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## Serving As a Dramaturg to on Campus Productions: The Development and Execution of THEA 6910: A Dramaturgy of Three Plays

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Serving As a Dramaturg to on Campus Productions:  
The Development and Execution of THEA 6910: A Dramaturgy of Three Plays

by  
Megan Kimball

A thesis presented to the

Faculty of the Department of  
Theatre Arts and Dance  
Loyola Marymount University

In partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Fine Arts in Performance Pedagogy

April 14, 2022

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## Table of Contents

### Chapter 1 Anna Deavere Smith's: *Twilight Los Angeles*

1. <b>Abstract</b> .....	4
2. <b>Introduction</b> .....	5
3. <b>Methods</b> .....	7
4. <b>Findings</b> .....	8
5. <i>Twilight Los Angeles</i> gets Cancelled.....	15
6. <b>Conclusion</b> .....	18

### Chapter 2 Brandon Jacob Jenkins: *Everybody*

1. <b>Abstract</b> .....	20
2. <b>Introduction</b> .....	21
3. <b>Methods</b> .....	22
4. <b>Findings</b> .....	25
5. <b>Conclusion</b> .....	26

### Chapter 3 Meanie Marnich: *These Shining Lives*

1. <b>Abstract</b> .....	29
2. <b>Introduction</b> .....	30
3. <b>Methods</b> .....	31
4. <b>Findings</b> .....	37
5. <b>Conclusion</b> .....	38

### Chapter 4

<b>What does it all mean?</b> .....	39
<b>Appendices</b> .....	40
<b>Works Cited</b> .....	43

### Abstract:

In the Fall of 2021, I served as the dramaturge for the Loyola Marymount campus productions of Anna Deavere's *Smiths*, *Twilight Los Angeles*, Brandon Jacob Jenkins, *Everybody* and Melanie Marnich's *These Shining Lives*. One cannot ignore the distinct and separate story designs of these plays. *Twilight Los Angeles* is a verbatim theatre style, with an arrangement of monologues. *Everybody* is a modern-day morality play with a lottery. *These shining Lives* is a period piece set as a docudrama. My process for this thesis will be a reflective and experiential study on performing the role of the dramaturg for these three different plays. After this research, I plan to have three dramaturg portfolios documenting the three different experiences. This research will assist future artists towards understanding how dramaturg research aids in creating the world of the show; therefore, helping with better communication and collaboration amongst the production team. The outcome will be examining how these three various productions have prepared me to perform the role of dramaturge as a future theatre arts faculty member.

## *Twilight Los Angeles*

### Introduction:

As a dramaturge, each production poses different challenges. Anna Deavere's Smith's *Twilight Los Angeles* is based on the Los Angeles riots and set in a character monologue format. However, the play's events happened over thirty years ago, and it will be challenging to look up all the people who have been interviewed in Smith's play. As my first production at Loyola Marymount, I am unsure what to expect in this journey. However, the analysis of this experience will assist in preparation for serving as the dramaturge in future productions.

The original production of *Twilight Los Angeles* opened at the Court Theatre in 1994. Initially set as a research project during the Los Angeles riots, this production is Anna Deavere Smith's "search for the character of Los Angeles in the wake of the initial Rodney King verdict" (Smith, 1994, xvii). Once the interviews were completed, Smith wanted to tie this piece to theatre in some format. "Theatre can mirror society. But to do that, theatre must embrace diversity. It must include new characters in our human drama that have not been portrayed on our stages. We now have the opportunity to be a part of the discovery of a larger, healthier, more interesting picture of America" (Smith, 1994, xxi). After reading this statement, one can see how Smith's comment is relevant even in today's 2021 America. During the pandemic, theatre is attempting to be more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible. Even though past events to the present may or may not relate, history can repeat itself; the human mind and brain are connected to the here and now. Therefore, a dramaturge must inform the artists and audience, even if it is not in the here and now.

I intend to approach each interviewed person's experience and production as an independent body of performance art. While Anna Devere Smith did a fantastic job conducting these interviews, these monologues were thirty years ago, and some people may be challenging to find. We needed to go beyond the script and the PBS video for this production. Theatre is a live entity; therefore, the same performance and audience experience cannot repeat. Thus, Smith's performance needs to be left separate from our production. To not emulate Smith's production too heavily, I will approach this research by finding facts about the interviewed that are not in the script or video. I will search their name and find pictures and video footage to

capture their experience. This research will assist the actors in understanding the world of the play.

## *Twilight Los Angeles*

### Methods

The method this research is based on was within itself a metamorphosis of script analysis. Overall, my research was narrative, which explored and conceptualized the human experience from Anna Deavere Smith's interviews represented in a textual format.

Anna Deavere Smith began this research herself using the ethnography method. Jack Caulfield defines ethnography as "qualitative research that involves immersing oneself in a particular community or organization to observe their behavior and interactions up close. The term also refers to the written report of the ethnographer's research afterward (Caulfield, March 13, 2020, 1). Smith's ethnographic research is founded on the Rodney King and Los Angeles riots; Smith interviewed about two hundred people and limited the interviews to about twenty due to time restrictions (Smith, 1994, xvii). Smith's research fits the definition of ethnography, for it is interviews of people's different lifestyles of a shared experience.

Smith converted her findings into a verbatim style theatre piece. Verbatim theatre has been a term utilized by Derek Paget during his extensive research. During his extensive research, Derek Paget investigated verbatim theater into a form of documentary drama that employs primarily or exclusively tape-recorded material from the real-life originals of the characters and events to which it gives dramatic shape (Paget, 2009, 148). Furthermore, Lindsay Price defines verbatim theatre as theatre that uses a process in which a playwright interviews subjects on a particular topic and issue, records the responses, then use those words exactly as they are no changes (Price, 2014, 1). Smith's impact on verbatim theatre got her content from the Rodney King incident through interviews and not just newspaper clippings, transcripts, letters, or other primary sources (Dunkelberg, 2021, 1).

Per the request of the director, my approach to this research was to create a packet for the actors. The packet included a portrait, biographical facts, and video footage of their character. My findings and conclusion were based on the assessment and discoveries from this process.



## *Twilight Los Angeles*

### Findings

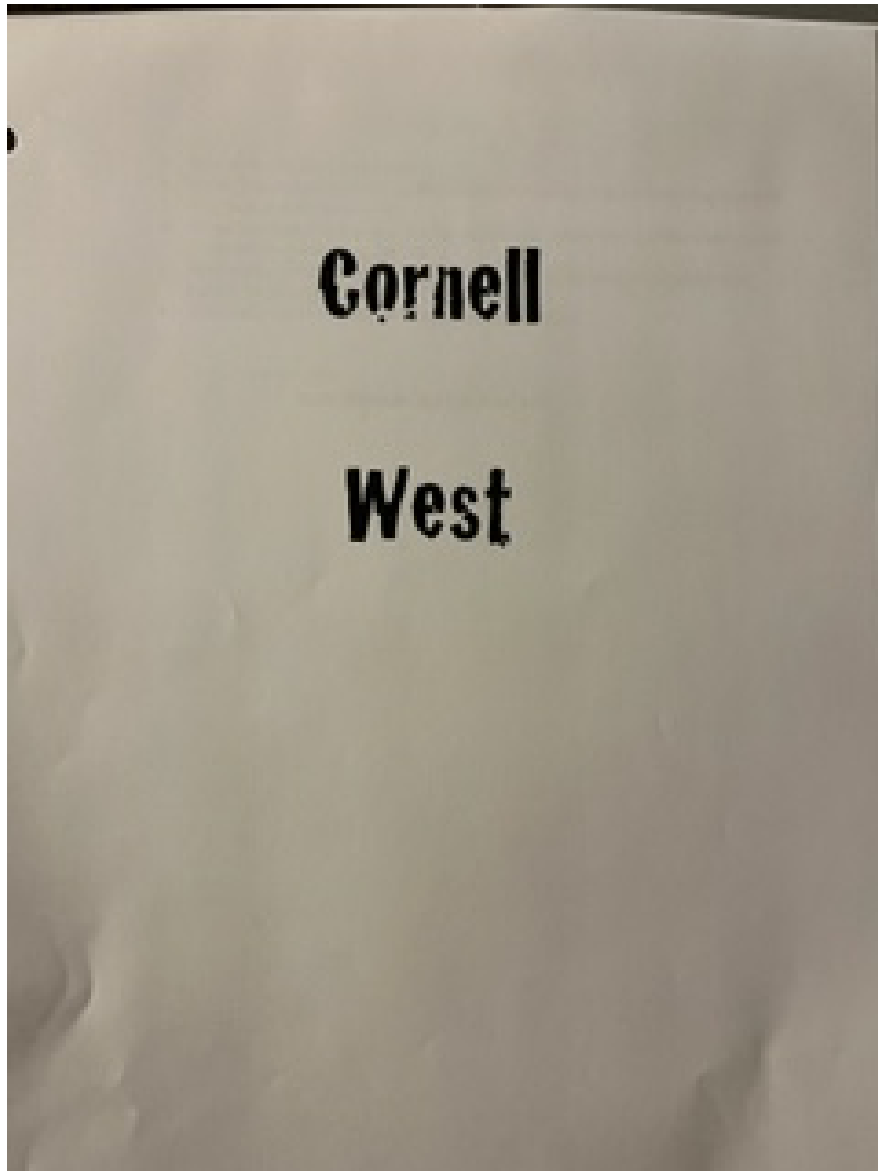
Smith's script is verbatim style theater piece with interviews from real people of the Rodney King incident. My findings were constructed and based on what information I could gather on the characters. By the end of the research, I discovered that the characters' information was built on an iconic name type of scale and needed to be adapted for the actor's packet. For example, for me it was very uncomplicated to locate some character names and gather a short biography, a picture, and a short video. It was much more complicated to track down and gather information of the other characters; how straightforward the character was to locate depended on their experience or relationship to the Rodney King incident, and how well known or current the person remained.

For characters such as Daryl Gates, Elaine Brown, and Cornell West, I found information for a short biography, a photo, and a video within minutes of an online search. These characters are well-known and active members of their community. Daryl Gates was the chief of the police department when the Rodney King incident occurred. Elaine Brown is a leader for black social justice and the former head of the Black Panther Party. Though she was in Paris when this event occurred, Elaine Brown was no stranger to Los Angeles; and Cornel West is an American philosopher and scholar (Smith, 1994, 180,227,41). Characters such as Richard Kim, Julio Menjivar, and Dean Gilmore were much more challenging to locate, and I had to adjust accordingly. For the names of the characters who were more difficult to find, I uncovered articles and video footage of their collaborative experience based on their race or ethnicity. I found their names attached to the reports so as not to make assumptions of their indecent experience and lump them into a hegemony collective. The articles were then gathered to complete the actor packets and a PowerPoint presentation.

The PowerPoint consisted of explaining verbatim theatre to those present at the meeting. This clarification placed the cast and production team into Smith's writing genre and style. The PowerPoint also consisted of events that took place before, around, during, and after the events of Rodney King. These events included the simmering pot of the Los Angeles racial disparity, the south-central raids, the killing of Latasha Harlin, the rooftop Koreans, Rodney King, and the making of *Twilight Los Angeles*. By presenting and having documentation of this research, I was

able to visually demonstrate how dramaturg's job is to merge the research from the script analysis with the director's concept. Collectively this information provides the cast and production team background knowledge about the environment and events surrounding the world of the play.

(See examples of character bios on next page)



1

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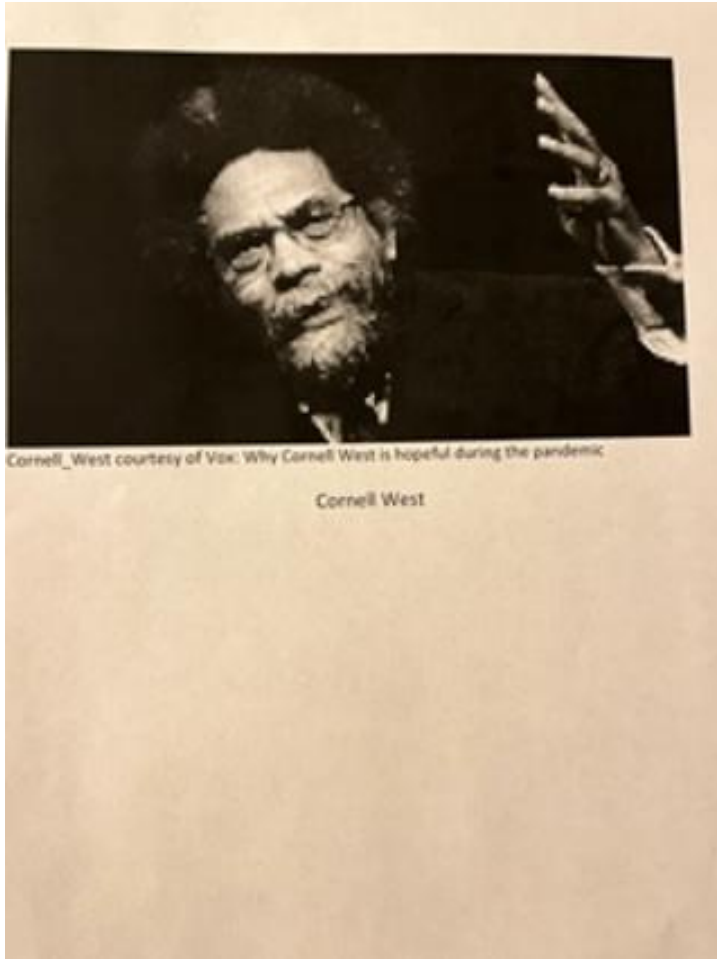
<sup>1</sup> Cornell West Title Page

### Cornell West

- Grandson of a Baptist minister
- Public intellectual, activist, media celebrity whose focus is the role of race, gender and class in American society
- Views the United States as a "racists patriarchal" nation where white supremacies continues to define everyday life
- As a result, of these views, he believes this created the black community to be, hungry for identity, meaning and self worth
- Politically views himself as a non Marxists socialists

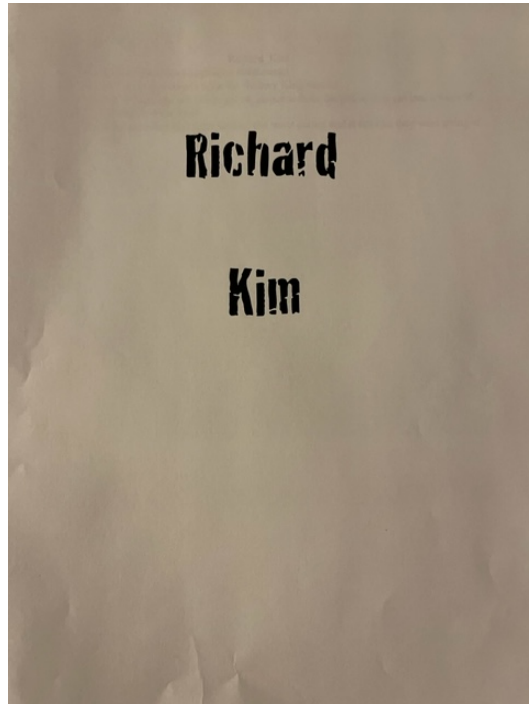
Link to video

<https://youtu.be/Ackh3ppKm5w>



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<sup>3</sup> Cornell West Picture




4

Richard\_Kim

- Korean American appliance store owner
- His store gets looted after the Rodney King verdict
- When Kim and his father got no response from the police they got into a van and headed to their store
- Kim's mother had been shot on the street corner and it felt like they were going to war

Meet The Real 'Roof Koreans' From The L.A. Riots 9/20/21, 3:47 PM

**As turmoil roiled in Los Angeles in April 1992, Korean store owners were abandoned by the LAPD and forced to fend for themselves. The results were disastrous.**



Getty Images With no assistance from the LAPD, Korean American business owners, now called "roof Koreans," and other residents of South Central were left to fend for themselves.

In 1992, Americans watched South Central Los Angeles go up in flames on the news. Tensions inside the neighborhood — a mix of racial minority demographics long plagued by urban blight — reached a boiling point after multiple incidents of racial violence against Black residents.

ADVERTISING

<http://Volumes/EMTEC%20HANG/Twilight%20Los%20Angeles%20Cha...e%20Rea%20'Roof%20Koreans'%20From%20The%20L.A.%20Riots.html> Page 3 of 3

6

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<sup>6</sup> Article on the Roof Top Koreans: Richard Kim not featured



## *Twilight Los Angeles*

### Gets Cancelled

On September 9, 2021, the department chair sent out a circulating email with instructions that the department would cancel the *Twilight Los Angeles* production. The chair met with the students and the production team regarding concerns about the show. Canceling the production was the result of that meeting. In place of *Twilight Los Angeles*, the department offered alternative performance pieces in the form of a discussion and collaboration session. *Twilight Los Angeles* was the first production I had taken part in that got canceled. Based on this situation, I witnessed how one handles crisis management. In a crisis, the process is to respond to the situation then create a post-crisis action based on the new set of facts placed in your hands.

As the dramaturg, the outcome of my thesis study was affected very little as much of the dramaturg's research is done before the rehearsal process occurs. Most of the dramaturg's findings are concluded before rehearsals, yet the dramaturg does assist in the investigation during the rehearsal process. During the rehearsal period, the assistance of the dramaturg comes when there are script questions from the director and cast. Although I did not get the chance to experience the dramaturg's tasks for the rehearsal process of this production, I did get to participate in the rehearsal process for *Everybody* and *These Shining Lives*, which will be addressed later in this thesis.

(See cancelation announcement on next page)

Find messages, documents, photos or people



I, along with theatre arts professors Arnab Banerji and Leon Wiebers, met last week with professors Jennifer Williams and Marne Campbell from the LMU African American Studies Department to design alternative programming to occur in place of the *Twilight* production. Our aim, as performance makers and teachers, was to create a series of events that reflect on the legacy of our craft, and to learn ways that we can build upon the rich heritage that sustains and inspires our work as artists. The entire department's faculty have been consulted and are in alignment with these plans.

**PROPOSED EVENTS**

1. Curated panel featuring experts who have researched the uprisings of 1992 from multi-ethnic perspectives.
2. A panel discussion that locates *Twilight* within a historical arc of celebrating black resilience, taking a new look at the text considering the shift in contextual frameworks for younger actors and audiences.
3. A panel on hip hop and how the music, dance, and eventually theatre centered around hip hop culture began to come into its own following the events of 1992.
4. An exploration of archived interviews housed in the Hannon Library Archives and Special Collection to help understand not only the uprisings in 1992 but also the events in Watts in 1965
5. Invite director Jon Rivera to share his personal connection with the events of 1992 and how that prompted the creation of Playwright's Arena and its operational ethos.

Our department is deeply disappointed we cannot stage another play in place of *Twilight*, but we are enthusiastic about these panels and workshops as an unexpected opportunity

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Twilight



**Noon, Katharine** [katharine.noon@lmu.edu](mailto:katharine.noon@lmu.edu)  
To: Breihan, Christine, Chapman, Catherine,  
Phillipp, Kate, Hall, Ava, lily.bartenstein@gmail.com  
and 10 more...  
From: Jon Rivera

Thu Sep 9 at 7:01 AM

Dear Twilight Team,

I'm not sure how much you have heard but there are many student concerns surrounding Twilight. These concerns involve the nature and demands of this show being produced at LMU at this time with this cast.

After meeting with the students it is clear that the best course of action is to cancel the production.

I do not know if there will be anything to replace it or if any of you would want to work on it if there was a replacement. The faculty is still figuring out next steps.

Your fees, of course, will be paid in full regardless of those next steps.

w  
le

## *Twilight Los Angeles*

### Conclusion

As I reflect on the experience of this production, I still have many questions? I wonder how selecting the theater arts season can be improved so the cancelation of a show will not occur. Can this situation be avoided? After the production season is set, will there always be a dissatisfied group who feels their voice is not being heard? The most straightforward question I can answer immediately is that it is not an attainable goal to fill each person's request for the production season. There are too many plays and too little time to perform everyone's script selection. As a result of this realization, it becomes necessary to fulfill the needs of the unsatisfied party at the next opportunity. For instance, a playwright done repeatedly during the season may need to be set aside to leave room for other playwrights whose play has not yet been performed on campus. Although this may displease some faculty members, it is essential to note that the prominent playwright performed on campus will return and not be forgotten. Yet, essentially speaking, rifts between faculty members and frustration with selecting the on-campus production season is unavoidable. The best outcome one can hope for is that each show that is placed into the season is performed, and the season is diverse as possible.

The most substantial outcome of participating in *Twilight Los Angeles* is that I witnessed the benefits and obstacles of having the students involved in the production process. After the first cast and crew meeting, the production *Twilight Los Angeles* was canceled due to irreconcilable differences between the cast and crew. The cast elected not to participate in the show. As I reflected on this event further, I was astonished. I pondered about the age-old issue of student involvement in the performing arts on campus. How do we get more students majors and non-majors to attend auditions on campus? How do we make the season more diverse and inclusive for the student body? Would this affect the outcome of attendance? If so, how? As I continue in my professional work in the arts, I realize this will always be a challenge when considering planning the production season with fellow faculty members.

*Everybody*

Brandon Jacob Jenkins

Chapter 2

### Abstract:

In the Fall of 2021, I next served as the dramaturge for the Loyola Marymount campus production of Brandon Jacob Jenkins, *Everybody*. *Everybody* is a modern-day morality play with a lottery. My process for this research will be a reflective and experiential study on performing the role of the dramaturg for this production. After this research, I will have a dramaturg portfolio documenting this experience. The outcome will be examining how serving as dramaturg for this production has prepared me to perform the role of dramaturge as a future theatre arts faculty member. Furthermore, this research will assist future artists towards understanding how amongst collaborating with the creative team, the dramaturgs research aids in creating the world of the show.

## *Everybody*

### Introduction:

My next project was performing the role of dramaturge for *Everybody*. While contemplating the difference between *Twilight Los Angeles* and *Everybody*, I deduced that overall, their main difference is in their style and genre of theatre. *Twilight Los Angeles* is a verbatim theatre style with an arrangement of monologues. *Everybody* is a modern-day morality play with an improv lottery. Therefore, it would be too grandiose to make a step-by-step comparison. Instead, I decided to consider this performance a different experience with different challenges.

*Everybody* premiered off-Broadway at the Irene Diamond stage on February 21, 2017. It is based on a Dutch morality play from the Middle Ages titled *Everyman*. Brandon Jacob Jenkins believes "the purpose of theatre is to create a safe space for all feelings, especially ugly feelings" (Macarthur Fellow, 2016). While his other works feel of a piece and of a period, *Everybody* is a modern adaptation of a play using a middle-aged play as its base. Brandon Jacob Jenkins further states, "All of my work is sort of fed by a question and a need to understand the world to insight connection" (Macarthur Fellow, 2016). *Everybody* fits this category for its questions and studies the meaning of life in a contemporary meta-story type of format.

The challenge of this production comes with working with two texts. To understand *Everybody* better, per the director's request, my approach to this research was to gather information on the play's foundation, *Everyman*. The next step was to take this information and place it in a PowerPoint with collective and sequential information on both plays. Seeing both plays' background information displayed visually was intended to better help the whole team understand the format of the play. It also intended to answer any questions regarding; what morality is and how a morality play looks. After the PowerPoint, inevitably, there were still questions about the texts during the rehearsal process. My goal was to answer as many as these text questions as possible to save time during the rehearsals.

## *Everybody*

### Method

#### The Concept Meeting

The main job of the dramaturg is to merge the background knowledge of the script with the director's perspective. During the first production meeting, the director will go over how they see the story taking shape on stage with the team. In our first production meeting, our director, Dr. Sicre defined *Everybody* as a meta-type of play. It is a meta-type of play, for the audience is part of the story. Dr. Sicre continued with the core of the script. She disclosed that in both *Everyman* and *Everybody*, the concept considers what man must do to obtain salvation. In *Everyman*, man's salvation comes from his faith and Jesus. In *Everybody*, the story is more inclusive, for it is humanity's responsibility to redeem itself through the healing act of love. During the production process, Dr. Sicre wanted us to consider these questions: how do we live our lives? are we happy with our lives? Are we stuck in the past? Are we here in the present? Do we focus too much on the future? By pondering these questions, we as the production team can think about getting our audience to contemplate these questions while the story is unfolding on stage.

#### The Method

The method used for this process was entirely narrative. I used the scripts *Everybody* and *Everyman* as my tools for the research. As the actors and production team were working to place *Everybody* on stage, I, as the dramaturg, was discovering a way to communicate and have visual aids to display the similarities and differences between the middle age play *Everyman* and the more modern play *Everybody*. At the first meeting, I used a step-by-step plotted-out PowerPoint which assisted in exhibiting the comparisons between both scripts. However, because the correlation between texts was an involved and enormous task, I was not surprised that the questions about the juxtapositions carried over into the rehearsal process.



## Rehearsal Reports

In my position as the dramaturg, the rehearsal reports mainly consisted of continuing the process of differentiating the *Everybody* text from the *Everyman* text. The actors also needed clarification when *Everybody* referenced *Everyman* in the script. Once I saw the dramaturg announcement in the rehearsal report, I directly responded with verbal and visual communication.

(Rehearsal Report example for *Everybody* on next page)

# Everybody

## Rehearsal Report #5

Location: Foley 210

Stage Manager: Tremaine Hinds

ASM's: Raven Watson, Ava Hall

Day: Monday

Date: 9/20/2021

Rehearsal Start: 6:05	Break Start: 6:56	Rehearsal Breakdown:	
Rehearsal Start: 7:03	Break Start: 7:55	6:05 - Introductions/Table Work	
Rehearsal Start: 8:03	Break Start: 8:55	6:56 - Break	
Rehearsal Start: 9:00	Rehearsal End: 9:53	7:03 - Table Work	
Attendance		7:55 - Break	
Called: Entire Cast		8:03 - Table Work	
Late: Raven Watson (Excused)		8:55 - Break	
Absent: Sara (Excused)		9:00 - Table Work	
Injuries/Sickness:		9:53 - Cast Dismissed	
Nothing at this time, thank you.		Upcoming Schedule:	Who is Called:
		Workshop with Andrea September 23rd, 2021 6 - 7:30pm	Entire Cast

Scenic:	Technical Director:
Nothing at this time, thank you.	Nothing at this time, thank you.
Props:	Lighting:
Nothing at this time, thank you.	Nothing at this time, thank you.
Sound:	Vocal & Dialect:
Nothing at this time, thank you.	Nothing at this time, thank you.
Costumes:	Hair & Makeup:
Nothing at this time, thank you.	Nothing at this time, thank you.
Stage Management	Dramaturgy:
Nothing at this time, thank you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is this quote from <i>Everyman</i>? "And now out of thy sight I flee so make thee ready shortly for here's the day from which they say that no one living gets away!"</li><li>• Epistemology of the word "Homey" and "Home".</li></ul>

Thank you!

## *Everybody*

### Findings

I discovered how vital communication is during this production when placing the written work from page to stage. Communication is even more essential and breaking down the information from the plays becomes even more necessary when linking two texts together. Even though only one script, *Everybody*, will be placed on the stage, the contemporary script's foundation, and introductory text, *Everyman*, needs to be examined. The question then becomes how do we as the dramaturg describe both texts to the cast and crew when their focus will be just on *Everybody*? What is too much information, and what is not enough? Brandon Jacob Jenkin's play *Everybody* has a too much-linked relationship with the middle age play *Everyman*. Therefore, both scripts need to be addressed when the dramaturg presents their research. Hence, both texts were transcribed into my dramaturg presentation. I still find the task of breaking down dual narratives challenging, yet I have come closer to resolving the balance between crucial information and the dramaturg's additional data. I created a separate glossary from the need-to-know material. Using this format assisted with presenting the mandatory facts; I then placed any further details aside but on hand so that when asked, I could answer the cast and crew's questions directly during the rehearsal process.

I also realized that this dual text takeaway could be helpful in my pedagogy practice as well. Whether our audience is our students or the production team, reading the room and knowing your audience is critical. Perhaps the written work on hand is so far removed that you need to find a way to make the script relatable. *Everyman* and *Everybody* both have the human experience of mortality and the power of healing at their core. *Everyman* has much more religious representation, while Jenkins *Everybody* is aimed to be more inclusive with the protagonist finding salvation through love instead of the religion's concept of good deeds. I took notice of the director, Dr. Sicre, leading the team in grasping this play's core concept by asking all who were present to explain what love means to them at our first meeting. Each member described love differently, yet this exercise caused the play to transform into something personable yet comprehensive to all. I did not expect my findings to have a duplicate purpose, but they will serve me well in my future practice.

## *Everybody*

### Conclusion

The dramaturg also concocts a glossary to have on hand for the production team. With Jenkin's *Everybody* being a modern-day morality play, this was no exception. The terms can even relate to the style or genre of the play. For the PowerPoint presentation, the terms I collected to define for the team were morality play and allegory. To explain these terms, my primary sources of reference were *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre* and Dover Publications *Everyman and Other Morality Plays*. The Cambridge Companion defines a morality play as "a play in which the protagonist is confronted by various moral attributes prompting them to follow the path of good" (Beadle and Fletcher, 2008 ,236). Describing a morality play to the team was the more straightforward term to define. The term allegory had a much more elaborate translation. Dover defines an allegory as "a literary tool in which a specific character, place, or situation that stands for a broader concept. For example, in *Everyman*, *Everyman* represents all of humanity. An allegory often involves anthropomorphic abstract ideas like good deeds, kindness, etc...." (Ward,1995,33). This translation was the most uncomplicated I could find for the *Everybody* group. Breaking down the texts and simplifying these terms for the group was undoubtedly the most herculean part of this journey, yet an enriching learning experience.

To paraphrase briefly, I performed the tasks of dramaturg of this production by analyzing the similarities and differences between the two texts and creating a glossary of terms to define to assist the team when needed. For future projects and personal purposes, I still can improve on simplifying the process of itemizing when dealing with adaptive works on the stage and in the classroom. I look forward to building on this growth, and I feel that improvement in this area will occur within my future practices. As the dramaturg for *Twilight Los Angeles*, I created character bios for the cast, and as *Twilight* was canceled, I could not be part of the rehearsal procedure. For *Everybody*, I spent the more significant amount of my time measuring the classical and modern version of Jenkin's contemporary script and the middle age morality play, and I did get to answer the team's questions during rehearsals. Therefore, overall, this was an

informative experience with distinct differences from the previous *Twilight Los Angeles* production proceedings. Both plays required to research, yet the way that analysis was carried out depended on the script's needs.

*These Shining Lives*

Melanie Marnich

Chapter 3

## Abstract

In the Fall of 2021, I served as the dramaturge for the Loyola Marymount campus productions of Melanie Marnich's *These Shining Lives*. One can't ignore the distinct and separate story designs of these plays. *Twilight Los Angeles* is a verbatim theatre style, with an arrangement of monologues. *Everybody* is a modern-day morality play with a lottery. "These shining lives" is a period piece set as a docudrama. My process for this thesis will be a reflective and experiential study on performing the role of the dramaturg for these three different plays. After this research, I will have three dramaturg portfolios documenting three different experiences. The outcome will be examining how these three various productions have prepared me to perform the role of dramaturge as a future theatre arts faculty member. Furthermore, this research will assist future artists towards understanding how amongst collaborating with the creative team, the dramaturgs research aids in creating the world of the show.

## *These Shining Lives*

### Introduction

*These Shing Lives* is a historical-fictional piece based on the lives of female workers of the Radium Dial Company. The Radium Dial Company opened in Ottawa, Illinois, in 1917. Unaware of the repercussions of the radium poison in the paint; the women continued to paint the clock dials. At its core, *These Shining Lives* is a story about these women's strength, struggle, fight, and legacy. Madeline Marnich wrote *These Shining Lives* before the book. She wanted to write a piece based on history that rides the border between imagination and reality (Journal & Courier). *These Shining Lives* premiered at the Baltimore Center Stage in April 2008 (Playwrights Center). Set as a period piece in the 1920s and 1930s, *These Shining Lives* chronicles the strength and determination of women considered expendable in their day, exploring their true story and its continued resonance. Catherine and her friends are dying it's true; but theirs is a story of survival in its most transcendent sense, as they refuse to allow the company that stole their health to kill their spirits or endanger the lives of those who come after them (Marnich, *Dramatists Play Service*, 2010). Marninch wanted these characters to "not be seen as victims for they have more strength than that. They never sink into sentimentality or weakness" (Marnich, *Dramatists Play Service*, 2010). The story contains twenty scenes set sequentially from Catherine's job at the radium dial company and ending with the court ruling in the women's favor.

By the time this project is concluded, I intend to have developed an acceptable format and portfolio which will assist in showing others my work. There will be a poster display with photos and bios of the radium girls. Having this display will give aid to the visual environment of the story and into the period and world of the play. I will also assist the sound designer in finding commercial ads and music appropriate to the 1920's-1930's era. While the show is taking place, this will provide auditory support and assist in transitional parts of the tale from scene to scene. By documenting this project, I will have a record of my work and have a binder showing my procedure as serving as the dramaturge for this play.



## *These Shining Lives*

### Methods

#### The Concept Meeting

*These Shing Lives* is a historical-fictional piece based on the lives of female workers of the Radium Dial Company. In the concept meeting, Lauren, the director, mentioned she saw *These Shining Lives* as a story with the following themes: the beauty of friendship between the radium girls, the resilience of fighting for what's right, the ability and desire to keep fighting for justice, having hope in a hopeless situation and how we benefit in the workplace today because of their struggle. The world of the play is a dream-like scenario told through the main protagonist, Katherine's memory. After the concept meeting, I prepared a dramaturgical PowerPoint for the cast and crew. Lauren sent me an email which explained that in the PowerPoint, she wanted the following topics covered: what life was like back in the 1920s and 1930's, describe the small town of Ottawa, Illinois, where the story takes place, describe what post-world war I was like for both men and women, describe family life after world war I, explain what the social life was like and who were the iconic people of this era, and define what immigrant life and work was like in this period. Lauren's request for this research was combined with the typical dramaturgic layout of the play. For example, the playwrights background, the background of the play, and the background information on the characters. After combining the text with the director's vision, the next stage of the production process was followed its consistency with rehearsals.

#### Rehearsal Reports

The director Laruen Johansen Shepard and I communicated my dramaturgy tasks through email.

Attached are the following

- Rehearsal Report
- Radium Girls complete picture
- Radium Girls Bios
- Song lists to play during the before and during the production

**These Shining Lives**  
 Rehearsal Report #1  
 Date 10/19/21  
 Created by Audrey Szot (SM)

Start Time: 7:45	End Time: 10:44
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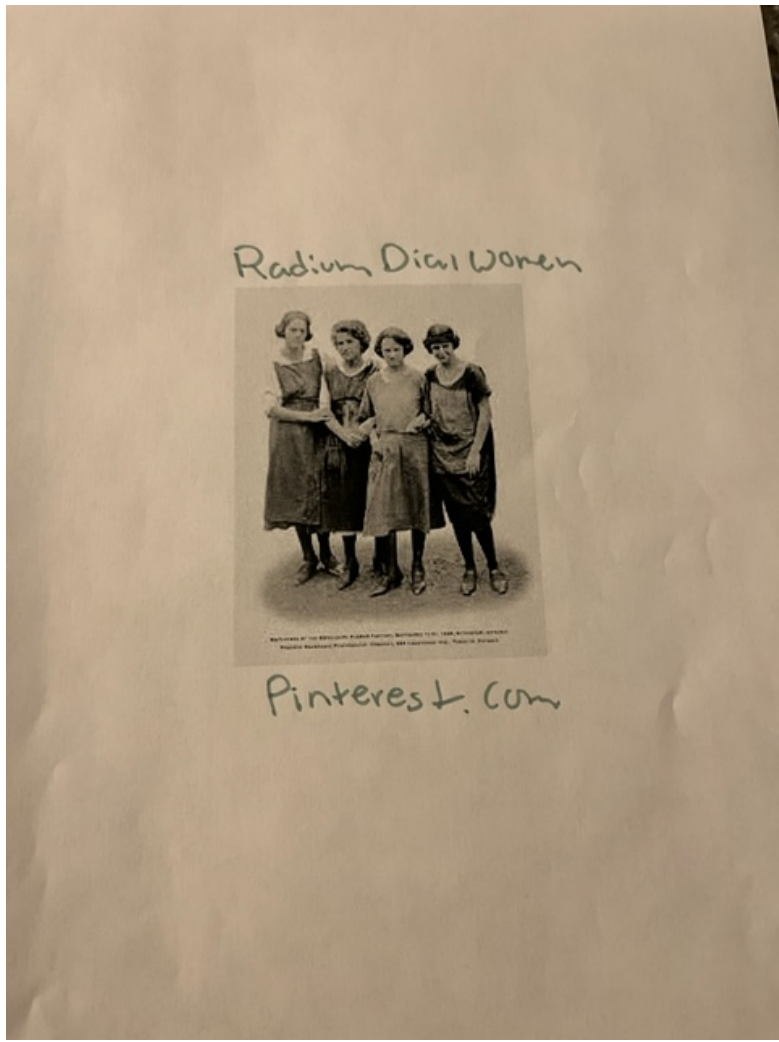
Attendance
<b>On time:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Production Team:</b> Lolly, Audrey, Brittany, Christine (left 10:20), Megan (left 9:08), Cate (left 9:08), Tori (left 9:08), Jason (left 9:08)</li> <li>• <b>Cast:</b> Quinn, Aidan, Lis, Noah, Rachael, Kelly</li> </ul>
<b>Late:</b> N/A
<b>Absent:</b> Ava (excused)

Accomplished
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Readthrough!               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1hr 15min</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Design team released at 9:08</li> <li>• Break 9:08-9:18</li> <li>• Boundaries workshop with Christine</li> <li>• Break 10:21-10:26</li> <li>• Discussed scheduling</li> </ul>

Costumes	Sound
Nothing at this time, thank you!	Nothing at this time, thank you!
Props	Lighting
Nothing at this time, thank you!	Nothing at this time, thank you!

Next Rehearsal
Thursday, October 21st 6-10 PM Foley 110 Agenda TBD

8



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<sup>9</sup> The Radium Dial Women

## Catherine Donohue



(theredlunogirls.com)

- The most famous/iconic of the Ottawa Dial Painters
- Catherine came to work for the Dial Company when she was 19 years old
- Married Tom Donohue in January 1932 and had 2 kids a boy and a girl
- Her courage and commitment to give evidence captured the heart of the nation
- Fighting for the case right up until the end, she passed away from the radium poisoning in 1938

10

Song List for  
*These Shining Lives*

Song Title	Artist	Year
Ain't Nobodies Business I Do	Anna Meyers and Original Memphis Five	1922
The Charleston	James P. Johnson Running Wild Musical	1923
Rhapsody in blue	George Gershwin	1924
Bye Bye Blackbird	Sam Lanin's dance orchestra	1926
Making Whoopee	Bing Crosby	1928
As Times Goes By	Rudy Vallee	1931
Sophisticated Lady	Duke Ellington and his Orchestra	1933
Sentimental Mood	Duke Ellington	1935

11

11 Song List for Radium Dial Women

## My Method

With analyzing the book, the play, and journal articles, my approach to this study was narrative research. I focused my attention on exploring and conceptualizing the human condition. Aiming for an in-depth exploration of the meanings people assign to their practice where the emphasis was on the storied experience. Using the script as the primary source, the book and online articles became my secondary sources. At our second rehearsal, I provided the cast with a power point with background information which gave them a more in depth look at the world of the play. While the process continued, both the director and I realized the text contained music and background sound ads needing to be time specific to this piece. To use the time wisely, I searched for specific jazz songs and commercial ads that would fit the play. I forward them to the director and she forward the list to the sound designer. Along with the bio display, the music and the cast having the framework behind the world of the play the process was complete.

I aspired to gather a list of all the radium girls that were documented and provide a detailed biographical background of the Ottawa Illinois workers who are mentioned in the play. Although I was unable to gather a complete list, I did manage to provide the biographical information and the display. This was to pay tribute to these women's work and legacy. This information was on display outside the theater as the audience is walking in. There was also collage display of actual imagery to give the audience a clear depiction of these women's journey in their illness, struggles and strength. To bring the audience into the time piece in an auditory manner I also assisted the sound designer in locating music and advertisements that fit the stories post World War One era. With a few minor adjustments, overall, this criterion was prosperous, and the outcome expectation met.

## *These Shining Lives*

### Findings

What made this play challenging is that there are still many individual names of the radium girls missing in the research documents. I approached this complication as the dramaturg by researching how many radium girls there were in total. Upon discovering that there were four thousand girls in total, I realized it was unattainable to list every radium girl and include every fact-finding information on what became of their lives. As an alternative, I provided the director with a list of the women I could locate, along with a memorium as a collective honorary mention to all the radium dial women. I wanted to come up with an inventive way to honor the women I could not find in spirit. Furthermore, I also provided the director with pictures and a short biography of the four women the play featured. With these biographies the audience was provided with information that was not in the play. Additionally, this also gave more detail on who these women were and paid proper attempt in honoring their mark in the past and its impact on the present. This problem-solving experience led me to encounter that even the dramaturge may have to devise a creative method in honoring the gap of any historical documentation or information regarding the play's era.

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## *These Shining Lives*

### Conclusion

Once *These Shining Lives* was completed, I realized I now have experience serving as the dramaturg for three very different productions: each required a separate task for me to perform and research for me to review. I now know that each play will be a different experience, and communication is critical; the dramaturg must ask the director, how would you like this research to serve your production, and where would you like to go with it? We have discussed communication in our collaboration class; this includes your analysis and practice. When your findings aren't what you expected, it is essential to convey this to the director as soon as possible to make adaptations in advance. I saw my work displayed when the music was on the radio as the audience walked in. Even though, as the dramaturg, not all your work will be shown, yet it is still a prideful job. Furthermore, the director displayed the real radium girl's photo at the end of the performance. In closing, this was a great group to collaborate with and a fascinating period to study.



## What Have I Learned?

With these three respective productions, I have come to ascertain a constructed process as the dramaturg: According to *The Process of Dramaturgy Handbook*, the structured approach in pre-production is laying the groundwork, opening a dialogue, and conceptual sets. The groundwork consists of the playwright's background and information, notes on the play's production history, a glossary of terms and concepts. Opening a dialogue consists of considering and drafting an introductory script presentation and discussion for the production team. The conceptual set comes from detecting patterns in the script. The patterns may consist of repetitive words or phrases linked together in the text, themes, and structure of the written work (Ireland, Fletcher, Dubiner, 2010, 39). Much of this work from the dramaturg takes place before even the first production meeting, and even rehearsals start to have the information handy when questions are asked during the rehearsal process.

However, there may be some added research and individual tasks the director requests from their dramaturg, which comes from the composition of the script fused with the director's vision. Therefore, while each dramaturg experience has its foundational formula, each production practice has its singular artistic path forged by the script and the director's analysis, creating the world of the play we see on stage. I will keep all these elements in mind as I continue my future practice and research as a dramaturg.

## Appendices

### Appendix A *Twilight Los Angeles*

- A-1 Cornell West bio title page; as written in the script, *Twilight Los Angeles*, by Anna Deavere Smith, 1994,10
- A-2 Five facts about Cornell West, from his website <http://www.cornelwest.com/>, updated Apr 7,2022,11
- A-3 Cornell West Image from Harvard Edcast: Love, Hope, and Education ,2019,12
- A-5 Richard Kim bio title page; as written in the script, *Twilight Los Angeles*, by Anna Deavere Smith, 1994,13
- A-6 Five facts about Richard Kim, from *Twilight Los Angeles*, by Anna Deavere Smith, 1994,14
- A-6b Article on the Roof Top Koreans: Richard Kim not featured, from website <https://koryogroup.com/blog/who-were-the-rooftop-koreans>, Jan 30,2021,15

### Appendix B *Everybody*

- B-7 *Everybody* rehearsal report; instructions for Dramaturg are highlighted Sep 9,2021
- B-7b Dramaturg glossary of terms table; *Everyman and Other Morality Plays* Dover Publications Inc. New York. 1995.and *Introduction to Performance Studies*, Richard Schechner June 2006, 25

<b>Morality Play</b>	<b>Allegory</b>	<b>Performance Studies</b>
A type of play in which the protagonist is confronted by various moral attributes prompting them to do good.	A literary tool in which a specific character, place, or situation stands for a broader concept.	A field that explores the wide world of performance-from theatre, dance, and music to ritual, play, political campaigns, social media, and the performances of everyday life

## Appendix C *These Shining Lives*

C-8 Rehearsal Report *These Shining Lives*, October 19, 2021, 33

C-9 A group photo of the real Illinois Radium Dial Women; provided by Pinterest.com  
Feb 9, 2009, 34

C-10 Catherine Wolf Donohue character Bio Sample; courtesy of theradiumgirls.com.  
Both photo and facts are from this source; 2017, 35

C-11 Song List for Radium Dial Women; song list contains song title, artist, and year the  
song was released; songs played as a prologue on a 1920's-1930's zenith radio, 36

C-12 A Dramaturgy process Megan style

### **Reading the material**

Step one: Repeatedly go through the material and get familiar with the text

Step two: Create a glossary of terms from the text the cast and crew will need to understand. These terms may be time specific to the play, or the director may choose to set the material in a specific place and time. For example, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* might take place in the 1960's Bronx

Step three: Prepare a presentation for the cast and crew with the following information

- A bio of the author
- Production history of the play
- History of the plays time period or time period selected by the director
- Concept of the play
- Key ideas inspired by the concept
- A sample glossary of terms from the text

### **Present the material**

After this background work is completed, produce this material to the director for approval. Once this material is approved, the director will

usually ask you to display this material to the cast and crew at the first or second rehearsal. For the presentation a power point might be helpful

### **Rehearsal and final product**

While rehearsals are taking place and up to tech week, the dramaturg will be taking notes along with making a to-do list for when the director asks the dramaturg to do further research

Once the production is completed, the dramaturg should keep a portfolio of their work with the following information

- Contacts
- Concept meeting (notes)
- Schedule
- Rehearsal reports
- To do lists the director asks the dramaturg to perform after each rehearsal
- Tasks you as the dramaturg performed
- Dramaturg presentation power point or visual aids to book end the portfolio

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