



## The Role of Media on the Audience and Text in Nathan Ellis' Play *Work.Txt*

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### ABSTRACT

This article seeks to study the impact of media and mediatic tools on Nathan Ellis' play *Work.Txt* (2022) as well as how such plays have transformed conventional forms into experiential forms using innovative technical means. Ellis's play, which centres on the concept of media and media-performance relationships, alludes to changes in the portrayal of plays to audiences in connection to a technologically advanced society. In a broad sense, media refers to modes of communication that convey information between sender and recipient, such as television, radio, print and the internet. The usage of projection, internet and print alters the audience's perception and encourages them to actively engage in the performances. This paper uses the notion of media to describe changes in the structure and context of performances as a result of media and experiential methods. On the other hand, this study will explore how the contemporary subject's alienation is exacerbated by the mediated environment and society. Nathan Ellis's play *Work.Txt* attempts to represent today's alienated individuals to each other by employing individuals (the audience) in the performance and demonstrating how estranged they are from one other.

**Keywords:** Nathan Ellis, *Work.Txt*, The Role of Media, Audience Participation, Experiential Performance



## The Effect of Media and Non-Dramatically Text on the Performance

The media-theatre relationship may be characterised as one in which the two interact and make theatre experiential which changes the experience of audiences' participation and relations among them. The question of what experience means in performance is central because the co-presence of the actor and the audience/participant on the stage or just the active involvement of the audience is important for the potential for transformative experience. In contemporary theatre multimedia performance create new modes of text and representational performance. Klich and Scheer define multimedia performance as "tracking the kind of performance work that highlights the ways in which representational, largely audio-visual, media can activate new aesthetic potentials and new spectatorial experiences"<sup>1</sup>. These new experiences assure that the theatre retains its vitality and adapts to the contemporary period by utilising technological tools in an exceptionally efficient manner. Utilising media components and technology may lead to the audience concentrating more on the performance. Peggy Phelan clarifies how theatre of ontology is changed by media technologies: "Media technologies affect the here-and-nowness of theatre, its proximity and immediacy, and threaten the theatre's ontology as live performance"<sup>2</sup>.

The purpose of this paper is to study the effect of media on the play *Work.Txt* (2022) and analyse how the text and the role of the audience change in the performance. As a ruling order, media shapes the society and individuals of the late twentieth century and shapes the consciousness of the audience during the performance. Actually "Media changes and co-relations between media are important tendencies in the development of the arts since the beginning of the twentieth century. These are usually associated with the blurring and crossing boundaries between media; with the hybridization of media utterances; with intertextual relationships between media; with intermedial relationships between media; and with an increasing self-reference and self-reflection of the arts as media"<sup>3</sup>. This study applies the concept of media to describe modifications in the practice and context of performances through media, experiential technique, and the 'no-longer dramatic text.' Patrice Pavis explains further that the role of media "is not, as it is onstage, a foreign body; it actually places itself in an intertextuality in the widest sense of the word"<sup>4</sup>. The traditional status of the text in the theatre has been altered by media culture and its forms. The hegemonic place of texts in the dramatic theatrical tradition has been deconstructed through avant-garde movements and contemporary performances.

This deconstruction may well be traced back to avant-garde, Absurdist, Surrealist, Artaudian, ritual theatre movements and later the rise of postdramatic theatre (should be used in the form

1 Rosemary Klich and Edward Scheer. *Multimedia Performance*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2012), 1.

2 Peggy Phelan. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. (London: Routledge 1993), 146.

3 Chiel Kattenbelt. 'Intermediality in Theatre and Performance: Definitions, Perceptions and Medial Relationships.' *Cultura, Lenguaje Y Representación / Culture, Language AND Representation*, Vol. 6, (2008): 21.

4 Patrice Pavis. *Dictionary of Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*. (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2003), 192.

as postdramatic). The theory of postdramatic theatre analyses the aesthetics which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. Hans Thies Lehmann's postdramatic theatre practices, considered the inheritors of the Absurd Theatre and Brechtian convention, refers to the work of experimental theatre practitioners Tadeusz Kantor, Heiner Müller, and Robert Wilson. There is a rich history of playwrights whose work questions traditional western theatrical assumptions in ways to experiential theatre that encounters early practices and conventional concepts and scrutinises open-ended structures, textual forms, and narrations, representing non-hierarchical structures. Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Bertolt Brecht, Caryl Churchill and Robert Wilson are all pioneer playwrights who have made radical changes in performance. Aside from these playwrights and their eras, writers such as Elfried Jelinek, Peter Handke, Sarah Kane, and René Pollesch all dispute the text's permanency. The text's permanence is contested precisely because it no longer claims an influence on the performance. Rather than preferring the permanence of text, experiential theatre forms interconnectivity among lights, sounds, scenes, bodies, cultures, societies, and spectators. Utilizing mediatic tools on the performance subvert economic role of texts in postdramatic performance. As postdramatic performance questions conventional structure in theatre, Nathan Ellis' play has made traditional text, actors and structure questionable through its use of multimedia.

By avoiding the hegemonic role of texts, playwrights may offer new writing possibilities for performances. "Text (becomes) just one element in the scenography and general performance writing of theatre"<sup>5</sup>; non-dramatic texts have surpassed conventional theatrical texts in prominence, bringing into question the text's long-held place of privilege and representing new kinds and roles of texts in the performance. As Lehmann focuses on the "performance dimension in postdramatic theatre"<sup>6</sup> and the continuing association and exchange between theatre and the text"<sup>7</sup>, Nathan Ellis works without professional actors but not without projected and printed out text. This text "may act as an initial and significant element of the performance, yet they do not claim dominance over other elements of performance"<sup>8</sup> because the current form of the text can be changed by audiences, who thereby become more active as co-writers and even participate in the performance. To put it another way, "audience participation is an integral aesthetic and structural feature of the performances, often motivated by the artists' and companies' desire to reformulate the performer-spectator relationship and to invite a different, explicitly more active, kind of audience engagement"<sup>9</sup>. Theatre practitioners and organisations

5 Karen Jürs-Munby. 'Introduction', in *Postdramatic Theatre*, by Hans---Thies Lehmann, (London: Routledge, 2006), 4.

6 Seda Ilter. 'Rethinking play texts in the age of mediatisation: Simon Stephens's *Pornography*'. *Modern Drama*, vol. 58, no. 2 (2015): 248.

7 Hans Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre* (London: Routledge), 17.

8 Ilter., 248.

9 Matthew Reason. 'Participations on Participation: Researching the 'active' theatre audience', *Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, vol. 12, No. 1 (2015): 271-80.

have influenced this new immersive style of performance. “‘Immersive theatre’ has become a widely adopted term to designate a trend for performances which use installations and expansive environments, which have mobile audiences, and which invite audience participation”<sup>10</sup>. Also, even if a given “production of Sarah Kane’s *Crave* attempts to offer a non-individuated portrait of subjectivity, audiences might still recognize the speakers as individuals”<sup>11</sup>; however there is no speakers recognised as individuals in Nathan Ellis’ play *Work.Txt*.

Both playwrights and directors search for new experiential performances and more active audiences as the text’s role changes. Representations of the world as a whole are deconstructed and transformed as representations of the world by the audience. “The rise of immersive theatre can be observed as the return of audience participation techniques that most recently captured the imagination of theatre producers and audiences to such a degree in the 1960s and 1970s”<sup>12</sup>. Many companies are behind today’s most innovative and radical audience involvement efforts, like Jerzy Grotowski’s early productions, such as *Faust* (1960), *Kordian* (1962) and *Akropolis* (1962), in which he takes “a decision to move away from public performance towards what he termed ‘paratheatre’, which had no observers”<sup>13</sup> and Robert Wilson’s Operas. Johannes Birringer considers “the impact of changing media on the aesthetics of performance, focusing particularly on dance, multimedia productions and experimental theatre”<sup>14</sup> in his work *Theatre, Theory, and Postmodernism* (1991). In Britain, the relation between theatre and technology media has become increasingly prominent in performance practise and critique since the 1990s. Forced Entertainment, (based in Sheffield), The Wooster Group (based in New York), Blast Theory (based in London), Desperate Optimists, (based at Dardington College of Arts), Stan’s Café (based in Birmingham), and Third Angel (based in Sheffield) are distinctive companies that use media technologies on stage and produce multi-medial and inter-medial shows using projection, video, film, internet, print and simulated tools on stage, as well as using interactive media to involve audiences via live performances. It is certainly true of the Blast Theory group that it “puts participants centre stage, often placing them in situations that blur the boundaries between art and life, computer games and theatre”<sup>15</sup>. Blurring the lines simultaneously challenges intimacy and participation in live performance. To achieve this in live performances, theatre should “rely on re-mediating other media in order to achieve effects”<sup>16</sup> because new kinds of performance are born as a result of media tools. Characters’ linearity and stability are undermined by new types of performances. Focusing on the changing

10 Gareth White. ‘On Immersive Theatre’, *Theatre Research International*, vol. 37, no. 3 (2012): 221

11 Cristina Delgado-Garcia. Rethinking Character in Contemporary British Theatre (De Gruyter, 2015), 52

12 Ibid., 223

13 Ellen Freshwater. *Theatre and Audience*. (Bloomsbury, Methuen Drama, 2021), 67.

14 Sarah Bay-Cheng, Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, and David Z. Saltz. *Performance and Media Taxonomies for a Changing Field*. (USA: University of Michigan, 2018), 25.

15 Ibid.

16 Peter Boenisch. ‘Aesthetic Art to Aesthetic Act: Theatre, Media, Intermedial Performance’, in *Mapping Intermediality in Performance*, ed. by Sarah Bay Cheng et al., (2006), 110.

role of texts and performances, Pavis clarifies that it is important “to pick out, amongst the machines, videos, technology and other computers.”<sup>17</sup> Technological development, the World Wide Web and new media forms carry socio-cultural implications. Individuals concentrate more on technology, spending most of their time in front of the screen, making printouts and working very intensely.

Individuals and the societies they form are frequently perceived by the media as either news or a means of diverting their attention. In everyday life, the media objects to individuals through news and other programmes and activities on the screen. The significance of how people view other people has waned, and the sentiments, grief, and pleasures of others have become something to consume. Individuals may grow less connected to one another, as well as less sensitive and apathetic. The mediated environment and society exacerbate the deterioration of human relations and the alienation of the modern subject. In his play *Work.Txt*, Nathan Ellis tries to reflect today’s alienated individuals to each other by using individuals (the audience) in the performance. The following part of the study tries to analyse the role of the audience in Ellis’ mediated experiential performance.

### **The Role of Media on Audience in Experiential Performance *Work.Txt***

New dramaturgical form goes beyond traditional theatre by integrating the audience within the on-stage performance, along with their experience, the political, social, and economic aspects of recent events, such as the pandemic, and the interpretation of those events. Nathan Ellis, the author of the play *Work.Txt*, which “was programmed at Incoming Festival and Summerhall for the Edinburgh Fringe before the pandemic”<sup>18</sup>, “was first seen in London just before Britain went into lockdown, but all the same, it’s a piece that might have been created for the age of enforced social isolation”<sup>19</sup>, and staged at the Soho Theatre in March 2022, attempts to convey the impact of the pandemic on work life and conditions, as well as on the events of daily life, utilising media and audience participation. The performance, which lasts roughly an hour, is entirely generated by the audience reading text displayed on the wall, reading scripts aloud, or reacting to directions via headphones. Through contact with and exposure to a mediated environment, the subject’s identity and experiences are continually created, dismantled, and recreated<sup>20</sup>. Ellis aims with the play *Work.Txt* to make a connection experientially between the inner and outer reality of the audience as individuals. There are no professional performers active in the play, unlike a conventional theatrical performance. The audience (at the performance I attended on 2 March 2022 and acted as a curator) is in charge

17 Patrice Pavis, *Dictionary of Theatre*, 191.

18 Stephi Wild. “WORK.TXT Comes to Edinburgh Fringe Next Month”. *Broadway World Scotland*, 2022.

19 Joyce McMillan. “Edinburgh Fringe theatre review: Work.txt by Nathan Ellis”. *The Scotsman*, 2020.

20 Katherine Hayles. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. (USA: Chicago University Press, 1999), 3.

of the play's direction. In this way, the author carries the conceptual framework of experiential theatre to a different dimension.

In the twentieth century, as the tendency of an active role for the audience increased among experiential theatre practitioners, the audience came to have a presence at the centre of the performance. Tim Etchells also clarifies the importance of experimental, exper(ie)ntial theatre as involving the "irreducible fact of theatre-actors and an audience to whom they must speak"<sup>21</sup>. Erika Fischer-Lichte asserts that audiences in a transitional realm share a performance event in her theory 'radical presence' which specifies the audience to experience "the performer and himself as embodied mind in a constant process of becoming-he perceives the circulating energy as transformative and vital energy"<sup>22</sup>. Through the theory of radical presence, the ordinariness and the alienation of the audience disappear. The subsequent experiential transformation of the audience means that the audience can reinterpret what is around them and the larger world.

The theatre does not have to stay within a designated and delimited building. Experiential theatre thrives in small studio settings and allows for the exploration of streams of emotion and thought in a relatively limited space. In addition, it is possible to move away from and deconstruct traditional notions of structure and character, along with concepts such as sound, light, and plot. They are experiential in the sense that by depicting extremes of experience. They try to give audience members a sensation extremely near to what is being portrayed, thus if what is being depicted is sexual assault, they want to make the audience feel a little like that. It pushes the audience not to be overlooked, so that the audience does not simply sit back and watch, but rather immerses itself in the emotions displayed on stage. Throughout the twentieth century, experiential theatre has tried to activate the relationship between the theatre and the audience and to involve the audience in the performance because the audience is not just a viewer and a crowd and sometimes the audience becomes a critic interpreting and attending the performance. Freshwater articulates the relationship between theatre and audience: "theatre and its audiences can illuminate our hopes for other models of social interaction, clarifying our expectations of community, democracy and citizenship"<sup>23</sup>. The audience, apart from taking a role in the performance, should engage in political reflection, criticising governments and economic and financial states of affairs. What makes each audience important is that it is composed of separate individuals. That's why, in their participation in the performances, each brings their own cultural and political views, personal desires and beliefs to the stage. Alice Rayner clarifies that even a single audience member has multiple perspectives based on different aspects of their identity: "Sometimes I hear you from my position as a woman,

21 Tim Etchells. *Certain Fragments: Contemporary Performance and Forced Entertainment*. (London: Routledge, 1999), 94.

22 Erika Fischer-Lichte. *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*. (Routledge, 2008), 99.

23 Ellen Freshwater, *Theatre and Audience*, 3.

sometimes as a professor, sometimes as a mother, sometimes as bourgeois”<sup>24</sup>. The audience can represent different reactions in the performance. It is important in terms of mediatised performance to observe how the audience reacts and let the audience’s feelings and thoughts reflect back on the performance, instead of embracing the jealousy of Othello that is presented ready-made or accepting that Malvolio has been deceived by his own friends.

In traditional theatre, on this theory, the audience has a passive role in that what the audience learns or how they react is ignored. “Most dramatic theory has been concerned with aesthetic formalism, rather than the spectators’ demands and expectations, as a shaping element of both playscript and performance practice”<sup>25</sup>. In mimetic drama, the audience’s participation centres on how they perceive the playwright’s text. In other words, the receiver’s role—that is, the audience response process—has been largely ignored by dramatic theory. Audiences are asked to watch and follow the process without making any sense. These passive viewers have low ability to analyse the performance and concentrate on the text, actors, scenery and costumes. Parallel to the importance of readerly interpretation, which is emphasized in reader response theory and Roland Barthes’ article ‘The Death of the Author’, the interpretation and questioning that the audience adds to the performance distinct from the playwright’s contribution is important. Active participation of the audience is also interpreted by David Savran’s *Breaking the Rules* as “each spectator, according to his part, enters into a dialogue with the work; the act of interpretation becomes a performance, an intervention in the piece”<sup>26</sup>. “In the art of bodies witnessed by bodies”<sup>27</sup>, different physical dynamics arise as a result of each interpretation and involvement in the performance and the audience not only sees and hears but also feels the performance with their whole bodies and instincts.

Witnessing other bodies reflect cultural reactions and involves a rejection of the thought that the audience has a homogeneous identity and culture. Race, age, culture, identity, religion, class, region and level of education of the audience reflect the heterogeneous structure of the audience and this condition of cultural heterogeneity enhances interpretation of the performance. Reflecting these concepts by theatre and stage is much more effective than television, because television cannot establish an active relationship with the audience, and ignores the physical relationship of one audience member with another. On television, the audience is only consumed. At the same time, the audience passively consumes their own time. Performance interacts with the audience. When it is based on discovering the audience’s reaction, the audience tries to transfer their personal experience and feelings to the written or fictionalized text. Playwrights

24 Alice Rayner. ‘The Audience: Subjectivity, Community and The Ethics of Listening’. *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, Vol. 7 No.2 (1993): 3-24.

25 Susan Bennett. *The Role of The Theatre Audience: A Theory of Production and Reception*. (McMaster University, PhD, 1988), 5.

26 David Savran. *Breaking the Rules: The Wooster Group*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1988), 55.

27 Simon Shepherd. *Theatre, Body and Pleasure*. (London: Routledge, 2006), 73.

as well as critics or directors seek to gauge the audience's reaction. Tim Crouch, in his play *The Author*, makes an important contribution to the independent performance model by trying to measure the reaction of the audience by both sitting among the audience and interfering with the audience. This type of experiential performance is also a reaction to Plato's objection to the theatre. Experiments with the actor and character relationship deconstruct Plato's frustration, his sense that "theatre was responsible for all the crimes and corruptions of his day"<sup>28</sup> through the performance and audiences. If it continued as Plato thought, the audience would not be able to go to the performance and would have to completely adhere to the rules of management of the theatre. In addition to adhering to traditional rules, it is also problematic for the audience to remain completely committed to the playwright and the performance. Recent examples of contemporary performance also deconstruct this dependence by releasing the audience throughout the performance. One of the most important current performances of contemporary mediatized performance is the play *Work.Txt*, written and directed by Nathan Ellis. Ellis' play was staged at the Soho theatre between February 28 and March 12, 2022. One of London's most diverse and vibrant theatres, Soho Theatre seeks to create experiential performances that embody radical values, punk culture and queer performances. It is a theatre that values accessibility and has a heterogeneous audience. This paper, focusing upon experiential theatre, addresses the role of the audience in the twenty first century contemporary British performance *Work.Txt* which incorporates the use of audience participation.

### **An Experiential Performance: Nathan Ellis' *Work.Txt***

*Work.Txt* was staged on 2 March 2022 at Soho Theatre. It is one of the most distinctive examples of experiential theatre performance because there are no traditional or actual characters. The director asserts that the text is projected, line by line and the stage is set with only two microphones, 120 yellow blocks of wood in a pile and a printer. The play starts with a member of audience who reads the text displayed on a projection:

*This is a play.  
It is performed entirely by us.  
Sometimes we will tell the story on our own.  
Sometimes we will speak together.  
This is the beginning<sup>29</sup>.*

At the beginning of the play, the text gives information about how the performance continues without the audience's participation. The audience is invited to participate in the performance. *Work.Txt* has been described as a "play with no performers"<sup>30</sup> since it is performed entirely by the audience. When the audience enters the theatre, they are greeted with a projector that

28 Freshwater, *Theatre and Audience*, 39.

29 Nathan Ellis. *Work.Txt*. (London: Methuen Drama, 2022), 5.

30 Claire Wood. *Work.Txt* (Online)". *The Wee Review* 2021.



provides instructions. Members of the audience are instructed on what to say, and scripts are produced for them to perform. No one in the audience is compelled to participate. They may participate in the event by their own authorization, while at the same time, they may add anything of themselves to the text coming from the printer, putting their own ideas and commitments front and centre. Furthermore, people can participate in the performance regardless of ethnic background, colour, age, gender or region. The play provides radical presence through the radical participation of the audience. This experiential performance, like pervasive acting, allows audience members to be somewhat co-present as audiences and performers. The audience's engagement gets deeper and much more multi-faceted as a result of this, transcending traditional barriers and allowing members to perform diverse participating roles throughout the same performance, transitioning from audience to performer. At the same time, this occurrence establishes bodily bonds amongst members of the audience.

The following part of the text is projected line by line and the whole audience starts to read lines projected to them:

*Cool!*  
*This is exciting!*  
*I love it when a performance involves participation*  
*Like in an immersive show*  
*And we're all here*<sup>31</sup>.

The author states that at the beginning of the play, he will provide an environment for the audience to understand the performance and sometimes to exhibit their own performances. Apart from this, the author describes members of the community such as people who work in an office, people who are self-employed, people who feel they are underpaid, people who work in the arts, people who have nice voices, Geminis, hard workers, people who hate their jobs, people who earn over and less than thirty thousand pounds a year and people who love an experiment with theatrical form. As the audience, these people are in the event to tell significant stories, to be part of the cooperative experience and to tell of financial instability and bullshit jobs. The author wants to underline that the audience is influenced by everything that occurs around them, including working hours and living situations, and that it is the audience itself who can best explain and transmit this because "someone must be in charge"<sup>32</sup>. Among the audience, there are those who only watch Netflix, those who only follow the seasons of the series they like, and even those who are brought to this experiential performance by force of their friend. In experiential theatre, though, "spectatorship is not a passivity that must be turned into activity. It is our normal situation. We learn and teach, we act and know, as spectators who link what they see with what they have seen and told, done and dreamed"<sup>33</sup>. As Rancière

31 Ellis, 5.

32 Ibid., 8.

33 Jacques Rancière. 'The Emancipated Spectator'. *Art forum International*, Vol. 45, No.7 2007: 277.

indicates, the playwright portrays how the audience do not have to turn to professional actors and no one is forced to do anything because "every spectator is already an actor in his own story. Spectators are active, as are students or scientists: they observe, select, compare, and interpret. They relate what they observe with many other things that they have observed, on other stages, in other kind of spaces. They make their own poems with the poem that is performed in front of them"<sup>34</sup>. Perceptions and behaviours are shaped and affected by this play, which has an impact on time and space. Media allows audiences to see significant changes to what they previously knew about conventional performance.

The 'emancipation of the spectator' is also limited however by the stage directions from the playwright. In the part of the performance that follows, the audience, following the directions which are projected, take from the pile and start to build the map of a city which includes a high tower, an underground and cranes. This part shows how the performance is effected by the media (the use of projection) and how the mode of representation, deconstructing dramatic text form, is changed. At the same time, the construction of the city on stage mirrors a recognised and so representable image of the outside world:

*The city hums with the sound of work.  
The city is waking.  
Another working day.  
Nearly ten million people, all setting about to get  
Stuff  
Done*<sup>35</sup>.

An office is set up in the city, and two persons from the audience, regardless of ethnic origin, age and gender, willingly wait for two copies of the text to come from the printer in the middle of the stage. The performers begin reading the text as the scene is projected behind them line by line. The office expresses how people focused on work are enslaved within the consumer culture, how they became desensitized after the pandemic and how they become social media robots. Nathan Ellis' dramaturgy incorporates plays whose structures directly or indirectly reflect a mediatized society without expressly addressing the media. Ellis profoundly analyses social dynamics of the contemporary world, such as globalisation and individualisation, by focusing on the performers/audience's daily working hours:

**The Audience:** *At nine seventeen, work is being done in the lobby, as two security guards bicker about whether this is a matter for the police.*  
**People who prefer red wine:** *At nine thirty, work is being done, and around three thousand people are late...*  
**People on social media:** *At ten fifteen, a thousand printers have inexplicably broken down...*  
**Optimists:** *At eleven minutes past eleven, working is being done.*

34 Ibid.

35 Nathan Ellis, *Work.Txt*, 11.

**Hungry people:** *At twelve o'clock, work is being done and hungry people are saying things like 'two sugars, please'...*

**People who don't like their boss:** *My boss is a dick.*

**A person who recently had Covid:** *It feels a bit weird being back with so many people*<sup>36</sup>.

The audience reads the expressions projected on the screen at the closing part of 'an office' as if they were professional performers; in fact, they genuinely reflect both individual and universal working hours, how people behave during these hours, and how Covid is now influencing them. As Freshwater states, Ellis puts the audience in the centre, frequently putting them in circumstances that cross the boundaries between art, life, and theatre.

The next fictionalized place is a gallery, and again two volunteers from the audience raise their hands to participate in the performance and start to wait for two copies of the script to finish printing. These two members also perform the scene into their microphones. Ellis uses media images to allow the audience members indications of the subject of the performance by placing them in a condition of display<sup>37</sup>. One member is a gallery attendant and the other one is curator. While the curator and gallery attendant are talking about workspace in the gallery, a member of the audience interrupts them and asks the curator "where is the best art"<sup>38</sup> and without waiting the answer, a member of the audience starts shouting:

*You are, you're patronising us, you're patronising me and my husband and my family. You think we're too stupid to understand this art and that I want simple art which isn't true, I just like different things to you, I just use art for different purposes to you. I don't need a gallery to explain what work is because I work already*<sup>39</sup>.

During the performance, a member of the audience protests to the curator and gallery attendant, stating that, unlike them, s/he will return to work on Monday and work hard. In fact, s/he, like the majority of the audience, dislikes his/her work. The audience, on the other hand, states that they spend a lot of time in front of the screen with a computer and have to work from home, so they come to the theatre to breathe a bit. However, the play they've come to relax in isn't one with witty lines, people performing dance routines, or actual actors. This performance, which Nathan Ellis has developed, utilising media technologies, does not even have a clear storyline. The audience reads and animates the texts that are projected onto the stage via a printer.

Apart from the volunteers, the rest of the audience watches them and tries to grasp what they are being told in the other experiential phase of the performance, and the scenario is shown behind them line by line:

36 Ibid., 22-23.

37 Vilém Flusser. 'The Future of Writing,' in *Writings*, ed. Andreas Ströhl, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2002), 73.

38 Nathan Ellis, 27

39 Ibid.

*Two volunteers step onstage.  
They take the headphones from the usher.  
They put the headphones on.  
They listen to the instructions.  
The audience watch them and wonder what they are being told to do<sup>40</sup>.*

The volunteers A and B are on a cruise ship and instead of printed text; they get the following through their headphones and repeat it. It's evening, everyone has completed their task, and volunteers A and B imagine themselves on a cruise ship. The volunteers and other audience members escape the hustle of work conditions by hearing the sound of the sea and fantasising about viewing the sunset on vacation. However, it is just a dream and they wake up. They have to go back to the work they don't like. They would like to stop because they are too tired.

The last part of the performance represents an extreme of experiential performance because even volunteer audience members are no longer available. On the stage, there is merely a printer, and the text continues to come out as printed from the printer, while what is written in the text is reflected on the projection:

*Three days after the end of working day, a very good post on Twitter is cause for celebration.  
Four months after the end of the working day, they make everyone change their passwords.  
...  
Two years after the end of working day, the one hundred Covid variant is discovered in Lincolnshire and a rainbow-coloured post-box is installed as a tribute.  
...  
Twelve years after the end of working day, Keira Knightley plays Karl Marx in a five-film adaptation of Das Kapital.  
...  
Five hundred years after the end of the working day, all the humans are dead.  
...  
One million years after the end of the working day, God tries literal thinking.  
...  
Ten billion years after the end of the working day, the universe makes partner<sup>41</sup>.*

Towards the end of the performance, Nathan Ellis completely deconstructs the traditional structure of the play. Ellis not only invites the audience to the performance, but also attempts to disclose the audience, which has become entirely, alienated from him/her and his/her surroundings so the "invitation to participate"<sup>42</sup> is inevitable. Nathan Ellis, showing the facts through mediatic tools, asks us to reject both traditional dramaturgy and performance in order to understand the intrinsic variety of our responses as audiences.

40 Ibid., 34.

41 Ibid., 35.

42 Gareth White. *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2013), 9.

## Conclusion

With absolutely no choice, Nathan Ellis' performance hits some fascinating areas. By engaging individuals the presentation is taken to the point of conveying something truly powerful. As Kate Adams emphasizes "Experiential theatre integrates interaction and often embodied participation into spectator engagements; it involves direct engagement with the world of the performance, rather than solely identificatory engagements through character perspective and thus generates an experience of performance as event. It generates a liminoid space which sits on the boundary between the real and the imaginary"<sup>43</sup>. The audience is included in the performance and allowed to express their experiences, resulting in more intriguing results and experiences, regardless of profession, gender, race, or religion. The way the play discloses the performance, which takes the chance to investigate the folks who attend experiential theatre and shout louder than the rest, is a genuinely intriguing feature of the play. As a result, experiencing a *Work.Txt* performance entails being included in the alienated atmosphere and attendant difficulties of media tools. Participation through media allows the theatre to (re)establish its basic life and displays interactions as well as spatial and temporal cohabitation. The show is a worthwhile, engaging, and exciting theatrical experiment, but beneath the given and obvious is the possibility of a more nuanced experience that attempts to give audiences more. Nathan Ellis attempts to create potential experiences through human interaction; as a result, interactions between audience members and one another, as well as between audience members and materials, constitute the "quintessence of creative activity"<sup>44</sup>. This distinctive performance focuses on immersing the audience in a transitional realm by involving the audience as an immersed consciousness in a shared experience using media tools and interactivity. The audience, which has grown more active with media technologies, takes advantage of the opportunity to go deeper and begins to consider the issues and answers that surround it.

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