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# Peter Brook's The Empty Space Analysis: Immediate Theatre

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Peter Brook writes of a type of theatre today that attempts to imitate reality and fails at it. He calls this the “Dead Theatre.” This type of theatre distracts the reader from seeing the playwright’s overall message: “It is not as though fifty years ago one type of theatre was in vogue while today the author who feels the ‘pulse of the public’ can find his way to the new idiom” (37). Brook wants the audience



The Empty Space by Peter Brook  
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to stray from simple nostalgic, theatre. To do this, the audience must allow themselves and the theatre to “transcend the invisible.” In Brook’s second chapter, he tells the story of a tall man who participated in an activity that required the participants to act like a child. He says the most successful actor was one who did not “attempt to imitate baby talk, he presented fully to everyone’s complete satisfaction the idea that he had been called upon to carry....It happened as direct communication, only for those present. This is what some theatres call magic, others science, but it’s the same thing. An invisible idea rightly shown” (51). To learn from the theatre, we must see though the threshold of the invisible.

When acting, one is usually prone to imitate stereotypes and/or follow the script completely, but the script is just one element to the theatre; the text is meant to guide the actor—not rule them. Brook writes of “a theatre working like the plague, by intoxication, by infection, by analogy, by magic; a theatre in which the play, the event itself stands in place of a text” (49). Because the theatre is more of a live and rich experience than simply reading text, when we translate the script to the stage, we should be able to see a huge difference between what we see and what we expected to see when we read the play. It should contain a sense of reality, regardless the style, storyline or time zone.

The theme of “reality” is very important to Brook. He writes, “‘Reality’ is a word with many meanings, but here it was understood to be that the slice of the real that reflected the people and the problems around the actor, and it coincided with the slices of existence that the writers of the day...were trying to define” (27). With a sense of reality in all theatre, we, as the audience, can learn from theatre.

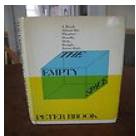
Playwrights struggle with writing less stage direction because they know what they are trying to deliver to the audience, but with too much stage direction, the actors, director and the audience don’t have room to breathe: “The best dramatists explain themselves the least” (13). The ones who cloud their scripts with excessive stage direction have a desire to direct, but cannot play that part when

writing the script.

People will keep coming to the theatre as long as it keep producing: "Theatres, actors, critics and public are interlocked in a machine that creaks, but never stops" (40). This machine is the art of theatre; it is the invisible system that keeps people coming to the theatre and people making theatre.

One of the major topics that Brook touches on within this book is the correlation between culture, location and theme or a play. He writes that the European version of *King Lear* was far more emotional than one he has seen in America because the "experience of life in Europe in the last years...enabled them to come directly to the play's painful themes" (22). When the actors, directors and producers all have a sense of the emotion that is represented within the text because of their life experiences, they will create a more interesting, accurate and emotional production.

Brook writes of many aspects of the theatre that we often dismiss. The reality and ability to transcend the invisible are vital for creating and/or observing the theatre. He labels the different types of theatre (holy, deadly, rough, immediate) to show us that when we watch a production, we should look for more than pointless



[book signed by famous theatre director PETER BROOK "The Empty Space"](#)

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