

Wallace Clare

“a safe and special place”: Activating Audiences in an Age of Truthiness?

standard lecture

The citation above is from a tweet by President elect of the United States, Donald Trump, calling on the cast of the hip-hop Broadway musical *Hamilton* to apologise for supposedly insulting his soon to be Vice-president Mike Pence in the theatre on the 19th November 2016. In *Theatre in the Expanded Field* (2013), Alan Read writes of the “contrastive symmetry” immunity shares with community; It is but one of the lesser ironies exuding from current cultural discourse that while generations of theatre-makers and artists have striven to diminish what Read calls the “immunisatory logic of theatre” arguably with little real effect, that the future incumbent of the White House found there to be too little in the unlikeliest of places. How can theatrical performance be thought to act on or with its audiences/spectators/participants? Via the work of Jean-Luc Nancy (*The Inoperative Community*), Alan Read (*Theatre, Intimacy and Engagement*) and Sara Ahmed’s writing on emotional economies, this paper will investigate the affective dimensions of attempted community making / community enacting in recent British theatre with reference to work by Tim Crouch, Andy Smith, David Greig and Caryl Churchill. It will attend to four aspects emergent in this work and its invitations to audiences: empathy, ambivalence, naivety and rage.

Bio:

Clare Wallace is an associate professor at the Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at Charles University in Prague. She is author of *The Theatre of David Greig* (2013) and *Suspect Cultures: Narrative, Identity and Citation in 1990s New Drama* (2007) and is editor of *Monologues: Theatre, Performance, Subjectivity* and *Stewart Parker Television Plays* (2008). Co-edited books include, *Cosmotopia: Transnational Identities in David Greig’s Theatre* (2011) with Anja Müller, *Stewart Parker Dramatis Personae and Other Writings* (2008) with Gerald Dawe and Maria Johnston, and *Global Ireland: Irish Literatures for the New Millennium* with Ondřej Pilný (2006). She writes widely on contemporary British and Irish theatre and is a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English*.

