, *Converses*, *In Case*, and *Our Nuclear Heritage*.