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Our Country's Good: Theatre, Colony and Nation in Wertenbaker's Adaptation of *The Playmaker*

ANN WILSON

In 1988, Max Stafford-Clark, the artistic director of the Royal Court Theatre, approached Timberlake Wertenbaker¹ and asked her to write a play based on Thomas Keneally's novel *The Playmaker*.² Wertenbaker accepted the commission, writing *Our Country's Good*³ which, like its source, deals with historically based material: the penal colony in Sydney Cove (Australia) where, in 1789, a group of convicts managed by Second-Lieutenant Ralph Clark produced George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* in celebration of the birthday of King George III. While the themes of prison, of colony and, consequently, of the English nation are common to both works, Wertenbaker's adaptation is concerned primarily with theatre as a means of liberating people, because it offers them the chance to envision a future in which they are free, and of creating a community of players which serves as a paradigm for this utopian society. This focus on theatre and community marks a shift from Keneally's novel which is concerned with colony and, by extension, with relations of power which buttress the colonial enterprise. This radical shift occurs because Wertenbaker's adaptation simplifies many of the characters, most notably Ralph Clark and Arthur Phillip, the Governor-in-Chief of the colony of New South Wales. In *The Playmaker*, Clark's and Phillip's personal relationships with the colonized – the convicts and the aborigines – are extensions of their public roles as officers who are the agents of colonization; in *Our Country's Good*, both are represented as essentially good men under whose benevolent aegis the convicts produce the play, create a community and recover their humanity which gives them true freedom.

The opening scene of *Our Country's Good* establishes the debased condition of the convicts' lives. Set on the transport ship bound for the penal colony, the play begins with Ralph Clark overseeing the flogging of a convict, Robert Sideway. After the beating is concluded, John Wischhammer, another convict, says:

At night? The sea cracks against the ship. Fear whispers, screams, falls silent, hushed. Spewed from our country, forgotten, bound to the dark edge of the earth, at night what is there to do but seek English cunt, warm, moist, soft, oh the comfort, the comfort of the lick, the thrust into the nooks, the crannies of the crooks of England. Alone, frightened, nameless in this stinking hole of hell, take me, take me inside you, whoever you are. Take me, my comfort and we'll remember England together. (p. 1)

Through the depiction of Sideway's beating, the first scene establishes the brutal terms of the marines' power over the convicts; through Wisehammer's eloquent description of night on the ship, it establishes the profound sense of loss experienced by the prisoners who, having been convicted of petty crimes against property, were expelled from their country and denied a sense of belonging to the nation.

In this context, we should remember that a nation does not exist as an absolute but is a construct of the imagination. As Benedict Anderson points out, to be a member of a nation is to identify yourself as sharing with other members of the community common bonds which mark that group as distinct and particular.⁴ For all who have been removed from the nation, either forcibly as were the convicts, or in fulfillment of the obligations to country, as were the marines, the experience of loss is acute. Many of the characters, beginning with Wisehammer, express an intense desire for England, now only a memory. Wisehammer's palpable, to say nothing of punning, desire to thrust "into the nooks, the crannies of the crooks ... and we'll remember England" is reiterated in various forms throughout the play. When Mary Brenham asks Dabby Bryant if she is remembering her lines, she says "No. I was remembering Devon. I was on my way back to Bigbury Bay" (p. 13). Later she continues, "I'm not spending the rest of my life in this flat, brittle, burnt-out country. Oh, give me some English rain" (p. 13). The punishment of being exiled has a particular harshness because it dislocates the convicts emotionally, as well as physically: the denial of nation is a denial of an aspect of their identities. The loss effected by the transport is a loss of home, of community, of identity and, the play seems to argue, of humanity. Wertenbaker presents theatre as an important therapeutic tool because the rehearsal process creates a community of players which allows the convicts, who are ostensibly anti-social, to begin to rebuild their social identities. Because the rehearsal demands generosity and cooperation of the players, they create an exemplary community.

Wertenbaker carefully charts the emergence of this community. Early in *Our Country's Good*, we see Mary Brenham, one of the convicts who can read and write, teaching Dabby Bryant and Liz Morden their lines (pp. 13, 14). When we first see the convict Ketch Freeman, he is despised because he is the colony's hangman and so an agent of authority. Gradually he gains the

acceptance of his fellow players, which he reciprocates by showing his concern for them. We see the rehearsal which is attended by Major Ross and Captain Campbell, two officers who are opposed to the production, which they view as pandering to the convicts whom they see as inhuman: they call Robert Sideway an animal; they command Dabby Bryant to drop to her hands and knees, and then to bark like a dog; they insist that Mary Brenham raise her skirts and display herself. In the face of this brutal and brutalizing exercise of power, the convicts would seem powerless to resist, but they do resist through the medium of the play:

SIDEWAY *turns to LIZ and starts acting, boldly, across the room, across everyone.*

SIDEWAY 'What pleasures I may receive abroad are indeed uncertain; but this I am sure of, I shall meet with less cruelty among the most barbarous nations than I have found at home.' (p. 27)

Presumably we, the audience, are intended to see this scene as an allegory about theatre as the site of political struggle, as an act of resistance. The convicts' dignity has been recuperated through the creation of the community; each member feels responsible for the others. Faced with the possibility of being stripped of their humanity (again), the convicts refuse to be brutalized and to have their community destroyed. This act of non-violent resistance through the performance of Farquhar's text marks the success of the project.

But the project's success is not simply that it allows the convicts to become "good" members of a society: Wertenbaker represents the convicts and their overseer, Ralph Clark, as being transformed on a personal level. Early in the play, we learn that the convicts regard Clark as effeminate and sexually dysfunctional (p. 7). The basis of this assumption is his refusal to take a lover because he remains faithful to his wife, Betsey Alicia, who is in England. His fidelity has a fetishistic component which is evident in the scene titled, "Ralph Clark Tries to Kiss His Dear Wife's Picture." Clark, who is reading his Bible late on a Saturday night, keeps turning from his reading to look at his watch: "My darling tender wife I am reading Proverbs waiting till midnight, the Sabbath, that I might kiss your picture as usual." Finally the hour arrives: "This being Sunday took your picture out of its prison and kissed it ... " As he does, he drops "*down on his knees and brings the picture to himself*" (p. 15). This elaborate ritual seems to indicate that Clark's primer for appropriate marital behaviour is a work of sentimental literature which directs him to see his wife as an object of adoration. This adoration is the inevitable consequence of Clark's seeing women either as whores – the convict women (p. 4) – or as the madonna – his wife. While this division certainly distances Clark from women because whores are too sullied to touch while madonnas are too pure, it is important to recognize how this way of

seeing women reinforces and perpetuates class distinctions: working class women are whores; middle and upper class women are madonnas. The distance between Clark and women is further reinforced by the mnemonic nature of the ritual. Rather importantly, in the same way that Dabby Bryant's memory of rain is a synecdoche for Devon which is her England, so the memory which Clark invokes – that of Betsey Alicia – serves as a synecdoche for that which he cherishes about England. Clark's ritual reminds us of Wisehammer's first speech in which he pleads, "Take me, take me inside you, whoever you are ... and we'll remember England together."

Beyond the mnemonic function of the ritual, the particular terms by which Clark describes it are important. "Dreamt my beloved Betsey that I was with you and that I was going to be arrested"; "took your picture out of its prison" (p. 15). There is an ambiguity about the precise meaning of the phrases which arises, in the first instance because Clark is describing a dream, and in the second because the case which holds the picture is described as a metaphoric prison. Given that Betsey Alicia is the object of Clark's desire, that we have no sense of her as desiring but only as desired, she seems to be a fantasy figure who is some aspect of Clark himself. Wertenbaker's use of the prison imagery casts Clark as a type of prisoner locked in a code of sentimentality which restrains him from fully loving a woman, and identifies him with his convict-players (an identification which is reinforced by the fact that he ends up playing Captain Plume in the production), but also marks a set of constraints imposed on him by a particular class position. His dream that he was with Betsey Alicia and about to be arrested foreshadows his infidelity with Mary Brenham, the convict whom he eventually takes as his "wife." Through his relationship with Brenham, which is, strictly speaking, illegal, Clark is freed from the imprisoning ideology of sentimentality, and so comes to recognize women as sexual beings who are not simply desired but desire:

RALPH "... Will you lodge at my quarters in the meantime? You shall have part of my bed.' Mary! ... Will you?

Pause.

MARY Yes.

They kiss.

RALPH Don't lower your head. Silvia wouldn't.

She begins to undress, from the top.

I've never looked at the body of a woman before.

MARY Your wife?

RALPH It wasn't right to look at her. Let me see you.

MARY Yes. Let me see you.

RALPH Yes.

He begins to undress himself. (p. 33)

Wertenbaker suggests that the theatre allows us to dream about who we might be, and indeed allows us to see the possibility of realizing, if not actually to realize, those dreams. As we have seen, Ralph Clark is released by Mary Brenham from his dreams of prisons and his wife. That Brenham releases Clark is a result of her role in the play. At the beginning of *Our Country's Good*, Brenham is self-effacing in the extreme, but through the course of the rehearsals assumes some of her character's confidence and so is able to address Clark as Silvia addresses Plume; that is, as her equal. It is not simply that Brenham sees herself differently but that Clark, as he directs her as Silvia, sees her in a new light. Whereas before she was a convict, now cast in the role of an upper class woman she is seen by Clark as someone whom he might love. When they do finally kiss on the beach, Clark approaches her using lines of *The Recruiting Officer*, indicating that he sees her both as Mary Brenham and as Silvia Balance, both as working class and as upper class, both as carnal and as spiritual. The play allows him to reconcile categories which, outside the theatre, seem antithetic. The scene in which gaoler and convict take off their clothing, an image of stripping away the social roles which separate them and their resulting discovery that each is simply a person, suggests that the transformations effected on the personal level by theatre are as powerful and as politically radical as the act of resistance to the oppressive force of Campbell and Ross which we saw during the rehearsal.

There are a number of important differences between Wertenbaker's and Keneally's representations of Clark's and Brenham's relationship. Wertenbaker suggests that although neither Clark nor Brenham is sexually inexperienced – he is married; she has had a lover and, on the ship, prostituted herself (p. 13) – both seem to believe in (and therefore, to want) sex as the physical expression of love which integrates the carnal and spiritual aspects of human nature. The scene of their coupling, set on the beach, at night, reinforces the romantic perception of love by removing them from the colony and its various, inter-related economies. In *The Playmaker*, Clark's and Brenham's relationship is located within the colony and so is determined by its complex social interactions. Neither of the lovers brings to the relationship the idealistic naiveté which characterizes their theatrical counterparts. In the novel, Mary Brenham, a woman with a child, is attacked by another convict, Black Caesar, who stole her food, then “‘beat her while the little boy looked on, screaming’” (p. 239). Clark, when he sees Brenham beaten, resolves to act on his attraction to her; that he chooses to act at this moment suggests that his attraction is tempered by feelings of pity which are informed by his position of power as a man and a marine. The complex terms of his attraction are evident when he confides in Dabby Bryant, the Cornish witch who has powers of healing of which Clark has availed himself, confessing his turmoil and seeking her consolation, both verbal and, on one occasion, physical when

she arrested his nightmares that his wife and son were dead by having intercourse with him (p. 58). He tells Bryant, "'I would like to see her [Brenham] safe from attack and from shame as well'" (p. 311). He reflects to himself:

Both the women I best know, or hope to best know, ... are in debt and subject to hard dealings. Betsey had never experienced the hard erotic business of transport or penal city, but in a way the closely managed estate of Broderick Hartwell would be a similarly merciless regime. And only Mary Brenham was available to receive the kindnesses he now felt himself brimful of. (p. 311)

In the novel, when Clark takes Brenham as his "wife," it is clear that he takes her, not as his equal, but his beneficiary. This point is clarified in the chapter where Clark and Brenham consummate their relationship. Clark, as he walks home one night, comes upon Brenham dressed in the white calico suit she wears as Silvia Balance impersonating Jack Wilful. As Clark catches Brenham in a private moment of rehearsal, he notes her vulnerability which would allow him to approach and "tyrannise" her, "without becoming a fool as she had become a fool in her white calico suit in the night" (p. 319). Instead, he finds he adopts a tone of tenderness when he asks her if she is rehearsing. When she turns to him, they are caught in sexual passion, "joined, blue as ice beneath that moon merely rumoured to be the same as the one which gave its light to Britain" (p. 320). After their lovemaking, Clark proposes to Brenham: "'I will have you built a hut in my garden. ... You shall be by name my housekeeper and by night my beloved'" (p. 321). It is significant that Clark initiates the affair when he feels he has the advantage of having caught Brenham off-guard, when she is not herself but in character rehearsing a performance which he has directed, and that he proposes that their affair be constituted within the frame of master/servant. Although Clark professes to wanting a relationship of equals, "a willing commonwealth," he does recognize that personal relationships in the colony tend to replicate the structure of public relationships: those who are empowered as gaoler and colonizer retain that privilege in their private dealings (p. 342).

Importantly, Brenham's and Clark's relationship is one which evokes England for him. When, just before the performance of *The Recruiting Officer*, he sees Brenham in costume as Silvia, he feels desire moving within him, noting that his lover looks "the essence of Englishness transported beyond all sensible bounds" (p. 341). As he admits to himself, his attraction to Brenham, in part, stems from the fact that she, not Betsey Alicia, is available to receive his benevolence. In the complex economy of exchange which determines Clark's relationship with Brenham, she does not displace his wife but becomes her surrogate. There is a trace of this aspect of the

relationship in the play when Clark tells Brenham that, if they have a daughter, "She will be called Betsey Alicia" (p. 37). This moment seems curious: if, in *Our Country's Good*, Brenham releases him from dreams of prison and of his wife, if her love frees him to discover his capacity to love a woman fully, why does he want to name their child after his wife?

Wertenbaker's project ("to write about how people are treated, what it means to be brutalized, what it means to live without hope, and how theater can be a humanizing force"⁵) demands that she show theatre liberating those who are imprisoned, either literally, as are the convicts, or metaphorically, as is Ralph Clark. This liberation is contingent on the dismantling of power which, in *Our Country's Good*, is exemplified most obviously by Clark, the gaoler who is himself imprisoned, the manager who is also one of the players. Within the terms of this project, Wertenbaker's representation of the Governor, the man who holds power within the colony, is particularly important. As she revises Keneally's Clark, making him play a simpler, more virtuous and hence more sympathetic character than in the novel, so she revises Phillip, erasing the aspects of his character which would be problematic in terms of her project.

In *The Playmaker*, Phillip is an outsider to the mainstream of British society. He is Jewish which, believe his enemies, gives him a particular view of God, "not as a father, loving or stern, but as a sort of quintessence of British order ..." (p. 36). As well, he is rumoured to be homosexual, a speculation which is based on the dissolution of his childless marriage, his apparent lack of interest in women and his obsession with Arabanoo, the young aboriginal male who was captured; or "as H.E. looked on it, he was rescued, taken out of his *ab origine* timelessness and introduced to breeches and naval jacket and the Gregorian calendar" (pp. 160-161). Although Arabanoo ostensibly is captured so that he can be employed as the intermediary between the aboriginal population and the colony, in fact Phillip, from the time Arabanoo is brought to the colony, seems to enjoy an intimate, presumably sexual, relationship with him. When they first meet, Phillip identifies himself, then names Arabanoo: "'Manly,' he said, pointing to the new man, choosing to name him" (p. 171). Arabanoo replies with a speech and then drops to his knees; Phillip follows his lead. "The native wept against H.E.'s shoulder and then began to handle the fabric of his shirt and to feel H.E.'s body beneath it. This led him to a desperate sort of embrace. 'Be-anna,' he said, apparently to his own surprise. Father" (p. 172).

The initial parental tenderness which is infused with an erotic component characterizes Phillip's relationship with Arabanoo throughout *The Playmaker*. At one point, Clark sees the Governor helping his ailing captive onto a longboat which will bring them from the supply ship to the shore. "H.E. sat beside the prone native and leaned over the body closely to inspect Arabanoo's glistening face. His posture was for a second so like that of a lover

leaning over a lover that Ralph, settling himself more or less amidships, saw the oarsmen smirk" (p. 223). The terms of the relationship between Phillip and Arabanoo reinforce, and indeed draw particular attention to, the structure of power underlying most of the sexual relationships in the colony, including Brenham's and Clark's. In the case of the Governor and the indigene, who loves his captor like a father, who dresses in the uniform of the colonizer, their relationship is inextricably an aspect of the colonial enterprise. This would seem to belie the contention of his enemies that the idea of the father and of British order are distinct because, while Phillip is not God, his relationship with Arabanoo has elements both of the paternal and of British order.

Wertenbaker's Phillip is like a child's view of a father-exemplifying figure who is astute, benevolent, just, wise; as he is the Governor of the colony, these virtues are associated with British order. The depiction of Phillip is a consequence of the playwright's most striking emendation of her source: Arabanoo does not appear as a character and so Phillip's homosexuality – indeed his sexuality – is suppressed. The aboriginal presence in the play occurs only with the periodic presence of a figure identified simply as The Aborigine. He remains outside the colony, commenting on what he sees as if it were a bizarre dream. The erasure of Arabanoo and the inscription of the aboriginal people in the solitary figure of the dreamer mark Wertenbaker's shifting of the focus from the novel's concern with colonization to hers with imprisonment and liberation. The shift is problematic inasmuch as it amounts to a denial of indigenous people because their voice is outside social discourse, relegated to the private idioms of dreamer. Whatever the curious politics of this erasure, its effect – Wertenbaker's disregard for Phillip's sexuality – allows her to depict the Governor as a man who refuses to involve himself in the social/sexual transactions of the colony.

That he is the chaste exemplar of virtue gives him particular authority when he makes his eloquent arguments on the virtues of theatre. Indeed his authority is so great that it is easy for an audience to accept his position without question and so overlook some of its more problematic implications. He says:

The theatre is an expression of a civilisation. We belong to a great country which has spawned great playwrights: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, and even in our own time, Sheridan. The convicts will be speaking a refined, literate language and expressing sentiments of a delicacy they are not used to ... [W]e, this colony of a few hundred will be watching this together, for a few hours we will no longer be despised prisoners and hated gaolers ... (p. 9)

He continues by suggesting that the benefits of the play are long-term. Appealing to history, he argues that "[t]he Greeks believed that it was a

citizen's duty to watch a play. It was a kind of work in that it required attention, judgement, patience, all the social virtues" (p. 10).

The thrust of Phillip's argument is that the play has an educative value which, by reminding us of our culture's past achievements, allows us to see that we have the capacity for greatness; by erasing social distinctions, it allows us to see the possibility of a utopian society; by teaching us social virtues, it provides us with the human qualities which are the basis of that society. His speech, and my summary of it, rely on the use of "we" and "our," inclusive pronouns which beg the question: to whom do "we" and "our" refer? Phillip claims that "[w]e belong to a great country" but, in the context of the play, can "we" be seen as including the convicts? They, after all, have been "spewed from our country, forgotten," as Wisehammer has told us. In the penal colony, the appeal to a common cultural heritage, a national heritage, is not an innocent attempt by the Governor to alleviate the tedium of life, but an aspect of the colonial enterprise. It is another example of the mnemonic practice which helps recall the nation; in this case the synecdoche for nation is "great" literature. Importantly the image of England which is evoked by the production is not John Wisehammer's nor Dabby Bryant's – nor for that matter, Ralph Clark's – but one which belongs to the educated. The occasion of the production, the birthday of the King, produces another image of England: the King who stands for the authority of tradition and order.

Ironically, this act of remembering England is designed to help those in the colony forget that they are "despised prisoners and hated gaolers." In short, the theatrical event is intended to erase divisions, to create a community of all, not just the convicts. Phillip wants this production to create homogeneity from the disparate elements of the colony. If the community has an identity which celebrates the King and "great" literature, emblems of the England of the ruling class, then England's claim on this far shore will be much more secure because the culture of the colony will reinforce, not contradict, the ideology of English imperialism.

The imperialistic implications of Phillip's remarks are obfuscated for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that his claims for the educating and transforming power of theatre seem borne out: in *Our Country's Good*, the convicts *are* transformed and *do* seem to develop a strong and affirming sense of self through their participation in the production. Perhaps the most striking example of this is Liz Morden, the convict described by Phillip as "one of the most difficult women in the colony" who is "[I]lower than a slave, full of loathing, foul mouthed, desperate" (p. 25). Phillip wants her in the play as the example which proves his thesis. When Morden is brought before a tribunal on charges of having stolen food, she refuses to speak because she adheres to "the convict code of honour. She doesn't want to beg for her life" (p. 34). The colony's court understands her silence, her failure

to speak in her own defense, as an admission of guilt. "Morden," Clark pleads, "you must speak."

COLLINS For the good of the colony.

PHILLIP And of the play.

A long silence.

LIZ I didn't steal the food. (p. 35)

That Phillip's appeal to speak for the good "of the play" moves Morden to break her silence suggests that she now identifies herself first as a player, then as a convict. This shift in self-identification is reinforced at the end of the scene when the Governor tells her that he hopes that she is good in the part. "Your Excellency, I will endeavour to speak Mr Farquhar's lines with the elegance and clarity their own worth commands" (p. 35). It is difficult for an audience – or at least for me – to remain untouched by this admittedly sentimental moment when Liz Morden gains eloquence and addresses Phillip with self-assurance. But the success of this moment depends on the audience's forgetting the contradictions inherent in the situation. Phillip's position presupposes either that there is no community of convicts, or that it exists but its existence threatens the success of the colonial enterprise and so the community must be dismantled. The reference to Morden's silence being a consequence of her adhering to the convict code suggests the latter; indeed, that there is a code suggests that the convict community has a complex social order.

In *Our Country's Good*, we have no sense of the convict society but in *The Playmaker*, through the accounts of Harry Brewer, the Provost Marshal who had himself once been a member of a canting crew (a criminal alliance), a portrait of the community emerges (p. 99). Brewer describes a highly structured society with codes of behaviour and systems of belief, including the worship of the Tawny Prince, the god of disorder (p. 103). Interestingly, given that New South Wales is a penal colony, it might be expected that the colonial authorities would be intolerant of the potential subversion represented by the alternate social order of the convict community. Instead, Keneally indicates that the success of the colonial enterprise depends on an acceptance of this community which seems controlled by a woman named Goose, a woman "'of many false names. She procures girls, even from this side of the stream, for Marines and for convicts with a *bung* as they say, a purse. In terms of the women's camp she lives in grand style. She calls herself a Queen'" (p. 289). Her authority with the women is such that, despite the fact that nothing keeps them from escaping into the wilderness, they remain within the camp. And, as one of the officers notes, her control of the women as prostitutes "'works some order upon the disorderly desires of Marines and lags alike'" (p. 290). While Phillip in *Our Country's Good* seems to want

to create a homogeneous community, a new nation which celebrates a particular sense of England as its ideal, Phillip of *The Playmaker*, a man who is himself an outcast of the England celebrated by his theatrical counterpart, seems reconciled to the colony operating on the basis of a *realpolitik* which demands the tolerance of the lag society.

In *The Playmaker*, Ralph Clark undertakes directing the production because H.E. has given him an order with no rationale offered (p. 19); but in *Our Country's Good*, Phillip believes that the production will teach social virtues. What seems not to be stated is that the production of *The Recruiting Officer* is an act of colonizing because it is the imposition of one culture on another. Although Wertenbaker carefully represents Phillip as the benevolent governor who insists that the rations "are the same for all, prisoners and soldiers" (p. 34), a position which reinforces his hope that the production will dissolve the distinctions between gaolers and prisoners, his intentions might not be as altruistic as they first appear.

Wertenbaker orchestrates the scenes, particularly those at the end the play, so that an audience ignores the problematic nature of Phillip's position. First there is the use of *The Recruiting Officer* as the act of resistance, then there is Liz Morden's eloquent breaking of her silence for the good of the play, then the kiss marking the moment when Mary Brenham and Ralph Clark recognize their love for each other, and finally the last moments of the play when "to the triumphant music of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and the sound of applause and laughter from the First Fleet audience, the first Australian performance of *The Recruiting Officer* begins" (p. 39). At this point, there is something quite literal about Wertenbaker's orchestrating our response. Each of the moments which I have cited is a moment of liberation made possible because, through the play, each of the characters has gained a stronger sense of self. But even as the audience cheers at these moments, we would be well advised not to forget that Phillip's idea of mounting the play does not clearly place the interests of the convicts before those of the colony, that the production of *The Recruiting Officer* amounts to the adoption of cultural values of the dominant community and hence is a means of colonization. As much as Wertenbaker wants to celebrate theatre as "a humanizing force," the emendations which this project requires as she adapts *The Playmaker* to the stage suggest that the social function of theatre, while having the capacity to affirm human experience and generate social change, can as easily legitimize the social position of a dominant class.⁶

NOTES

- 1 Timberlake Wertenbaker is an American-born playwright now living in London. A noted translator from French to English of a range of dramatic works, Wertenbaker's own plays include *The Third*, *Case to Answer*, *New Anatomies*,

Abel's Sister, *The Grace of Mary Traverse* and *The Love of the Nightingale*.

Abel's Sister and *The Grace of Mary Traverse* were both produced at the Royal Court Theatre where she was the resident writer during the 1984-85 season.

- 2 Thomas Keneally, *The Playmaker* (London, 1987). All references are from this version of *The Playmaker*; page references are cited parenthetically.
- 3 It is important to note that there are two published versions of *Our Country's Good*. The first was issued in 1988 on the occasion of the first production of *Our Country's Good*; the script was revised and republished in 1989. All references to *Our Country's Good* are from the revised version (London, 1989); page references are cited parenthetically.
- 4 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983), pp. 15, 16.
- 5 Timberlake Wertenbaker, quoted in Hilary de Vries, "Of Convicts, Brutality and the power of Theater," *The New York Times*, 30 September 1990, p. H10.
- 6 A version of this paper was given at the session sponsored by the Theory and Criticism Forum at the convention of the Association of Theatre in Higher Education, Chicago, August 1990.