

Shifting Sands Summary.

In Shifting Sands, I was examining how historical fact and myth combine forming stories on the boundary of truth and fiction. The performance itself took place as a site-specific, hour long performance, with ritualistic, historical and fictional elements. The purpose of these individual elements was for them to merge and create a space where the lines between the past and present, myth and reality were unclear and fluid. I tried to reflect these themes in the text of the performance. There was poetry which focused on animal imagery including transformation, an important theme in myth. There were also passages reflecting the merging of myth and reality, specifically the myth of 'The Bells of Aberdovey'. The physical elements of the piece relied on ritualistic practice, leading the audience to the space in a procession, giving the audience simple tasks to add an element of participation and repeating a set of movements at key times in order to mark the time and space of the performance.

Critical Reflection Summary.

In the critical reflection I have concentrated on my decisions regarding the textual element of my performance and the complications that resulted from the location I chose for the performance. There is a detailed explanation of how I arrived at the scripted and textual elements of the production. I have also attempted to explain and justify my decisions during the performance process and the performance itself, including discussion of the challenges I faced from making those decisions. Included are some of my own personal reflections on the performance and the effect the condition of the text and site had on me, while trying to avoid anecdotal stories. I have outlined some of the key concepts surround my performance including the ideas of cultural memory, mythic truth and site-specific work.

Caroline Melia

Shifting Sands: Critical Reflection

Introduction.

There is always a certain distance between a performance event and a written record of that event. Inevitably things are forgotten or perhaps not fully recalled. This work falls into this category. There are also always times in preparing and planning a production when things come together, and then fall apart so quickly, that you are left in doubt of anything being completed or appearing as you had imagined. This document will try to navigate and explain the choices that I made throughout and during the production of *Shifting Sands*.

In this critical reflection I will be concentrating on three key elements that ultimately defined my production; the location, the text and the interaction between the two. Through these sections I will discuss various other elements of the performance including my abilities as a performer and the contextual background to the themes and content of the production. From this I hope to gain a greater understanding of both my abilities and limits as a performer, and greater insight into how each decision in the production process comes together to create the final performance.

Location

Choosing a location for my performance was very difficult from the start. I knew I wanted a circular area in which to perform but I didn't want to create the space in an artificial way, that is, to make a circular space inside a square room. The circle and the spiral are 'recurrent abstract motifs'¹ in Celtic art and so it seemed appropriate to use this as starting point for my space. I also used these motifs during the performance in the pattern of the body paint I applied. I was trying to communicate the idea that these 'patterns could represent not only

¹ Green, M. *Symbol and Image* p124.

physical shapes but also perhaps, music, dance, or thought-patterns'² and that there was the possibility of a narrative happening in the act of painting.

I thought about using Studio Two, in Aberystwyth Arts Centre that is a round studio, with very good acoustic properties, but as the piece progressed I realised that the technical requirements were very minimal, I began to look for an outdoor site.

As my performance was now becoming a 'site-specific work'³, this work then is a product not only of my design but infused with meaning from the site as well. There can be a deliberate juxtaposition of meaning between the performance and the site, but for my performance I was hoping to create a more cohesive and unified match between the location and the meaning of the performance.

There are several reasons that I decided to use the sand dunes at Ynyslas Nature Reserve as the location for my performance, yet as with every location there were difficulties with it as well; 'the challenge is to acknowledge the environment at hand and cope with it creatively'⁴.

I chose the dunes after several visits there during the summer. What always struck me was the expanse of sand and the presence of the sea. In my initial research for the piece I was thinking of adapting features of the local landscape into a mythic world. Creating a myth for each landscape feature and why it was there. Although I did not follow this line of enquiry, I knew that the landscape would be an important part of my performance. I also wanted to work with natural sounds. I did some basic recording of the sea and the surrounding beach

² Green, M. *Symbol and Image* p117.

³ Kaye, N. *Site-specific Art* p1.

⁴ Schechner, R. *Environmental Theater* p xxxiii.

which might have become part of a soundtrack for my performance if I had performed it indoors.

There are a few performance companies that work on site-specific locations - one of these companies is called Red Earth. Their performance of Enclosure was similar to the atmosphere I was trying to create in my performance. The Red Earth piece took place at Hambledon Hill in 2007 and their website describes it as a ‘corridor through time between our ancestors and ourselves’⁵. It was also ritualistic in its influence and structure, and used both fire and body painting as a way of creating a ‘reconnecting with both the land and with the people who shaped it’⁶. The scale of this performance was clearly much bigger than anything I could attempt and their use of fire was not prohibited, as it was on my location, but they are touching on the same themes of history, archaeology and ritual that I was working towards in my performance.

I had originally thought of performing the entire hour on the beach. But then, after quite a bit of climbing around in the dunes themselves, I decided to move the middle part of the show into one of the dips in the dune. This was partly for aesthetic reasons, I liked the natural amphitheatre that was created by the dunes steep sides, but also to find somewhere that was sheltered from the wind.

The bleak beauty of the site became more apparent each time I visited and rehearsed there but the drawbacks of the location were also obvious from the beginning.

The site is surprising difficult to get to. This is especially true for me as I don’t have a car.

There is a bus which I frequently used to travel for my rehearsals, but I was never able to stay

⁵ Red earth web site.

⁶ Red Earth Website.

late, or until sunset, due to the bus timetable. I was also difficult for me to transport my props even though I kept everything to a minimum.

One of the other considerations was that the site is part of a nature reserve. This meant that I had to adapt some of my staging ideas about how I would light the performance at the end. I had wanted there to be small flaming torches which would have made up the circle and then a fire at the centre. But the reserve wardens were very clear that I would not be permitted any naked flames at all because of the risk to the natural habitat. The solar torches I used in the performance were not exactly ideal as they were light sensitive so they only came on when it was dark enough. This led to not all of them coming on at the same time, which I found very frustrating.

I was also worried about the intrusion of technology into the performance. The solar lights are a very modern invention, the smooth metal of their cases was at odds with the uneven surfaces of the natural environment around them. There was one point at which I thought about doing the performance as “authentically” as possible. This would have meant fixing the performance in a previous time period, and recreating the clothing and props of that era. I soon realised that the subject material I was investigating spanned a great period of time. If I had chosen to locate it exactly in one time frame I would have lost the ‘stratigraphy of layers’⁷ that I was trying to create.

Stratigraphy, or layering, is used in archaeology to show the progression of layers that is built up over the remains over time, the ‘accumulated deposits’⁸ over a site. In referring to performance it can be used to describe the building up of a performance’s parts, the layers of

⁷ Pearson, M. Shanks, M. *Theatre/Archaeology* p24.

⁸ Ibid. p28.

‘text, physical action, music and/or soundtrack, scenography and/or architecture’⁹. In the context of my performance I am blending the historical elements together but building a strata of events in the narrative.

Using the lamps out of necessity gave me the freedom to mix modern elements into my production. This also extended to my costume, the simple black outfit I wore was modern but not intrusive enough to distract from the historical elements of the production.

There was also the issue of the performance being in a public place. I was not able to reserve the space or cordon it off so I was never sure what condition it would be in when I arrived for a rehearsal. Several times during the summer I had to collect litter before I could start to rehearse. The presence of broken glass was also problematic as I had wanted to do the production barefoot, but it was too dangerous; just moving the stones around to construct the space was often hazardous due to the presence of broken bottles.

This became particularly problematic on the final day of rehearsals when on the block of driftwood I had been using as a centrepiece was removed from its place, and carried over the sand dunes and burnt in someone’s camp fire. Despite the official policy of the nature reserve, it is a very popular location for camping, and fires are common. Fortunately I was able to retrieve the wooden centrepiece, and although a little fire damaged I was still able to use it in the final show.

It was always slightly nerve-wracking turning up at my location and not knowing what state it would be in. This was further complicated by people interrupting my rehearsals to ask what I was doing, or if I would move. Once I had explained why I was there most people left me alone, but there were often problems with the sand dune behind me.

⁹ Ibid. p24.

I really liked the contrast of the sand to the surrounding green vegetation, and when the wind was up, the sand blowing up and down it made patterns across the surface where it was smooth. Ideally for my performance I wanted to get the smoothest surface possible so that if it was windy, the audience would be able to see this natural effect.

However, a popular activity is to jump and slide down the steep sides of the dunes, which creates deep ruts and footprints in the sand. This is prohibited by the park authorities but the advice is often ignored. I asked them to put up some barrier tape as a way of deterring people. It didn't really work, and it was frustrating that I was always defending the site from being disturbed and destroyed.

A similar thing happened during the performance its self, a group of children were standing at the top of the dune and debating where or not to slide down. This was one of the most difficult things about doing the show in a public place, you can never tell what people are going to do or say, or how the site will be disturbed when you return.

One of the other difficulties I faced during the performance was exactly how I would get the audience back to the car park at the end of the show. I had led them out to the space, but was unable to lead them back because of the final gesture of washing off the body paint. I had hoped that the ending would be quite obvious and that it would be a natural progression for the audience to watch me for a while and then walk back towards the car park. In reality, there was probably some need for an external device to draw the audience away and to signal that the piece had finished, but I found it difficult to create anything that would work effectively without me physically being present.

There are many other artists that work with site-specific locations, Brith Gof are probably the most well known for their work that uses the site not to create ‘synthesis of elements’¹⁰ of the performance, but work to ‘engage with and activate narratives and properties’¹¹ of the site.

There are always some compromises to be made with any location, and though I faced difficulties when rehearsing and during the performance, the presence of the space and the natural environment made up for the inconveniences that were associated.

The choice of texts

Originally I had wanted to write all the material for the production myself. But I soon realised that this was both impractical and unhelpful considering the rich range of sources I had been gathering. The direction of much of my text was hinged around the symbol of the crow, and its different meanings in folklore and myth. I was very interested in using animal symbolism in the performance and I really wanted to explore or work-in some idea of transmutation from human to animal form. Transformations like these are a staple of folklore all over the world, but in the Welsh myth saga the Mabinogion they feature particularly strongly.

The crow immediately caught my attention. Its history as a creature of myth is very mixed. It is usually a negative figure associated with death and destruction, but also has a clever resourcefulness that is respected, and a ‘dual symbolism of death and rebirth’¹². There is also a strong connection with the female goddess figure able to ‘change shape from a woman to

¹⁰ Kaye, N. *Site-specific Art* p53.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Green, M. *Symbol and Image in Celtic Religious Art* p143.

death-crow in battle'¹³ and was connected in particular with 'the outcome of the battle, and prognosis of evil,'¹⁴ and 'prophesying disaster and death'¹⁵.

I soon discovered the wealth of myths that surround this creature, but what also caught my attention were some of the more modern connections: the poems by Ted Hughes and then the wonderful example of folklore becoming the basis for a scientific study concerning tool use by rooks¹⁶ - one of the largest of the crows. Although there were no crows present during the performance there were many times during rehearsals, out in the space where crows would perch on the telephone pole opposite the main performance area. Although crows are not seabirds there a mythological link between them and the sea, the 'birds are described as being huge in size, and capable of swimming on the waves and their evil nature is stressed'¹⁷. The poem *Crow on the Beach*¹⁸, linked the site and the bird so well, I felt assured that the link between the bird and the coast was truly cohesive.

Also I had established that poetry would play an important part of my production. There is lots of history surrounding poetry especially in the Welsh language and its myths; it is in Wales that an 'astonishingly ancient literary tradition, mainly in the form of popular tales which preserved fragments...[that] go back as far as the Stone Age'¹⁹. There is also the so called new age revival of druidism, which holds the bard and performing poetry as a major principle of learning; they believe it holds the key to the roots of their religion. Certainly

¹³ Ibid. p142.

¹⁴ Ross, A. *Pagan Celtic Britain* p246.

¹⁵ Ibid. p257.

¹⁶ Morell, R. *Clever Rooks Repeat Ancient Fable*.

¹⁷ Ross, A. *Pagan Celtic Britain* p255.

¹⁸ Hughes, T. *Crow* p82.

¹⁹ Graves, R. *The White Goddess* p19-20.

there is evidence pointing to a strong oral tradition, ‘the rudiments of which formed a close religious secret for centuries but which were at last garbled, discredited and forgotten’²⁰.

I was looking for a subtle way of working in some elements of the idea that knowledge is passed down the ages through poetry. The poems I chose were nothing to do with this druidism, but I hoped that they would help create another layer of text and reference that would bring the different elements of my text and performance together.

A version of the transformation poem that I used in my production can be found in Robert Graves book *The White Goddess*. He cites it as an ‘English ballad of *The Coal Black Smith*’²¹ and links it to British witchcraft of the 17th century. The version of this poem that I used, already included the imagery of the crow, and was much longer, but I felt that there were enough transformations included in the first and last verse. As I was also repeating the transformation movements as a silent physical act, the poem needed to be shorter. I would have liked to expand on the physical aspects of this section. I attempted to use some yoga positions as a starting point for my movements but these ended up being quite constrained. I was happy with the crow move, as I had spent quite a bit of time watching crows and studying photographs of them, which is how I developed the action of splaying my fingers to mimic the spread of the crows’ wingtips.

Choosing one creature to focus on helped me to pinpoint something that I could use to link things to, and develop things from. This helped not just in the text but in developing the actions I used in the performance as well.

²⁰ Ibid. p17.

²¹ Ibid. p401.

Once I had established that the crow would be part of the story of the place, I wanted to find a way to incorporate it into the other story that was specific to the location.

The Bells of Aberdovey is a folk legend about a city inundated by flood somewhere off the coast of Aberdovey in Cardigan Bay. The city's Welsh name is Canter'r Gwaelod and there is some evidence for the actual event occurring 'sometime during the sixth century'²² with the land lost described as 'The Lowland Hundred'²³. It is hard to determine exactly how accurate this is but it is true that flood myths are an enduring symbol that occurs in different civilisations throughout history and that a 'whole mythology and folklore of lost lands has been built up'²⁴ throughout centuries of storytelling.

The theory behind this wealth of folklore is 'collective memory'²⁵. This states that there are 'common traditions and social representations showed by our collectivities'²⁶. Society has a cultural store of memories that is drawn on during the telling of a story or myth; it forms a 'narrative organization of the past'²⁷ and 'must have a beginning and an end, an interesting story and impressive hero'²⁸. History at one time was constructed in this way. Before written records it was passed through the ages as stories from memory and, through a social understating of those stories, 'memory exists through its relation with what has been shared with others: language, symbols, events and social and cultural contexts'²⁹. What is of interest

²² Pennick, N. *Lost Cities and Sunken Lands* p68.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid. p4.

²⁵ Misztal, B. *Theories of Social Remembering* p12.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid. p10.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid. p11.

to me in this case is that there is a flood myth so local to this area of Wales. Worldwide there are many recorded diluvial myths throughout history, Atlantis and Noah's Ark are the most well known of all, but there does seem to be a universal and enduring idea surround the flooding of lands. There is documented flooding of many areas of the world after the last ice age. So is it possible that these stories are the reminiscence of a collective memory that dates back to that time? The story I focus on in the performance is a small part of that collective, but it still has a relevant message in today's world of climate change and global warming.

There are many different versions of Canter'r Gwaelod and, as is typical of folklore, each one varies slightly in its telling. After looking at several accounts of the story, it became clear that in order to highlight the element of the tale I was interested in, I needed to work on my own piece of writing based on this story. It also gave me the opportunity to work-in a very slight reference to the crow, and thereby further connect it to the location.

Text and Site

The boundaries set by the Ynyslas location were clear. I thought the best way to transport the audience to the location and also into the performance, was to have a processional beginning and end. This was also echoing the structure of a ritual as well as physically separating the audience from the mundane world in order to lead them into an unknown space.

Part of this journey for the audience, included elements of audience participation. This functioned as the space where 'the performance breaks down and becomes a social event'³⁰.

It was a social event in the sense that it was designed to create a unified purpose to the audience's actions. It did not follow the concept that 'participation is legitimate only if it

³⁰ Schechner, R. *Environmental Theater* p40.

influences the tone and possibly the outcome of the performance'.³¹ This was not the purpose of the participation in my performance.

I drew a mark on each audience member in the blue paint that I would later use on myself. I also gave the audience the task of picking up a stone and keeping it for later. Perhaps a better word would have been pebble, as I had intended small pocket-sized stones to be picked up; but many people were more ambitious than I had anticipated and collected some very large rocks. I should have used more precise instructions that clarified what I meant. This task was designed to be a physical demonstration of one of the textual pieces. The audience had to put their stones in the bucket as instructed. The problem of the larger stones being used became even more evident as they were filling the bucket too quickly and not leaving enough room for further stones.

There was also a section of the performance I had rehearsed involving a map of the coastline which I had marked with any important historical features.

I had done research at the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments to find out if there was any evidence for the flood myth of Aberdovey, and other monuments of ancient history around the local coastline. I was surprised to find so little material, considering the evidence I had found about the 'Lowland Hundred'³². Most of what I did find was to do with the geographic history of the area such as the submerged forests and preserved peat bogs, rather than human influence and evidence. All of this evidence also related to much earlier geography of the coast line, in the Neolithic era.

³¹ Ibid. p77.

³² Pennick, N. *Lost Cities and Sunken Lands* p68.

This map section was deliberately formulated to be a break in the format and tone of the production up until that point. I was attempting to create a ‘deep map’³³ of the area around the site of the performance, creating a document that ‘attempts to record and represent the grain and patina of place through juxtapositions and interpenetrations of the historical and the contemporary, the poetic and the poetic, the factual and the fictional.... natural history and everything you might ever want to say about a place’³⁴.

It was not formally scripted but I knew about all the detail I had annotated onto it. I was partly impersonating the type of delivery on popular television archaeology shows. This section was designed to connect some of the historic stories I was demonstrating to events and people of the world that we live in now.

This disruption to the tone of the piece was perhaps too unexpected. Most of the physical aspects of the production had taken on a mirroring effect, echoing each movement repeatedly. I had also tried hard to incorporate sacred symbols into the textual elements, like that of the crow. The Map section however was something completely different, isolated from the rest of the production. I had intended there to be a jarring effect from this, a sort of back to reality effect of the audience realising that they are all just standing on a beach listening to someone presenting the past. In this respect it did seem to have the desired effect and I wanted the audience to continue looking at the map, whilst I began the sword work, almost unaware that show was continuing. This too was achieved by this section, but perhaps I could have set a precedent for breaking the atmosphere before that point. If I had done that then there would have been a symmetry to that element of the production as well. However I might have lost the jarring effect that was created by only breaking the format once. Where I felt the section

³³ Pearson, M. Shanks, M. *Theatre/Archaeology* p64.

³⁴ Ibid. p64-65.

needed development was integrating the end of that section back into the ritualistic side of the performance. Although I had wanted this to happen spontaneously, there was a clear need for a connection to be re-established at that point of the production.

There is a strong connection between the transformation section and the site itself. I have already explained the transformation poem's origin, but the concept behind the transformation is linked to the site by the '*Romance of Taliesin*'³⁵, the female character: Cerridwen, chases and tries to kill Gwion as he stole a potion that was meant for her son.

'By use of the powers that he had drawn from the cauldron he changed himself into a hare: she changed herself into a greyhound. He plunged into a river and became a fish; she changed herself into an otter. He flew up into the air like a bird; she changed herself into a hawk. He became a grain of winnowed wheat on the floor of a barn: she changed herself into a black hen, found him and swallowed him.'³⁶

This sequence is very similar to the one featured in the poem (see appendix p24-25), it has the same elements of transformation, and being pursued into different forms. The story then continues with Cerridwen giving birth to Gwion and throwing him into the sea. He is then found by fishermen 'near Dovey and Aberystwyth in Cardigan Bay'³⁷, which is the geographical area of the site of my performance.

This ties the location and aspects of the narrative together very well, but there is still some question about whether the text and location gelled together during the performance. I was

³⁵ Graves, R. *The White Goddess* p2.

³⁶ Ibid. p28.

³⁷ Ibid.

nervous about the very formal structure of the poetry being recited in such an open landscape, I did wonder if it would simply get lost, or appear irrelevant to the surroundings.

On my Own

I decided quite early on that I would be performing solo for the duration of the performance. I knew I wanted there to be the aspect of the solo performer. I also wanted to create a sense of self-reliance: I didn't want to over-complicate things by trying to direct a cast as well as come up with all the material and direction.

There are many female performers that have chosen to perform solo work, one of the most well known is Marina Abramovic. She creates strong images of her female form, often in quite violent and destructive performances. There are strong elements of endurance performance in some of her more extreme work involving 'physical risk'³⁸ that then developed into 'risk that pushes at different limits'³⁹. But it was the idea of combining the feminine with something violent that attracted me to her work. I used a sword in my performance to get a subtle edge of danger and violence into the tone of the piece. I tried to keep my costume as bare as possible, so that the femininity of my body was neither hidden or highlighted, and so that the sword would make a strong impact on the audience whenever I performed with it.

The nature of the location was a factor in my decision to remain solo. It was difficult to get people to visit the site and even on the day of the performance it proved difficult for some people to find. Consequently there really was only me, the beach and the sky to work with. There was nowhere to hide, and nothing to hide behind. The production rested entirely on my

³⁸ Richards, M. *Marina Abramovic* p43.

³⁹ Ibid.

performance technique which, as I am relatively new to performing, is not that advanced. I didn't realise just how difficult I would find it to rehearse properly in a public space. I was not allowed to use the metal sword when I was rehearsing. This led to me doing some days in a studio and some days on the site. However this was very far from ideal as I was always having to imagine the missing element during the rehearsal and consequently I had no clear idea of how everything would work when it was brought together.

This did, unfortunately lead to some elements of the piece being quite under-rehearsed. Certainly my interaction and direction of the audience was not developed enough, as demonstrated by the stone incident. The lack of rehearsal time was also at odds with the style and meaning I was trying to create within the performance. With the ritualistic structure, I wanted everything have a well-paced and rhythmic quality which would carry the audience along and help pace the performance. Most of this structure was created by the sword-work sections that were spaced as evenly as possible throughout the production, the repetitive movements and steady speed were structured to add to this rhythmic quality. Where perhaps the production lacked this pacing was in elements of my delivery of the texts I had chosen, and the stark contrast of the map section which disrupted this rhythm.

An aesthetic quality, which also disturbed the rhythm I was attempting to build, was how my movements with the sword were not always as smooth as I had rehearsed. I wanted a flow of movement to have a strong flowing action and to appear to glide into one another. The movements with my arms did help to achieve this effect, but I had done most of my sword work rehearsing in bare feet, once I put shoes on the rigidity of the soles changed the way I moved during these sections and disrupted this effect.

For me as a solo performer, getting all the pieces of the production in the correct order was a task in itself. This meant that in the rehearsal time that I did have, I concentrate on blocking

out and memorising the order of the piece. With hindsight it would have been beneficial for me to have practiced the delivery of the some of my text in studio conditions. Although it would have been impossible for me to reconstruct these controlled rehearsals at the location itself due to the extreme variety of weather conditions. The knowledge of these ideal delivery rehearsals would have created a solid structure for me to work from, and would have given me more confidence with the delivery of the texts during the production itself.

My original idea for the ending of the performance relied on there being a low tide so I could walk toward it and disappear into the landscape. However due to also needing the show to take place at sunset, there was a full tide instead. I chose to walk to the water's edge, which was very close to the site of the performance. This seemed to create a concentration on my physical form, which I had not intended. It might have been better for me at that point to have totally immersed myself in the water to create the vanishing effect I had originally planed. No doubt there would have been some safety concerns, but it would have resulted in a more effective ending image.

Conclusion

In this piece of writing I have tried to evaluate my performance so that my decisions and choices through the process have been explained and examined in both a personal and a critical way. I am aware that not every decision I made in the show resulted in the outcome I had expected. This is all part of my development in practicing performance.

Each decision during the process of both the making and the performing of this piece has added to the performance in some way. I have come to realise that no matter how small a decision is, it will affect the look and feel of the performance. I have also come to appreciate there is no substitute for being able to bring everything together and rehearse it on site. The

fact I was unable to do so for the performance of *Shifting Sands* was a challenge for me. It is hard to talk in terms of making things difficult or easy during the making of a production, as the result is that they are simply different. In the same way it is hard to judge the success or failure of a particular work as it depends so much on what you are looking for. I did want to challenge myself, and push myself into something beyond my usual boundaries of performance.

(And, for me, I think I did.)

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Appendix

Script: Shifting Sands. (n.b .Evolved script, annotated as performed.)

BELL

5. **Welcome to Ynyslas × 3.** Follow me

Four sword set: the corners

Mark the audience.

Begin to lead to site.

10 -**halfway there**- please pick up a stone.- keep it with you.

Arrive but still on the beach.

Crow on the Beach

Hearing the shingle explode, seeing it skip,

Crow sucked his tongue.

Seeing sea-grey mash a mountain of itself

Crow tightened his goose-pimples.

Feeling spray form the sea's root nothinged on his crest

Crow's toes gripped the wet pebbles.

When the smell of the whale's den, the gulping of the crab's

last prayer,

Gimletted in his nostrils

He grasped he was on earth.

He knew he grasped

Something fleeting

Of the sea's ogreish outcry and convulsion.

He knew he was the wrong listener unwanted

To understand or help –

His utmost gaping of brain in his tiny skull

Was just enough to wonder, about the sea,

What could be hurting so much?

15. Sword work slow: Three moving set: Towards sea. Two back

BELL

B E G I N I N G

20 Enter and define space. **Place stones.**

Stones last. They are markers, signposts, strong hard wearing, timeless. Stones last

Square group: sword section to the four corners: north, south east west.

25 Transformation.

O I shall go into a Crow
With Sorrow and fear my way to go
And fly from thee in his good name
Aye, till I be fetched hame.

Crow, take heed of hawk so bright
Will tear thee from the air's sweet light
For hear I come in Our Lady's name
All but for to fetch thee hame.

Cunning and art he did not lack
But, aye her whistle would fetch him back.

Yet I shall go into a mouse
And hast me unto the miller's house
There in his corn to have good game
Ere that I be fetched hame

Mouse, take heed of white tib-cat
That never was baulked of mouse or rat
For I'll crack thy bones In Our Lady's name
Thus shalt thou be fetched hame.

Cunning and art he did not lack
But aye her whistle would fetch him back.

30 **Start paint**

Aesop's Fable.

A Crow, half-dead with thirst, came upon a Pitcher which had once been full of water; but when the Crow tried to drink, he found that ~~only~~ very little water was left in it. He could not reach far enough down to get at it. He tried, and tried, but at last had to give up in despair. Then a thought came to him; he took a pebble and dropped it into the Pitcher. Then he took another and dropped it into the Pitcher. And so he continued. At last, he saw the water mount up near him, and after casting in a few more pebbles he was able to quench his thirst and save his life.

Continue to paint

Little by little does the trick.

This tale, written more than 2,000 years ago, may have been based on fact.

A study published in *Current Biology* reveals that rooks, a relative of crows, do just the same when presented with a similar situation.

~~The team says~~ The study shows rooks are innovative tool-users.

To investigate further, a team from the University of Cambridge and Queen Mary, University of London, presented four captive rooks with a set-up similar to the fable.

The birds were shown a clear tube containing a small amount of water. Floating upon it was an out-of-reach worm. A pile of stones was positioned nearby.

"The rooks have to put multiple stones in the tube until the worm floats to the top."

And the four birds did just that. Two, called Cook and Fry, raised the water-level enough to grab the floating feast the very first time they were presented with the test, ~~while Connelly and Monroe~~ while the other two were successful on their second attempt.

The experiments show the rooks first assessing the water level by peering at the tube from above and from the side, before picking up and dropping the stones into the water.

The birds were extremely accurate, using the exact number of stones needed to raise the worm to a height where they could reach it.

In another experiment, the rooks were presented with a similar scenario. This time they were given a combination of small and large stones.

The rooks opted for the larger ones, raising the worm to the top of the tube more quickly.

"They are being as efficient as possible."

~~And when given a choice between a tube filled with water and another filled with sawdust, the birds were more likely to opt for the liquid-filled tube.~~

The researchers say their findings suggest that the ancient fable may have been based on fact.

They said: "In folklore, it is rarely possible to know with certainty which corvid is being referred to.

"Hence, the crow might have easily been the rook." (or vice versa)

Earlier this year, the same team revealed that rooks were able to use different tools to solve a variety of complex problems.

"Nowadays, we have so many startling findings that the rooks just don't surprise us that much any more. You almost expect them to do the cleverest thing."

The only other animals reported to have solved similar problem are orangutans.

BELL

35 Flood Myth

Performance direction

Throw rocks at sand

The Bells of Aberdovey.

The tide crept in, cloaking the sands, reflecting the sky above. Faint thunder could be heard offshore and bright flashes of light. The people in the city carried on, 'It's just a storm' they

said. Dark clouds hung heavy overhead and rolled across the sky. The sea was whipped up to white by the wind, the tide came in quicker than before, 'It's just some waves' they said. The wind howled across the sands, muting the warning bell; its last toll lost to the howling wind, carried out to sea. Water crashed across the walls, the rain shot down in shards. 'The gate will be shut now' they said. The gate lay open; its keeper asleep with many bottles at his feet, not roused by either bell or thunder. The waves lapped up to the gate and seeped through the walls and fences, 'It's just the high tide' they said. But the water kept coming through the gate driven on by the storm. The force of the water was too great; the gates could not be shut. The water surrounded the city, and pulled at its bricks and stakes. The people were drowned by the upcoming tide and could say no more, their bodies, scattered over the coastline, slowly picked at and eaten by the crows and sea creatures. The remains of that city have drifted over time, broken. The tide is the law out on the sand; always be on guard. A warning bell can still be heard ringing out across this coast. A faint toll carried on the wind, emanating from the sea. A drowned city lies out there forever: a warning to all. If you hear the bell, you now know to head back to the shore. The higher ground is safe for now, but the tide will always be the law.

Map

I have here a map of Cardigan Bay. On it I have marked the sea level as predicted at between ~~9000 cal BC and 4000 cal BC~~. The symbols here represent the petrified forest just down the coast in that direction. This thing up here is a causeway that was probably formed by glacial moments spreading down from Scotland. These sites here represent the areas to be surveyed. ~~There are some areas that have produced finds, mostly pulled up by fishermen. This brought up an antler of (date), which had some very exciting blade marks on it. We believe it may have been shaped in some way. They are definitely deliberate marks in any case.~~ This here

was an axe, which was chipped on its left side so there is a good chance ~~this~~ it was ~~used for~~
~~some reason~~. However much more work is necessary before any strong conclusion can be
drawn from this data. We hope to get something a little more conclusive in the future. (~~place~~
~~stones on corners of map~~) I'll leave this here so you can study it further.

Square group: sword section to the four corners: north, south, east, west.

Dismantle space: take out lights and give to audience.

BELL

E N D

40 The Lower Hundred.

Stand here for a moment, look across the sea. The whole of this bay used to be land. Forests,
peat bogs, grassland, all vanished, submerged under the Irish Sea. Does the memory of this
land remain;echoing through history? There is evidence just down the coast, a forest, a few
tree stumps poking through the sand, frozen, preserved, dead. Look to the horizon, can you
picture the land that was there; is still there, hidden, preserved, unknown?

Wait hear a moment.

45: Lead audience to beach:

50 : Sword work, three moving sets toward the sea and three back to the shore. Slow,
getting faster each time.

55. Build stone mound.

60. Sword work Square group: sword section to the four corners: north, south, east, west.

Ending: Safe Journey Home.

Walk to the sea and start to wash off paint.

BELL.