



In an era of globalization and localism, the idea of the nation feels anachronistic and limiting. How do your chosen plays and performances explore ideas of nation in these contemporary contexts, and to what effect?

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Jerusalem and *Pornography* examine the state of the nation within the contemporary contexts of globalization and localism. *Jerusalem* is concerned with localism as characters tend 'to favour what is local', displaying a preference for their local region in Wiltshire and a 'limitation of ideas, sympathies, and interests resulting from this'.¹ In political terms, localism means 'the policy or practice of giving greater control to local residents, representatives, and authorities (as opposed to national or central government)', yet characters in *Jerusalem* are denied this, as the play stages the imposition of state authority and the invading force of urbanization on the local.² Globalization is a much contested concept,³ but is defined by Dan Rebellato as '*the rise of global capitalism operating under neoliberal policy conditions*'.⁴ *Pornography* represents the globalized nation both formally and linguistically, and provides a portrait of a stratified nation that is atomized and individualistic, and ultimately lacking in empathy. Brand names proliferate in both plays, representing the surfeit of commodities in the global market economy and expressing the pervasion of global capitalism in contemporary life. By staging the conflict between the local and the forces of capitalism and urbanization in *Jerusalem*, and the concurrence of atomization and globalization in *Pornography*, Stephens and Butterworth show that the contemporary nation is fragmented.

Localism denotes a 'limitation of outlook' and this is expressed in characters' insularity.⁵ Benedict Anderson defines the nation as 'an imagined political community' and argues that 'it is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'.⁶ However, Butterworth presents characters whose localism refutes the notion that the contemporary nation is an 'imagined community'. This is captured in the comical criticism of 'BBC *Points West*' which 'used to be solid local news' but has 'merged with Bristol, now it's half the bloody country'.⁷ Pea demarcates 'local' as 'Bedwyn' and 'Devizes' and the place-names' specificity contrasts with the general vagueness of 'half the bloody country'.⁸ Lee's and Davey's jokes that '*Points West*' was 'off in Norwich' or 'merging with BBC Belgium' echo Davey's assertion that he '[doesn't] like to go east of Wootton Bassett' as 'suddenly it's Reading, then London, then before you know where you are you're in France, and then there's just countries popping up all over'.⁹ By conflating places outside Wiltshire with foreign countries, claiming that his 'ears pop' when he 'leave[s] Wiltshire', Davey articulates his alienation from the rest of the nation and repudiates the idea that 'in the minds of the 'fellow-members' of the contemporary nation 'lives the image of their communion'.¹⁰ Thus intense localism entails psychological disconnection from the nation as a whole. Davey's localism exemplifies what Doreen Massey deems 'the defensive reaction of the assertion of place-bound identity' to globalization.¹¹ The inwardness induced by localism is reflected on a personal level in the 'solipsistic narratives' of *Pornography*.¹² In

¹ OED <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/109552?redirectedFrom=localism#eid>> [accessed 7 January 2017]

² OED <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/109552?redirectedFrom=localism#eid>> [accessed 7 January 2017]

³ Jo Robinson, 'Becoming More Provincial? The Global and the Local in Theatre History', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 23:3 (2007), 229-40 (p. 232). <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/s0266464x07000139>> [accessed 2 December 2016]

⁴ Dan Rebellato, *Theatre and Globalization* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 12.

⁵ <<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/localism>> [accessed 7 January 2017]

⁶ *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (London and New York: Verso, 2006), in *Performing the Nation: British Theatre since 1980 Module Reader* (2016), p. 6.

⁷ p. 59.

⁸ p. 60.

⁹ pp. 60, 24.

¹⁰ p. 24.

¹¹ 'The conceptualization of space', in *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalization*, ed. by Doreen Massey and Pat Jess (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 48. All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹² Jacqueline Bolton, 'Commentary', in *Pornography*, ed. by Jacqueline Bolton (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014), p. xxxviii. All subsequent references are to this edition.

Scene Five, the brother has never spoken to his neighbours yet assumes that they are 'cunts', revealing a lack of human interaction and an 'imagined' gulf between nation members.¹³

Characters display a lack of empathy for people and places outside their locality. While in *Jerusalem* this locality pertains to regional location, in *Pornography* it is delineated by the prisms of characters' individual lives and perceptions. In Scene Seven, the unnamed woman states that 'Jonathan' is 'watching the news. There's been another car bomb in a market in Baghdad. There's always a car bomb in a market in Baghdad' and that she would 'rather watch *Sex and the City*.'¹⁴ The reported 'car bomb' contextualizes the scene within the Iraq War and its juxtaposition to '*Sex and the City*' evokes Britain's military and cultural entanglement with America. Her preference indicates the supremacy of aspiration and escapism in contemporary society. The woman's attitude displays a negative effect of globalization, for as Anthony McGrew argues, the 'global communications infrastructure' has reinforced 'both an expanded sense of global solidarity amongst the like-minded and indifference, if not outright hostility, between different cultures, nations and groupings.'¹⁵ The woman's insouciant dismissal of human tragedies that occur outside her personal orbit epitomises the self-centred apathy of the contemporary nation and shows how media saturation engenders anaesthetization to human suffering. Nicholas Ridout argues that 'the global media separate our perception from our personal experience by constantly bombarding us with images' and 'information flows' which 'typically preclude any response'.¹⁶ The woman's attitude compares with *Jerusalem*, in Davey's account of 'tearing up' upon 'watching this one story about this old lady, eighty-seven-year-old', who 'kids' have 'kicked [...] to death for her scratchcard' before realising 'it's some old biddy from Wales' and dismissing it as 'some Welsh nonsense.'¹⁷ The lady's presumed 'Welsh' heritage is significant as distinct from Englishness, highlighting divisions within the United Kingdom. Davey's degradation of her death because she is 'Welsh', although intentionally humorous, nevertheless exhibits his callous apathy for those outside his locality. Thus Butterworth uses the character of Davey to present the lack of connection and empathy between nation members that arises from excessive, myopic localism, thereby depicting a fragmented nation.

The form of *Pornography* emphasises characters' detachment and potently evokes atomized existence in a global metropolis. The play is composed of seven scenes and the juxtaposition of ostensibly disconnected narratives disorients the audience, capturing the complexities and freneticism of city life. It also creates a collage effect whereby London, and by extension the nation, is constructed from complicated and conflicting fragments. Stephens' depiction of a fragmented nation was emphasised in Sebastian Nübling's 2007 production, which set the scenes 'against a vast, fragmented image of Brueghel's Tower of Babel.'¹⁸ All eight actors remained onstage throughout and when not directly acting in the scene, they clambered up and down, adding tiles to the mosaic behind them.¹⁹ The scattered tiles symbolise the nation's fragmentation and are reminiscent of debris from a bomb blast, while the mosaic's construction represents nation members' doomed attempts at connection and societal cohesion. In Scene Five, dashes in the text mark pauses in conversation, but could also indicate the physical distance between characters. This spatial demarcation is echoed in the speech: 'The street map is a web of contradiction and complication and between each one there's a ghost.'²⁰ The cartographic metaphor also relates to Tube lines, thus encapsulating London's simultaneous atomization and connectivity. Stephens intimates that while globalization entails interconnectedness, it erodes emotional connection and human interaction.

Stephens' dialogue expresses the concomitance of isolation and fragmentation with globalization. The unattributed dialogue is ambiguous, reflecting the uncertainty of contemporary life. Sentences are predominantly short and sharp, enforcing characters' atomization, yet the anonymous, unattributed dialogue is fluid, implying peoples' interchangeability in a globalized nation. This is reflected in the fact that the scenes can be performed in any order. The flow of dialogue between nameless characters is dehumanising, as it resembles the mass flow of products in the global market. Additionally,

¹³ Simon Stephens, *Pornography*, ed. by Jacqueline Bolton (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014), p. 28. All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹⁴ pp. 5-6.

¹⁵ 'Globalization and Global Politics', in Baylis and Smith, ed., *The Globalization of World Politics*, p. 19-40 (p. 21); quoted in Jo Robinson, 'Becoming More Provincial? The Global and the Local in Theatre History', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 23:3 (2007), 229-40 (p. 232). <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/s0266464x07000139>> [accessed 2 December 2016]

¹⁶ Nicholas Ridout, *Theatre and Ethics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 58, 57.

¹⁷ pp. 59, 60.

¹⁸ Brian Logan, 'One day in July', *The Guardian* (19 June 2007)

<<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2007/jun/19/theatre>> [accessed 11 January 2017]

¹⁹ Logan, 'One day in July'.

²⁰ p. 22.

Scenes Seven, Six, Four and Two are monologues in which 'autopoiesis' is used as 'characters speak themselves into existence and, by so doing, generate the present-tense "action" of the scene.'²¹ This self-narration implies a self-objectification and could intimate that characters are circulating themselves as objects in a global market economy. Thus Stephens suggests that humanity is substituted for marketability in the contemporary nation.

The forces of global capitalism pervade the plays, depicting globalization's predominance. In Scene Seven, the woman's language is redolent of advertising as she states that her son's pushchair 'has fabulous suspension. It makes it ideal for city street life' and that her 'new pair of summer sandals' are 'ideal for the beach'.²² The repeated adjective 'ideal' shows the woman imitating salespeople and suggests that she has internalised their language and hence acquired salesmanship herself. It is as if she is promoting these products to the audience, thereby enacting neoliberal market transactions on a micro level. The characters in Scenes Seven and Three both drink 'Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee' and thus Stephens shows how nation members who are personally disconnected, are nonetheless united in their participation in the global market.²³ Engagement with global capitalism therefore becomes the uniting factor in the contemporary nation. In *Jerusalem*, Johnny is a staunch advocate of localism and Englishness, yet his 'Coca-Cola plastic chairs' epitomise American-led global capitalism.²⁴ Johnny's frequent references to brands such as 'HP' and 'Mars Bars' is symbolic, as they are perceived as being quintessentially British, yet have undergone multiple mergers and been incorporated into conglomerates.²⁵ This reflects the submergence of local and national identity in a globalized nation and the hegemony of neoliberalism. Johnny mentions 'the Little Chef' on 'the A14', while the speaker of *Pornography* Scene Four, views people 'breakfasting on McDonald's', and the references to chains evoke the homogeneity engendered in globalization.²⁶ Rebellato affirms this: 'in the omnipresence of certain shops and brands [...] we see the emergence of a global high street, identical from continent to continent.'²⁷ 'McDonald's' is a worldwide American corporation, while 'Little Chef' is modelled on American diners, thus the references assert American hegemony. However, 'Little Chef' went into administration in 2006, declining further between 2007 and 2009, and therefore connotes vulnerability in a neoliberal nation.

Jerusalem's theme of global capitalism is echoed in its production history. Rebellato suggests theatre's contemporary globalization: 'The ever-greater interconnectedness of theatre cultures is visible in [...] international hit plays being performed in different countries in rapid succession'.²⁸ *Jerusalem's* original 2009 Royal Court production transferred to the West End in 2010 and then to the Music Box Theatre on Broadway in 2011, continually achieving critical and financial success. Mark Ravenhill writes: 'The Royal Court Theatre [...] has been called, because of the number of subsequent productions its writers receive, the Starbucks of playwriting' and that when 'invited to see my plays produced abroad and then to speak about theatre or to teach playwriting, I felt like I was just another manager of a global franchise.'²⁹ The play is therefore subject to the same forces of globalization that it depicts.

Both plays feature festivals that have been co-opted by higher authorities for capitalist purposes. In *Jerusalem*, the long-standing 'Flintock Fair' is an expression of localism in its assertion of place-bound identity. The fair purports to unite the local community and celebrate local tradition, yet is appropriated by the 'brewery' to sell 'whatever they can't shift'.³⁰ Due to 'a Swindon-level decision', the 'brewery' has 'got right behind the fair' producing 'Point-of-sale material. T-shirts. Flintock Men. Special ale', thereby mining local identity for profit.³¹ As David Harvey attests: 'tradition is now often preserved by being commodified and marketed as such. The search for roots ends up at worst being produced and marketed as an image, as a simulacrum or pastiche'.³² The 'commodification of experience' is an

²¹ Bolton, 'Commentary', p. lv.

²² pp. 3, 4.

²³ pp. 3, 49.

²⁴ p. 6.

²⁵ pp. 18, 12.

²⁶ *Jerusalem*, p. 57, *Pornography*, p. 37.

²⁷ *Theatre and Globalization*, p. 26.

²⁸ *Theatre and Globalization*, p. 8.

²⁹ 'Foreword', in *Theatre and Globalization*, by Dan Rebellato (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. xiii.

³⁰ p. 35.

³¹ p. 35.

³² David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 302-4; quoted in Doreen Massey, 'The conceptualization of space', in *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalization*, ed. by Doreen Massey and Pat Jess (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 77.

integral aspect of globalization, thus Flintock Fair's commodification represents the dominance of globalization and diminishing of local identity in the contemporary nation.³³ Butterworth therefore suggests that authentic localism is untenable in a nation driven by global capitalism. Johnny and friends mock the imitative 'Flintock Men', mirroring characters' cynical views of Live8 in *Pornography*: 'exactly what [Live8] is going to achieve I must admit I find a little unclear.'³⁴ Live8 served as an awareness campaign for Make Poverty History, yet was bankrolled by multinational companies who recouped vast profits through the sale of broadcast rights, merchandising and advertising, and sponsorship deals.³⁵ Thus while the event proclaims to unite the nation, it could also be viewed as reinforcing globalization, and from *Pornography's* perspective, the atomization and fragmentation that globalization engenders. Characters from different scenes are united by their references to, and interactions with Live8 via radio and television, which shows how global media markets have constructed a 'mediatised collective consciousness.'³⁶

The form of *Pornography* conveys the nation's mediatization, a process that is intrinsically linked to globalization. Friedrich Krotz views mediatization as a 'meta-process' that "influence[s] the social and cultural" construction of everyday life and "should be understood as a concept similar to globalization, individualization, and commercialization".³⁷ Seda Iltä introduces the concept of "mediatized dramaturgy" which 'refers solely to the structure of a play text' and concerns 'how a play is affected by the media and the culture it generates.'³⁸ The assemblage of scenes offers the audience snapshots of characters' lives, giving the impression of a media montage. The scenes can be performed in any order and by any number of actors, bestowing the director with the responsibility of curation. It is as if Stephens is surrendering editorial control to the director, in accordance with German theatre, which 'favour[s] the creative input of the director as an artist over the playwright',³⁹ and where 'in line with a director's vision [...] a play-text may be rewritten, edited, spliced, fused and/or collided with other texts'.⁴⁰ *Pornography* premiered in Germany in a co-production with Festival Theaterformen and the Schauspielhannover, Hanover, in which Nübling 'reordered some of the text within scenes, partially rewrote Scene Three and swapped the gender of one of the characters'.⁴¹ *Pornography* is therefore global, as its open structure is compatible with international theatre. The play's unattributed dialogue is cacophonous, mirroring the plurality of voices in global media. In Nübling's production, the allusion to the 'Tower of Babel' in Muriel Gerstner's set design implies the discord and confusion that arises from myriad modes of communication in a mediatized and globalized nation.⁴² For the arts critic Brian Logan, 'the tower is [...] London: a babble of uncomprehending voices, a community alienated from itself, desperately seeking ways (Live8, the Olympics, even terrorism) to connect.'⁴³

Stephens and Butterworth depict the 'increasing time-space compression' precipitated by globalization, equating urbanism with accelerated time.⁴⁴ David Harvey proposes the term 'time-space compression' to refer to 'the acceleration or seeming collapse of spatial and temporal distances.'⁴⁵ Stephens captures this with pervasive references to television and radio news broadcasts and by using 'mediatized dramaturgy', in which scenes bombard the audience. Like the woman in Scene Seven who 'can't decipher all of the different news stories on the radio', the audience is plunged directly into characters' perspectives, which they are not granted time to fully comprehend before viewing the next scene.⁴⁶ Thus Stephens demonstrates how the media's 'time-space compression' reduces viewers' capacity for empathy towards others. Both plays take place within a tight timescale: *Jerusalem* is set in one day with stage directions noting the time at the beginning of each act, ('midnight', 'Two o'clock',

³³ Bolton, 'Commentary', p. xlii.

³⁴ p. 3.

³⁵ Bolton, 'Commentary', pp. xliii-iv.

³⁶ Bolton, 'Commentary', p. xxxviii.

³⁷ 'Mediatization: A Concept with Which to Grasp Media and Societal Change', in *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences*, ed. by Knut Lundby (New York: Lang, 2009), pp. 24-25; quoted in Seda Iltä, 'Rethinking Play Texts in the Age of Mediatization: Simon Stephens's *Pornography*', *Modern Drama*, 58:2 (2015), 238-62 (p. 242).

³⁸ 'Rethinking Play Texts in the Age of Mediatization: Simon Stephens's *Pornography*', *Modern Drama*, 58:2 (2015), 238-62 (p. 240). <<http://dx.doi.org/10.3138/MD.0693R1.84>> [accessed 25 November 2016]

³⁹ David Barnett, 'Simon Stephens: British Playwright in Dialogue with Europe', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 26:3 (2016), 305-10 (p. 307). <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10486801.2016.1183666>> [accessed 24 November 2016]

⁴⁰ Bolton, 'Commentary', p. lxiv.

⁴¹ Bolton, 'Commentary', pp. lxiii, lxv.

⁴² Genesis 11.

⁴³ 'One day in July'.

⁴⁴ Massey, 'The conceptualization of space', p. 57.

⁴⁵ Bolton, 'Commentary', p. xli.

⁴⁶ p. 6.

'Five o'clock'), while *Pornography* unfolds in the first week in July 2005, and these parameters are policed by the inevitability of Johnny's eviction and the 7/7 bombings.⁴⁷ In *Jerusalem*, Linda Fawcett voices 'the English law' as 'Kennet and Avon Senior Community Liaison Officer', and hence embodies state authority.⁴⁸ With her first word 'Time', she instigates the countdown to Johnny's eviction, imposing a quantitative time pressure to make way for 'the New Estate'.⁴⁹ Fawcett's terse language is littered with times and dates and thus the imposition of time is aligned with the forces of urbanization. Lee's time is also restricted as he is due to leave for Australia 'tomorrow' and his speech becomes similarly clipped as he states: 'Heathrow Airport. 6 a.m. coach from Chippenham.'⁵⁰ The compressed timeframe therefore facilitates international travel, presenting the connectivity enabled by globalization. Moreover, Lee bought his ticket on Google, which illustrates the time-space compression generated by the worldwide web, and hence by globalization.⁵¹

In conclusion, *Jerusalem* and *Pornography* depict the contemporary nation as fragmented. Characters in both plays display a lack of connection and empathy with those outside their boundaries, either through vehement localism as in *Jerusalem*, or solipsism stimulated by media saturation as in *Pornography*. In *Pornography*, characters strive for personal connection, yet are alienated from each other, their families, and from those they perceive in the media. The play's form highlights and enforces characters', and hence London's, atomization, thereby portraying a kaleidoscopic nation composed of different fragments. The repetition of language and references between scenes suggests a kind of communion between nation members, yet this is mediatized language and therefore the depicted communion is fostered by the media. The verbal echoes also generate a sense of flow that emulates the flow of commodities in the global market, suggesting the domination of capitalism in the globalized nation. Thus any perceived communion between nation members is created by the forces of global capitalism. In *Jerusalem*, Butterworth stages a nation in transition, implying the vulnerability and evanescence of authentic, local identity in an era of global capitalism and urbanization and suggesting that vociferous, narrow-minded forms of localism are limited responses to globalization. Both plays explore the lack of cohesion in society and therefore present the nation as fragmented.

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⁴⁷ pp. 6, 47, 85.

⁴⁸ pp. 96, 7.

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