PAUL FARMER

AFTER THE MINERS' STRIKE

A39 AND CORNISH POLITICAL THEATRE VERSUS THATCHER'S BRITAIN

VOLUME 1

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Cover image: A39 in street theatre mode at Camborne Trevithick Day, 1985
Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

This book is dedicated to the memory of our friend George Jackson Greene, 1953–2022; and to Shirley Kathleen Allen, 1933–2023.

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Authors' Biographies

Paul Farmer first worked in Cornish arts as an actor/musician/bus driver with Miracle Theatre, then co-founded A39 Theatre Group, later becoming artistic director. As a freelance playwright he wrote a number of plays for Kneehigh Theatre Company and for Cornish community events and celebrations. During the mid-late 1990s Farmer was one of those who established the Cornish film industry, as a writer, director and producer. An increasingly experimental film practice would lead to a number of projects exploring digital image work in a literary context.

He was a founder member and company manager of the live literature collective Scavel An Gow, then one of the three artists who represented Cornwall in the European Regions of Culture initiative, leading into work in a fine art context in performance, moving image and installation.

He holds an Honours degree in Theatre from Dartington College of Arts and a Masters in Fine Art: contemporary practice from University College Falmouth. From 2014 to 2022 he was a lecturer in film and theatre at Falmouth University. In 2000 he was made a Bard of Gorsedh Kernow 'for services to Cornish arts'.

Rebecca Hillman's work as Senior Lecturer in the Department of Communications, Drama and Film at the University of Exeter is informed by her involvement with trade unions and political campaign groups. She enjoys teaching her module *Activism and Performance* to examine with students how social and industrial movements use performance and other cultural forms to make change in the world. Her recent publications explore theatre as a political organising tool, working-class theatre, housing and activism, and collaborative efforts to strengthen links between artists and the labour movement. Rebecca is the Principle Investigator on the AHRC Fellowship *Performing Resistance: Theatre and Performance in 21st Century Workers' Movements.* She is writing a book based on some of this work, to be published with Bloomsbury in 2025.

Mark Kilburn was born in Birmingham and lived for a number of years in Scandinavia. Between 1996–98 he was writer in residence at the City Open Theatre, Århus, Denmark, and in 2002 he was awarded a Canongate prize for new fiction. In 2012 he won the ABCtales poetry competition. Subsequent prizes include first place in the Cerasus Poetry Olympics, 2020.

His first novel, *Hawk Island*, was originally published by ElectronPress (currently out of print). His poetry collection, *Beautiful Fish*, is available from Amazon (print) and Cerasus Poetry (digital). His latest novel, *The Castle*, set in Falmouth during the English Civil Wars, is available from Amazon in paperback, hardback, and digital editions.

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Preface

Rebecca Hillman

'Busking in a twilight zone of performance'

Three quarters of the way through the last century, a rich seam of enquiry emerged that explored how theatre was harnessed to achieve political goals for the working class. For some time, documenting this work was itself considered an intervention, and part of a broad effort to advance the international cause of socialism. However, the ascent of neoliberal capitalism in the years that followed not only weakened organising capacity and the industrial bases that historically supported lively ecosystems of radical art, but also the cultural frameworks that had sustained them. Cultural and analytical frameworks were eroded further by disillusionment with twentieth-century regimes, common perceptions of the organised left as having failed, and wariness—especially in the academy—of art as an advocate of political 'truth'.

So profoundly was this shift reflected in theatre studies and in the emerging field of performance studies, that scholars questioned whether the category of 'political theatre' any longer made much sense, 'except, perhaps, as an historical construct' (Kershaw 1997).

Yet while it is true that the British labour movement and accompanying praxis went into decline at this time, this narrative does not tell the whole story. It leaves workers' theatre hanging at the end of the 1970s despite its endurance in the following years, and despite an increase in class-conscious and materialist critiques from artists and theatre makers that has helped sustain new socialist movements over the last decade, in the UK and elsewhere (Filewod & Watt 2001, Hillman 2022a).

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It also misses the work of companies like A39: a homegrown agitprop troupe who told the story of Cornish mining in the context of the struggle that was 'currently embodied in the civil war in the coalfields' (Farmer 2023: 24). A39 were formed with the explicit intention of raising support for those engaged in one of the largest and longest industrial actions anywhere on record, when coal workers in Britain went on strike to prevent pit and colliery closures between 1984–1985.

Despite the urgency of that context, the decline in interest or confidence in left movements and culture is the backdrop for Farmer's reflections in this book that A39 'operated in the dying years of an artistic era' (117). As he saw it, diminishing hope in the academy as to 'whether political theatre was even possible' contributed, ironically—tragically, really—to the closing-down of progressive praxis by some of 'its primary beneficiaries' (118).

Yet by Farmer's own admission these doubts, even his own, also fall short of the full picture. He describes political theatre workers responding to academics 'in bewilderment' at a conference in 1990, when they kept returning to the question of 'whether political theatre was even possible'. 'Of course it was possible', the theatre workers declared, 'we did it on a daily basis!' (117). Rather than having withered away, these 'unlikely artists' had taken root in the rich soil of the preceding years (118).

At a basic level, Farmer's book records political agitprop theatre that took place at a time often regarded as having gone without. This, as well as A39's struggle for funding, are reasons to suggest that what has been missing since the 1980s is not the art but its practical support and understanding.

Farmer's provocative, very readable book is the first to document the practices of A39, and one of the only existing accounts of political theatre in Cornwall. Such a record is precious in and of itself, for its contribution to the history of socialist and working-class theatre. Because of this, it is also an important response to the situation described above. Although it does not position itself as a political analysis of culture or the theatre industry, threading through the chapters are arguments on class, marginalisation, aesthetics, and efficacy, that command attention.

After the Miners' Strike: A39 and Cornish Political Theatre versus Thatcher's Britain demands we look again at any neat timeline where

history, politics, or agitprop theatre come to a halt, or even enter a twilight zone. By telling A39's story in terms that are as charged and unapologetic as the theatre he documents, and by refocussing attention to local experience, where 'nothing had changed in our communities', Farmer's account directly addresses the exclusion—at least between 1984–1992—of regional, working-class political culture in England (117).

The fact the work of A39 is only now receiving critical attention is perhaps a further indication of this exclusion. It's also an exciting prospect, though. That is, if I am an historian who specialises in workers' theatre, who also happens to live around the corner from Cornwall — and I've only just heard about A39 — what other theatre of this ilk is yet to emerge from the woodwork?

'Agitprop as a badge of honour'

A39 followed in the footsteps of political theatre practitioners in England and Scotland in the decades immediately prior to their formation, particularly the work of 7:84. They were also influenced by European political theatre of the mid twentieth century, especially the theories of Bertolt Brecht. Farmer discusses how A39 aimed to make a powerful, personal connection with their target audiences through popular forms and aesthetics. For example, by operating 'in spaces usually entirely dominated by loud music', their shows would start and end 'like a gig' to enable the kind of '[moments] of intense possibility' Farmer associates with music concerts (68). He explains how such approaches helped them produce class-based analysis in a way that engaged local working-class audiences, who lived through the theatrical experience with the company rather than just bearing witness (58).

He also explains how, rather than being put off by political theatre traditions associated with the organised left, A39 found strength and resource in them. Their first show *One & All — An unofficial history of tin mining in Cornwall* 'delightedly clasped' to agitprop traditions, demanding 'capitalists in top hats' and 'workers with clenched fists' in an 'avowedly didactic' conveyance of large quantities of information (62). Farmer describes A39's approach as 'a political cell that operated

as a theatre company' and declares the company 'embraced the label "agitprop" as a badge of honour' (Farmer 2023: 7).

Farmer roughly measures A39's agency for agitating audiences over ideological and industrial issues by the extent to which they managed to have 'an effect on the world beyond the theatre,' or rather 'beyond the village hall, the pub or the open air' (55). He recalls how audiences were moved by the shows, including miners and their families; the moment when district councillors became keen to engage in discussion, and the company's 'shock' on realising their radical arguments could not only be made but also valued within mainstream discourse locally (Farmer 2022: 3).

His account also explains how A39, originally formed by joining forces with an unemployed workers' collective, later found themselves at the centre of several political networks. They exercised influence within the Cornwall Theatre Alliance and extended it, acting as a bridge between various likeminded organisations and encouraging further collaboration with the Claimants Union and the Workers Educational Association, as well as members of Cornish labour parties and trades unions (ibid; Farmer 2023: 67). The later-established Cornwall Theatre Umbrella, with statutory links to Cornwall County Council and South West Arts, also came about as a result of an A39 initiative. This resonates with accounts of British political theatre in in the late 1960s and 1970s, when an ecosystem of theatre companies, writers' guilds, claimants' unions, and trade unions, many of which remain active today, collaborated to support one another and strengthen the cultural arm of the labour movement (Hillman 2022b). Farmer describes the 'hinterland of community engagement' surrounding A39 as essential for the group's survival, reach, and impact (Farmer 2023: 67).

'The history of a place remains in the land beneath our feet'

In-between-spaces, hinterlands, and wastelands also figure as sites of transformation and exchange in Farmer's narrative. He describes walking near arsenic heaps and abandoned shafts of old tin mines and the influence of this on A39 plays. He mentions the distance between

A39 and Southwest arts, the regional arm of the Arts Council of Great Britain, as geographically one hundred miles away, but 'in more abstract ways [much] further' (55). A39 counted neither themselves nor Cornwall as part of English cultural heritage (ibid). Company members are depicted as outsiders who operated apart from 'their elders, betters, social superiors, teachers, pundits, politicians, the successful in whatever sphere...'. They would 'literally [pick] up coins discarded by official culture' (24, 60).

In *After the Miners' Strike*, place is displaced and contested, damaged or inaccessible. It is also embraced as something we belong to and that belongs to us. A39 is named after the road connecting its members in Truro and Falmouth. Although not all company members were born and bred in Cornwall, their shows were based on living there and engaging deeply with the people, the land, the past, and possible futures. They were deeply committed to honouring and animating Cornish history and its connection with ongoing workers' struggle. Through this endeavour they forged new bonds and bridges, binding people together across place and time.

The tradition of connecting history and place is often fundamental to political theatre, and characterised creative approaches to political protest throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s. It is also upheld in the work of political theatre companies active today, for example Red Ladder's tour into old mining communities with the show *We're Not Going Back* (2015), Common Wealth's *We're Still Here* produced in collaboration with Port Talbot's 'Save Our Steel' campaign (2017), or Salford Community Theatre's *Love on the Dole* (2016) and *The Salford Docker* (2019).

The other day, I spoke to a student at the University of Manchester who is interested in working-class, political, site-sensitive theatre. Inspired by 7:84, Salford Community Theatre, In Good Company, and others, she told me she wants to make theatre to assist positive change in her community when she graduates. *After the Miners' Strike*... will be an invaluable resource and inspiration for this young woman, as it will be for others who reach for theatre as a process of socialism and a tool to improve the conditions of those who work to live.

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Introduction

This is the first volume of the story of a tiny theatre company in a distant part of the UK that operated like a political cell; or alternatively, of a political cell that operated as a theatre company.

A39 Theatre Group came into being because of the great Miners' Strike of 1984–85. It embraced the label 'agitprop' as a badge of honour. A39 was motivated entirely by ideology and operated within a methodology and aesthetics conditioned by the countercultural movements of the 1960s–80s. Its reference points were identified as those that could best facilitate participation in the political struggle. The members of A39 wanted to fight for their class against the government of Margaret Thatcher. That this fight took the form of theatre at all was simply because that was where the members' common experience lay, and because theatre was the medium they believed could best resist the Thatcherite forces of hegemonic capitalism.

The theatre practice that resulted was immediate, often comedic and, conducted with little access to funding other than that generated by income, was through both commitment and necessity widely accessible. Image and aesthetics meant that significant aspects of the practice could comfortably operate in spaces usually entirely dominated by loud music or, on the other hand, by the most abrasive of performance poets.

This book will locate the theatre practice in the context of the political, cultural, and artistic circumstances that could be seen as its parameters, and of the circumstances that brought it into being. The Miners' Strike was defeated, which allowed Britain in the longer term to become the country it is today: one of widening social divisions and economic disparities with permanent unaddressed crises in public issues such as health and housing. It might be described as a society that hates itself, with its various parts each either despising or resenting (or both) the others for reasons it denies its subjects, for ideological reasons, the

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tools to understand. It was the Thatcher era that birthed this monster, enacting a huge change in the outlook of Britain that, with the aid of the Reagan regime in the USA, managed to export then globalise itself. It marked the transition from the expectation and political demand that lives and circumstances should improve, that technology would render the future better than the present, that lives would be longer, that there would be less hunger, and that people would be healthier and happier, to a vision of decline, disengagement, and ever-worsening poverty and hopelessness in which governments and mass media overtly exploit racism and division to maintain a steady state of power.

Part of that huge change has been the end of the countercultural artistic practices and communities that formed an aspect of A39's birth context, as they did for other political theatre practices such as Joint Stock, Red Ladder, Banner, as well as 7:84—founded by John McGrath whose book *A Good Night Out* is cited here.[1] So the study of A39 also provides an insight into an era of fundamental interaction between the arts and the political New Left that was taken for granted at the time but is now a novelty, though subsequent generations of 'satirical' comedians (an area in which A39 came also to operate) continue to wear its accoutrements without accepting or even understanding any of its aims or responsibilities.

There are other useful historical facets of this memoir. A39 managed to demonstrate that its politics had applications relevant to the community and cultural issues of Cornwall. There is a picture here of the host community that is recognisably different from its currently perceived nature. And it is a historical document in terms of the mediation of political argument and wider issues of communication technology. This is an arts practice in a form chosen because it was accessible without capitalisation or access to mass broadcast or distribution. It was formulated to be not only local but *personal* communication, so theatre was chosen in preference to any kind of screened medium. Around us were stirring already the early facets of the 'Third Disruption', which would transform the issues of this choice and render possible forms

1 John McGrath, *A Good Night Out — Popular Theatre: Audience, Class and Form* (London: Nick Hern Books 1996). The history of the formation of this phase of British political theatre was detailed in Catherine Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution: Political Theatre in Britain Since 1968* (London: Eyre Methuen 1980).

that are accessible both to small groups without the intervention of capitalised structures, and also to large audiences in cases where they can be engaged. But at the same time, social media and its exploitation in terms of advertising and political campaigning has altered knowledge and pedagogy such that propaganda looks thoroughly respectable in comparison.

This book, together with its second volume, describes a moment in the history of theatre, or maybe just the end of a moment. But in this, it also reflects both a wider cultural blossoming and its curtailment. Britain's political theatre has been a victim of the ongoing class war in the same way as its manufacturing industry, its welfare state, and its communities, killed off in the interests of profit for a few for whom nothing is too valuable to be sacrificed to their own ever-growing wealth.[2] The history of Britain in the decades since the events described here demonstrates the rightness of the arguments made by Britain's mining communities during the great strike of 1984/85; arguments which A39 was created to disseminate.

2 For a summary of factors in the demise of British political theatre reviewed at the time of McGrath's death, see Brian Logan, 'What did you do in the class war, Daddy?', *The Guardian*, 15 May 2002, https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/may/15/artsfeatures.

1. A Tour Through the Miners' Strike

My professional arts career began because I had been a bus driver. Miracle Theatre, in my new home of Cornwall, was buying a bus and needed someone who could make it go. The Bedford single-decker was a horrible thing. I was taken to London as adviser in its purchase from the London Transport garage at Catford, sleeping overnight in a Renault 4 parked up at Crystal Palace. After a test drive, I tendered my best advice — 'Don't buy it!'. They bought it.

A career spent in ten thousand GLC school runs on the flat roads and short hills of London, saved from any urge to speed by the density of traffic, had enabled it to survive the fact that the bus's vacuum brakes were one of the world's fictions. As its custodian and operator, I'd have been better off with an anchor to chuck out of the window of the cab I shared with its stinking three-litre petrol engine, which had the guts of a jellyfish or the most shrinking of Rodentia. The more sentimental elements of the theatre company immediately gave this shaking, dangerous behemoth a name, but I do not even remember what it was. I, who had to drive and maintain the thing, felt no bond with it. It was my burden.

Sometimes, when hurtling down a Cornish hillside, the bus would jump out of gear, leaving me with no control whatever of this overloaded red box save a handbrake that operated by locking clenched metal hands around the drive shaft. I never tried this at speed, certain that its first use would also be the last as all the innards of the bus junked themselves along the road, sliding along on the film of oil the bus customarily trailed like a tail. In pursuit of branding and free publicity, the beast was plastered with signwriting and company posters. Inscrutable

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anonymity would have been a far better friend. It undoubtedly made us many enemies amongst the thousands of drivers forced to breathe the particulates of its wake for slow unpassable miles as it crawled over the face of Cornwall and England with the name 'Miracle Theatre' blatantly claiming the blame.

Through the winter of 1983–84 we rehearsed in a barn in the rough land of the mining area west of Truro. Bill and Coral Scott's house at Fentongoose, with its outbuildings and mobile homes enclosing a yard and small community that reminded me of the back cover of Gong's *Camembert Electrique*, was a long way from any road. The company I joined was Bill, Rem (Rosemary) Drew, Chris Humphries, Mary Humphries (who would be forced for family reasons to quit the tour at an early stage), Steve Clarke, and Sue Farmer. Maggie Bull was costumier, and on tour we would be joined by her daughter Vicki and Vicki's boyfriend John, whose blue hair I remember but not his surname. Bert Biscoe was musician and arranger. I could play guitar and bass and assorted other things, so my first and almost immediate promotion was to the pit band.

Through the short days and long nights we rehearsed our two shows, then bounced our various disintegrating vehicles (though not, thankfully, the bus) dangerously down a dirt road for last orders in the pubs of Truro. 1984 was hoped to be a breakthrough year for Miracle Theatre. As well as the godforsaken bus there was to be a huge yellow pyramid tent for the bus to carry, with triangular aluminium structures for legs, so tall it must be erected with a scaffold tower; and that must be carried too, and seats to fill this huge theatre, and equipment to cater for a large company, and lights and sound equipment. The bus was not only full to bursting but gear was piled on top as well, as high as a double decker. For as long as I was out on the road, all this *materiel* was my responsibility.

On 25 May 1984, the tour began. We erected the tent in Trelissick Gardens near Feock, four miles from our Fentongoose headquarters. It was exhausting and it took hours. And it rained. The heavy yellow canvas held the water in its folds and crawled up its frame like a slug as we hauled on the tackle. It was cold, and the moist wind assailed us from the Carrick Roads. This first set-up took far longer that it should and the audience was forced to wait in the rain for us to finish, but this wasn't as serious a problem as it might have been because there were only a handful of them. I wanted to be at Carlyon Bay where The Psychedelic

Furs were playing the Cornwall Colosseum. Instead, I was breaching my principle of never performing to an audience that is smaller than the cast, because now I was also in the shows. Why not? I was there anyway. This is the artist's version of Mission Creep.

The tour slowly gained momentum. We performed the two plays we had worked on through the winter. In the afternoons we did *The Joke Machine*, a show aimed at children. Sue Farmer starred as 'Susie' in a red plastic mac, and that's all I remember about it really, except that the plot involved a TV game show for which Bert and I played snappy theme music, him on guitar and me on bass. We didn't really get on. In the great tradition of the pit band, we would glower at each other and everyone else while playing this jolly music, me wearing a blue beret for which I apologise. As our brusque muso cool abraded each other's, I would come to value Bert Biscoe very highly. Nowadays he is both poet and a pillar of the Cornish community, his status as a leading musician on the Cornish scene largely forgotten. But it was very useful in our rudimentary street theatre act, based on some of the music Sue and I busked when times were hard, which they usually were. Miracle's *al fresco* performances took the form of old songs like *Da Doo Ron Ron* and *Something Good*, or singalong modern material like Ronnie Lane's *How Come?*, with simple little choreographies performed by Sue, Mary, Rem, Steve, and Bill with accompaniments by Bert, Chris, and I. This earned money for petrol for the bus and the vehicles that transported the rest of the company, and was also an opportunity to publicise the shows directly to the public in the Fore Streets, High Streets and precincts of Cornwall and England.

There is something raw and exposing about street performance, setting up and beginning the act to an entirely theoretical, invisible audience and watching the reality assemble itself in ones and twos and families. The direct address mode develops and personalises that aspect of the entire art which I remember hearing described (it might have been by me) as to 'refrain from not performing'—the battleground leap of going Over the Top into enacting this thing that feels like it already exists. This may seem a grandiose description of the singing of an old Herman's Hermits song, but all rituals require some moment of the claiming of significance both for the enactors and the receivers, and that moment is it.

In the evenings we performed *McBeth*, Bill Scott's adaptation of the Scottish Play with extra bits by Middleton. I wrote some music as a setting for Middleton's verse as an overture—pushy buggar for a company driver, wasn't I? It was not the intention. Somewhere in my life I had learned the confidence to identify issues and sometimes to sort them out, but not when not to do that. In Miracle's version, McBeth himself represented a real person, played by Chris Humphries. The rest of us played the witches, as dæmons who conjured up illusions and characters within which McBeth enacted his degradation and demise in some space of the imagination. I approved of this Cartesian approach. It posed interesting questions about our relationships with our own versions of reality and seemed to me to make more sense than Shakespeare's original, in which the witches appear to wreck Macbeth's life to pass the time, or maybe as an obsessive essentialist essay in the Tragedy form. But I always saw opportunities for development in the production and as we toured the show for all those months, I would put forward idea after idea for things we might add or subtract or remake. The show resolutely remained as it was, and I came to see this unchanging re-enactment as a frustration of our potential collective creativity and that, without profound mutual engagement to maintain them, inevitably the considerable stresses of this lifestyle would be visited on the personal relationships within the company.

This judgement was probably entirely based on observing myself. Sometimes I would arrive on site after forcing the bus brakeless to another destination, nerves jangling and back aching, perhaps after having had to change a wheel by the side of a motorway or deal with one of its many mechanical crises, and just strut away in a targetless rage. But Bill too would write of the tour that 'by the end everyone had lost money, enthusiasm and their good humour,' and that, of this and the subsequent production, that 'Miracle was suffering from a lack of any direction or identity'.[1]

Because this tour was immense, from May to September, day by day by day with very little in the way of rest. We lived on the road—how romantic that sounds!–in tents we erected in the shadow of the huge yellow pyramid Bill had commissioned from the hippy artisans of Bath. I was already sick of our own two-person tent before we started, having lived in it for several

1 Bill Scott, 'A Brief History of Miracle Theatre', *The Poly 2005/06*. https://thepoly.org/assets/uploads/files/Poly%20Magazine%202005.pdf

weeks when I first arrived in Cornwall only a few months before; and now there were three of us in it: Sue, Matty the springer spaniel, and me.

Above all, this was the summer of 1984….

During the months Miracle Theatre had been rehearsing the play and organising performances, events had been developing towards the most significant industrial conflict since the General Strike of 1926: the 1984–85 Miners' Strike. As Francis Beckett and David Hencke put it, 'Britain before the great miners' strike of 1984–5 and Britain after it are two fundamentally different places, and they have little in common.'[2]

At the beginning of March, it began, with the announcement by the National Coal Board of the impending closure of what were termed 'uneconomic pits'.

In detailing this story, it is important to say that nearly forty years later there is little in the way of an unpartisan history available. Everybody has their angle. Its personalities and motivations are the armatures around which ideologies and prejudices cluster. But the evidence is now clear that the announcement of the planned closures was a deliberate provocation intended by Thatcher's government to precipitate a strike. It turned out that the inclusion in the list of Cortonwood in the Yorkshire coalfield was a mistake,[3] but it was here the miners first walked out in protest, and on 6 March 1984 their strike was made official by the National Union of Mineworkers.[4] Other mines and Regions of the NUM joined the dispute regarding the threatened closures, and on 12 March the strike was declared national.[5]

There had already been an overtime ban in place since the previous autumn, but the Conservatives' plans to provoke such a nationwide confrontation with the miners' union had been laid and unfolded over a period not of months but of years. It was significantly an act of revenge. In 1972 the miners defeated the Conservative government of Edward Heath in a pay dispute, and their victory historically focused on a mass demonstration that included supporters from other industries—organised by a little-known activist called Arthur Scargill—that closed down the fuel storage depot at Saltley in Birmingham in what became

2 Francis Beckett and David Hencke, 'Preface', in *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable, 2009).
3 Becket & Hencke, p. 47.
4 Ibid., p. 50.
5 Ibid.

known as the Battle of Saltley Gate.[6] The terms of Heath's climbdown elevated the miners to the top of the industrial wage scales and led to a general perception of the NUM as leading the Trade Union movement, in terms of industrial muscle and political credibility.[7]

Then, in early 1974, further industrial action by the miners caused Heath to declare the Three-Day Week, limiting the amount of time companies, factories, and premises could open to pursue their business, and then to call a General Election over the question 'Who Rules Britain?'. The electorate's answer was 'Not you mate!', and the Tories were removed from power for more than five years. The wing of the Conservative Party that was moving ever further to the political right swore this should not happen again and began fulminating revenge and redress against the miners and their union.[8]

In the election for Conservative leader in 1975, Margaret Thatcher defeated Edward Heath and all comers to become the first woman leader of any British political party,[9] and she and her fellow travellers—those she would label as 'One of Us' (she habitually spoke in capitalised words) and that Jonathon Green has described as 'her court of cowed sycophants'—set about rationalising their hatred of the NUM as part of a plan to end nationalised industries and the existence of trades unions as a significant factor in British economic life.[10] Reports by her business courtier John Hoskyns and urgent parliamentary acolyte Nicholas Ridley, Conservative MP for Cirencester and Tewkesbury, were strategies in how to overcome these, both as enemies of Thatcherism and as affronts to her values and vision.[11]

Now, the use of 'flying pickets'–a mobile force of strikers that could appear wherever they were needed to persuade or shame a workforce

6 *Nine Days and Saltley Gates*, Jon Chadwick's and John Hoyland's linked documentary plays about the 1926 General Strike and the 1972 Miners' Strike, were toured by Foco Novo in 1976. See Graham Saunders, 'Foco Novo: The Icarus of British Small-Scale Touring Theatre', in *Reverberations Across Small-Scale British Theatre: Politics, Aesthetics and Forms*, ed. by Patrick Duggan and Victor I. Ukaegbu (Intellect 2013), p. 4.

7 Seumas Milne, *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners* (London: Verso, 2014), p. 7; Becket & Hencke, p. 35.

8 Ibid.

9 Mr Heath steps down as leader after 11 vote defeat by Mrs Thatcher', *The Times*, 5 February 1975;

10 Hugo Young, *One of Us: A Biography of Margaret Thatcher* (London: Macmillan 1989), pp. 113–115; Jonathon Green, *Days in the Life: Voices from the English Underground 1961–71* (London: Pimlico 1998), Introduction to the Pimlico Edition.

11 Young, ibid.; Milne, p. 9; *The Ridley Report* (version leaked to *The Economist* in 1978), https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110795

into joining the strike, the strategy pioneered by Arthur Scargill in 1972– was effective in the early days of the great strike. So recommendations from the secret annexe of the Ridley Report were put into effect and a national police force was created as a weapon of the government to negate the pickets, with roadblocks to prevent movement and brute force to greet them where they arrived.[12] Arthur Wakefield, a striking miner from Frickley Colliery in Yorkshire, described in his diary an attempt to drive to another mine:

> Day 32: Wednesday, 11 April 1984 We are going to a pit called Gedlin. We were to take the M1 and go to junction 27 [but] the police were waiting for us; they took Tony's name and registration number and told him not go any further or he would be arrested. We were kept waiting for a while then told to go back the way we had come, so we had no alternative. Wednesday was short and sweet but better luck next time.[13]

Where the pickets did arrive, they were greeted ruthlessly:

> Day 46:…. They made their move by putting the pressure on. We dug our heels in and linked our arms and it seemed as though we were holding our own when all of a sudden they broke the barrier, and it was a free for all. The police from the Met pushed and kicked and told us in no uncertain terms to take off. There were several ugly scenes. We were pushed out of the pit lane onto the main road and across the other side of the road from the pit gates.[14]

This, then, was the country through which I drove the Miracle Theatre bus, unable to ignore this seminal struggle. The Conservative Party, the police, and the national press coalesced with every appalling barroom bore to form an easily identifiable Bad Guy; and the strike progressively exposed hypocrisy in what purported to be the leadership of the Labour Movement, reaffirming its institutional history as a catalogue of disappointments. Though there was sincere support from some trade union leaders, much solidarity action collapsed or was called off; the NUM leadership was condemned by Labour Party leaders and the Trade Union Congress (and by many a charlatan since) on the technicality that there had been no national ballot on the strike, though clearly if that

12 Becket & Hencke, p. 59.

13 Arthur Wakefield, *The Miner's Strike: Day by Day; The Illustrated 1984–85 Diary of Yorkshire Miner Arthur Wakefield*, ed. by Brian Elliott (Barnsley: Wharncliffe/Pen and Sword 2002), p. 53.

14 Ibid., p. 57.

'justification' had not existed they would simply have sought another. The miners' long-standing practice was that it should not be possible for miners of one region to abandon the interests of another when others' jobs were threatened but your own was not.

In an increasingly polarised country, the traditional socialist question 'Which side are you on?' was not difficult to answer. In his paper 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?', philosopher of mind Thomas Nagel says consciousness is present whenever there is 'something it is like to be' the entity under discussion. What it was like to be a striking miner was to be steered by your pride in your history and your union to fight for your community, a system of values, a politics of fairness, and social justice, and to do so collectively. As they picketed and marched and confronted the paramilitary police force they sang 'Here we go, here we go, here we go!', a collectivist chant that rings down the ages: all we have to do is quote it and we are back in those times. To the tune of *She'll Be Coming Round the Mountain* they sang 'I'd rather be a picket than a scab', and we would too. All good people wanted to be striking miners and not their opponents, overt or covert.[15]

What was it like to be those who opposed the miners, or simply failed *ex officio* to support them? That was like being a liar, because what such figures all had in common was a shallow pretence to want one thing while really wanting another. For Thatcher and her ministers, the aim was the destruction of political opposition while pretending to want a profitable coal industry. Neil Kinnock's leadership of the Labour Party had begun as it would go on when he emerged from his coronation at the 1983 Party Conference onto Brighton Beach to parade before photographers, turned his back on the advancing waves, and fell over in the sea. His wish that Arthur Scargill, now president of the NUM, should be removed as a force in the country, seems to have echoed Thatcher's.[16] As Milne notes:

> Scargill never played by the rules of the British trade-union game and despised the routine deal-making and bureaucratic compromises

15 Thomas Nagel, 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?', *The Philosophical Review*, 83.4 (1974), 435–450, https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/study/ugmodules/humananimalstudies/lectures/32/nagel_bat.pdf.

16 See, for example, Kinnock's 2014 contribution to *The Miners' Strike, 30 Years On* conference organised by H&P Trade Union Forum and the British Universities' Industrial Relations Association (BUIRA), https://www.historyandpolicy.org/trade-union-forum/meeting/the-miners-strike-30-years-on-conference.

> accepted as inevitable and necessary by more orthodox trade-union leaders. To many union officials, that made him a poor trade unionist and a lousy negotiator. To the Coal Board and the government, it made him alarmingly impervious to the usual accommodations. For his supporters, it was a unique advantage: here, in Scargill's description of himself, was the 'union leader that doesn't sell out'.[17]

The atmosphere of strike and country became ever more embittered. On the hundredth day of the strike, 18 June 1984, occurred what soon came to be known as the Battle of Orgreave, or Bloody Monday. Orgreave was a coking works in South Yorkshire and its picketing-out became a symbolic aim in the tradition of Saltley Gate in 1972. Pickets were helpfully steered by police officers to a convenient location where they could be cavalry-charged by mounted police, then chased and beaten through the village streets. Famous photos show horrible police violence visited on the community, and even some of the press, by the forces that claimed to represent Law and Order, prearranged as an exemplary show of force. In another clarifying moment in terms of the resources deployed against the miners, the BBC—for its evening news—edited their footage to reorder events to suggest the miners mounted an unprovoked attack with stones and that the mounted police charged in response. The BBC too was claiming one agenda while following another.[18]

There were mass arrests that day, and Arthur Scargill was attacked and knocked unconscious. Frickley miner Arthur Wakefield was an eyewitness:

> I look across the road to see if Arthur [Scargill] is still there. He is with two or three of the lads. The 'cavalry' [mounted police] and 'riot squad' come again. It's 11.20 am. I take a photograph of Arthur with the lads. I glance again across to where Arthur and the lads are and some of them are running. I see one of the riot squad knock Arthur down from behind. The attacker had his riot shield in a raised position. Others were chasing the lads that ran off. I ran across the road as soon as I could to give assistance. There was a big lad [Peter Stones] picking Arthur off the ground and we put him in a sitting position. He suddenly collapsed for a brief spell then sat up again, complaining about his head. I told him it was the shield.[19]

17 Milne, p. 22.
18 Ibid., p. 352; Becket & Hencke, p. 99.
19 Wakefield & Elliott, p. 118.

The echoes of Orgreave resound down the years. The Orgreave Truth & Justice Campaign fights still for a government enquiry into a day that saw many miners charged with 'riot', an offence that can carry a life sentence, their trials collapsing a year later.[20]

The atmosphere this created in the country was that of a low-intensity civil war, with selected citizens of the state subject to an oppression by all means available to that state, all pretence of impartiality and equality in its institutions gleefully abandoned, the media aligned with the government they claimed to hold to account: portents of the country that would come to be over the decades once the miners had lost and we had lost the miners. The mass media consistently obscured the reality of an epochal struggle over ways of life and values and cultures and freedom and family and pride: the stuff of wars.

I arrived in each new site on the tour more and more believing that it was a terrible waste of life, of my life, to donate it to an illusory Shakespearean drama while the real drama was being enacted on the picket lines of the coalfields, at the coking works and the coal ports; that there was the real struggle, the struggle of the values of solidarity, socialism, and community against the horrible sneer of Thatcherism, that thing of blasted limbs and storming skies while floods and blood claimed the world. Thatcher's brand of Conservatism was the inner world of Macbeth rendered as ideology. I found myself spending my time in a way I could not justify in the face of this conflict that was ripping the country apart.

These were my thoughts as I drove the daylight miles and the night-time hours between performance places and exhausting labour, trying to pick out the significant in the BBC's tortured narrative on the radio in my bus cab, relieving the anger by seeking out *Small Town Boy* by Bronski Beat: the sound of that early summer.

And it was a good summer of long, hot days. We were young and our skins were brown, living outdoors and everlastingly moving on, a small tribe united only in the purpose of performance to the next house, making music on the next street for money for petrol for the bastard bus; trying to find some half-ounce of privacy to maintain yourself as an individual or a couple, with friendship sometimes tested to destruction in the endless endeavour. We performed at festivals, set up in municipal

20 The Orgreave Truth & Justice Campaign's website can be found at https://otjc.org.uk.

parks and commons, by Bristol Docks; surrounded still by the wastelands of World War Two. I remember one night staring from the waterside across acre-mounds of rubble towards a distant pool of light that was a lone-standing pub, its surrounding terraces still flat from German bombs or municipal decisions. And across that dark vacancy came the sound of a Trad jazz band.

In Bill's version of the play, Macbeth's soliloquy was chanted by the entire cast *except* McBeth. One night I found myself behind the audience intoning 'Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow', in chorus with five other voices, to an audience of a single rat perched on its owner's shoulder. The owner was watching somebody else. I include this anecdote because, apart from a few photos, it is stories like this that are for actors all that sustains of their ephemeral nightly art; so many ancient remembered performances, real now only in this piece of writing on these white pages. Theatre: something planned, delivered, sometimes remembered, and gone. And that was our lives, as it is for all the profession. But theatre, as its traditions and its ways of life, was not enough for me. It required too much faith that anything had effectively happened other than that one person had been fleetingly present to another in seventeenth-century verse. What was I prepared to believe had been achieved? Could I take it on faith that 'The Play's the Thing', that 'The Show Must Go On', that 'There's No Business Like Show Business'? I could not. I needed some real effect.

The story of the previous twenty years in the culture that nearly everyone in the company entered by affinity, rather than as one we were born into, was a curious mixture of the spiritual and the political; a culture initially of resistance that had mutated into its own parallel society in some places, for some people: 'The Alternative Society'. It was an idea of infinite charm and ultimate disappointment, but this is not to say it was unimportant. It had for a while freed us from some conventional restraints, those that we would otherwise adopt unexamined unless consistently careful—too consistently too careful for any of us to realistically achieve alone over anything but the shortest term. The Alternative Society, the Underground, the Counterculture, had assumptions of its own, but in which the 'straight' icons of wealth and ambition had no acknowledged part.

My awareness of its possibilities, largely abstracted from the pages of the music press, meant I had left school free of the perceived need for a career. I lived casually in various places, took various jobs, earned some money sometimes then did something else, wandered around doing underground things, played lots of music, lived on boats, had lots and lots of hair. Hair has always been something I do very well. My engagement had always been with the political side. The spiritual aspects of the Counterculture seemed elitist, determined to draw a hierarchical line between 'them', the straights, and 'us', the enlightened ones. That judgement too often seemed to me to mirror a very 'straight' class hegemony, and, having taken a job on the buses temporarily to fund the restoration of the old boat that was my home, I found I did not want after all to separate myself from my 'straight' working class colleagues. I stayed and became an activist in the Transport and General Workers Union.

Increasingly predominant through the 1970s and into the 1980s was the assumption that anything that could be labelled spiritual was the exclusive property of the self-defining group that still considered themselves 'alternative'. By now, that encompassed yoga, a vague idea of Buddhism, aspects of Hinduism, even crystals and aromatic oils—anything in the exotic that could be deemed transcendental, tantric, yin and yang or 'zen'. Since by the early 1980s this came effectively to be all that was left of the Counterculture other than Travellers' convoys, I no longer considered myself amongst the congregation. Without an Alternative, it was the issues of this society that would need to be engaged.

Eventually, that summer of 1984 began to transform into Autumn. I had now been a Cornish resident only twelve months and when I turned the bus's blunt nose west down the A303 for the last time, for me it was still like driving away from what I knew, rather than towards it. But by now I had little love for the England in which I was born and had led my life, after its Falklands fiesta of war and Thatcher's consequent second election victory. This rendered me rootless, baseless anywhere beyond the abstract castle of myself and my partner, my dog, and my tent—a skinny gypsy punk whose nearly every defining characteristic, bus and company and tribe, belonged to someone else.

Back in Cornwall, after the last performances in Truro, some of us unloaded the bus for the final time. I parked it up, left the key in Bill's wholefood warehouse by the old docks at Newham, went home and no one called. And we called no one. (We didn't have a phone.) The world of our summer had passed.

Fig. 1. The author in a Miracle Theatre street performance, Falmouth, Cornwall, Spring 1984, with Bert Biscoe in the background. Photo by George J. Greene (CC BY 4.0).

Fig. 2. Future A39 member Sue Farmer with the loaded Miracle Theatre bus on The Island at St Ives, Cornwall, July 1984, accompanied by company dogs Matty and Casper. Each of the triangular constructions on the bus roof is half of one of the legs of the pyramid theatre. Photo by the author (CC BY-NC 4.0).

Fig. 3. The Miracle bus cab and my view throughout the Strike summer of 1984, in this case of hazy Devon hills. The oily finger marks on the bulkhead are due to my (far too frequently) off-on relationship with the engine box, just visible at bottom left. Photo by the author (CC BY-NC 4.0).

Fig. 4. Erecting the pyramid theatre. The legs are assembled, the tops then raised up onto the scaffold tower where they are fixed to the (very heavy!) steel top piece. The legs are then moved inwards to raise the assembly to full height, and joined by rigging wires to make the structure secure. Then someone (in this case Bill Scott) has to go up there to finish off. Photo by the author (CC BY-NC 4.0).

Fig. 5. The bus and the erected pyramid, top removed to let out heat. The striped tent served as the box office. The theatre entrance awning is folded down. Matty, as usual, has her own project on. Photo by the author (CC BY-NC 4.0).

Fig. 6. *McBeth* curtain call, left to right: Bert Biscoe, Bill Scott, Steve Clarke, John, Rem Drew, Sue Farmer, Paul Farmer, Chris Humphries. Photo by kind permission of Miracle Theatre (CC BY-NC 4.0).

2. Into A39

Our careers with Miracle Theatre were over. I would have resigned, but no one was interested. I did not want to repeat that experience. It is an effective test of motivation to spend months doing something very hard. A lack of value will become apparent on waking every morning when the question will sooner or later arise: why am I doing this? If there is no specific answer for this question you are engaged in an act of faith, and when it applies to the presentation of the work of a sixteenth/seventeenth-century writer, it is a matter of national faith. Shakespeare is an established religion every bit as much as the Church of England and, it now seemed to me, performed very much the same functions—affirming an implicit set of values with Shakespeare at the top and England firmly attached as Culture's peak: blue riband, blue-blooded, more prestigiously high-culture than even Mozart and Wagner.[1]

But do Shakespeare's virtues in any way justify this? Removing the assumptions and the necessity to believe in the object of faith, and any investment as a facet of the national image, how is Shakespeare as an experience of theatre? I was sick of participating in what I saw as the blurred-eyed defence of an out-of-date misanthropist, who wrote some poetry entirely to my taste then eked it into interminable plays through tricksy padding:

> DUNCAN:
> This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
> Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
> Unto our gentle senses.

1 For a comprehensive exploration of this aspect of Shakespeare see Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History From the Restoration to the Present* (London: Hogarth Press 1990).

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BANQUO
This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here: no jutty, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle:
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed,
The air is delicate.[2]

Nimble and fireworky though it may be, how does this justify any claim on our time? This passage haunts me, and not in a good way. I even wrote my own version of it:

The castle sits on its arse in the grass
Amidst some shady garden.
I think it made that awful smell
Cos I heard it beg my pardon.

Often, Shakespeare's dross simply outweighs the poetry; sometimes each negates the other into nothing. Hamlet's soliloquy, at great length (not just the bit you know),[3] seems to me to cancel itself out of meaning. Perhaps there was some staging challenge to cover at the time and there was a need for lots of words to distract (though there is nothing inherently wrong with that–many good artistic decisions are made for logistical reasons). The dialogue of the duel scene in *Romeo and Juliet*[4] makes me feel physically sick, and Shakespeare's jokes are never funny. Surely Will Kemp would not waste his time on such tosh but would take it away and replace it with sex and farts and falling over. If there is some overwhelming intrinsic virtue in this, it has never been apparent to me. It is certainly not unassailably self-evident. It was questionable, and therefore must be questioned: this material was nearly four hundred years old and occupied the stages of the English-speaking world to the exclusion of far too much of everything else that discussed more relevant issues, like the Miners' Strike for example, that continued still. Distanced by centuries, I told myself after that long Shakespearean summer that if ever I found myself again in a theatre seat in front of anyone uttering the

2 *Macbeth* Act I, Sc. 6.
3 *Hamlet* Act III, Sc. 1 'To be or not to be…. Be all my sins remember'd'.
4 *Romeo and Juliet* Act I, Sc. 1.

words 'Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania',[5] I had my own permission to eviscerate myself and sod the mess for the cleaners. Shakespeare's effective exclusion of the new and the news in the theatres of Britain was far too convenient for all the wrong people. As Gary Taylor has noted:

> The important questions, the questions that matter beyond the intellectual enclosure of Shakespeare specialists, do not concern the meaning of particular words or the motives of particular characters; they concern the blunt fact of his cultural dominance. When did people decide that Shakespeare was the greatest English dramatist? The greatest English poet? The greatest writer who ever lived? Who did the deciding? What prejudices and convictions might have influenced their decision? On what evidence, by what reasoning, did they justify their verdict? How did they persuade others? How did they discredit rival claimants? And once Shakespeare's hegemony was achieved, how was it maintained?[6]

My pursuit through the routes of the summer of something creative and rewarding had perhaps been too directed, too rigorous and unyielding, but we have only one life and we will be a long time dead. And perhaps in what we had done there was somewhere some slight chance of significance (I hope that's not too dogmatic) that we had casually allowed to slip away by not pursuing it with everything we were: in sitting too long perhaps through easy evenings, in doing too little in those long afternoons; by not talking about every aspect of what we did all the time, by failing to walk every path in every town, by leaving too many opportunities unaddressed, people unspoken to. Surely so much effort should have some result somewhere, should register something, should count as some small weight in some sort of scale. In the matter of theatre perhaps there was still some possibility, and any opportunity it represented must be retained and owned.

As the year 1984 began to darken into its own evening, we had lived in Cornwall one year mostly committed night and day to Miracle Theatre. This place still felt far from a home, but at last now we had time to investigate it properly.

Through the mysteries of council house exchanges, Sue and I found ourselves living in a flat in the village of Playing Place. When first I had heard that name I had not believed it was real. I had never heard a place

5 *A Midsummer Night's Eve* Act II Sc. 1.
6 Taylor, ibid., p. 5.

name like it; but that was true of so many places in Cornwall—the mark of Kernewek, its shallowly-interred language. I discovered that Playing Place was a literal anglicisation of the Cornish 'Plen an Gwari', which was the Kernewek term for a theatre or, to be more exact, for an open-air arena for the performance of mediaeval Cornish-language mystery plays. Miracle Theatre had been named after these plays and initiated itself through performing them. During the interminable tour we had visited one of these old theatre places: Perran Round, near Perranporth. It was huge, and it was apparent that the plays must have involved crowds—entire communities—both as performers and audience. Theatre had been part of Cornish popular culture.[7] What might that mean for theatre workers here, now?

Historical context. Cultural context. Context.

More than this, the manuscripts of these old miracle plays still exist, though in the Bodleian Library in Oxford; a long way from their birthplace in Glasney College, that is now nothing more than a silhouette picked out on the ground of an open space in Penryn. It had been a dissolute victim of the activities of Henry Tudor Junior, who agreed with Proudhon that property is theft, as long as it was someone else's property.[8] The scripts of the three plays of the *Ordinalia* cycle comprised a vault of poetic wealth that ensured the Cornish language a continuing existence. It was not dead as long as it was there to be read, its sounds reconjured in the air like a spell evoking the ancient relationship between land, language, and people. Theatre here was a defensive citadel for Cornwall's sense of herself as something distinct, discrete.

Given this relationship between theatre, place, and people, the current state of British theatre here in Cornwall and everywhere else–locked away in specialist boxes with cultural sanctions that guarded every entry, even the purchase of a ticket–amounted to a theft every bit as bad as any of Henry Tudor's. This factor of the people's lives had

7 For information on the particular role of the Plen an Gwari at Playing Place, see https://www.keaparishcouncil.org.uk/st-kea-truth-legend-and-the-rounds-at-playing-place/. For more general information on the mediaeval theatres of Cornwall see Will Coleman, *Plen an Gwari: The Playing Places of Cornwall* (Cornwall: Golden Tree Productions 2015).

8 French: La propriété, c'est le vol! Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Qu'est-ce que la propriété? ou Recherche sur le principe du Droit et du Gouvernement*, 1st edn (Paris: Brocard 1840), p. 2.

been taken away and reserved for the privileged; its benefits, whatever they may once have been, reshaped through specialisation, and now exclusive. Literally. A painful facet of working in theatre was that it meant leaving the normal world of interaction. None of those who lived around us on our Cornish council estate would voluntarily expose themselves to theatre, except the panto for the kids at Christmas. But in these days, as the miners fought on through the winter, it was obvious that almost all means of communication in the UK had been occupied by the enemy as in the early days of a coup. That was an appropriate analogy for the Thatcherism that was by now systematically setting aside the consensual aspects of the uneasy British post-war settlement, that had anyway subtly kept the socialist assumptions that underpinned the Welfare State always the lip-service side of realisation, by begrudging bestowals of favours instead of rights; by liberal expression rather than rational conclusion.

Socialism, even (or perhaps especially) in the Labour Party that was still theoretically dedicated to it, had become an endlessly hollowed-out concept, the shiny carapace of a void like a cheap foil-wrapped Easter egg. As an ideology, it was always carefully separated from its institutional attainments by, for example, the tonal indignation of BBC reactions to each small victory of the working class, whether won by strike or vote—the puzzled unspoken warning that such sins must result in falling tears; its official accent incapable of speaking the language of equality without parenthesis or, in later-night programmes, irony. It found the implicit tones of Thatcherism much easier to pronounce, and the newspaper proprietors found this occupying force very much to their millionaire taste. The at-all-costs destructive purge of every aspect of organised labour was of a scope that none of these opinion-formers seemed capable of reporting, and this they had in common with its enactors, who did not seem to know what they were doing either.

Together, the organs of the intelligentsia, from Radio Three to *The Guardian* to ITV, revealed themselves inadequate to anything beyond their own sectional interest; and my neighbours on the estate walked back from the village Spar shop carrying their copies of *The Sun* like a merciless virus into the hearts of their families.

In a world of media controlled by a sick state or Rupert Murdoch or Robert Maxwell, in which the technology of the media was all but

unattainable and its means of distribution determinedly reserved for approved voices, there was a role for theatre as a dissident, dissonant voice in addressing the community of those present. There was no opportunity for Lord Rothermere to intervene. And anyway, we could refuse him entry.

So that winter was spent in conversations on the basis that the engagement with theatre would go on. Mark Kilburn and Lucy Kempton were a couple Sue and I knew from Roll Up Theatre, an unemployed workers' theatre group that had once worked with Miracle on presenting the *Ordinalia*. We spent New Year together in their cold winter-let flat in Falmouth listening to Mark's beloved jazz and The Smiths' *Hatful of Hollow*. Mark also brought to the discussion a book by John McGrath, *A Good Night Out*.[9]

McGrath was a famously angry man, one of those who gave birth to what the 1960s became; a playwright who also wrote for television and film, determined to break out of the arts ghettoes and address The People and to move the discussion of The People from the abstract to an infinite number of particulars. He had co-founded the theatre company 7:84 and its Scottish branch, predicated on touring plays about specific histories, stories, and issues to the people they directly concerned. The aims of 7:84 did not include the attainment of status within high art—that part of a culture that is used as an advertisement for the culture, as shopfront and hagiography, divorced from everyday experience—with the necessity for specialist presentation and interpretation. Like the music of Mozart, high art does not accuse those who, in their entitled exercise of power, fear the very possibility of accusation because they know that stripped of their careful constructed consolidated contexts, they would have no useful excuses; that, like so many of those dark museum paintings that were taken to define the fine in Fine Art, there is no apparent means of engagement, understanding, or judgement that does not rely on the Art Historical parsing of the exclusively educated.

7:84 based themselves in ideas of the Popular, the masses' own arts—modulating down the centuries through forms accessible and rewarding to the masses: cheap and cheerful, professional and virtuoso, amateur and idiosyncratic, peripatetic or embedded. The project for McGrath

9 John McGrath, *A Good Night Out–Popular Theatre: Audience, Class and Form* (London: Nick Hern Books 1996).

was to enter the popular and inject into its vocabulary the stories of the perpetual struggles whose protagonists it entertained but too often otherwise ignored. The purpose was to establish communication with a popular audience, rather than the elite whose artistic tastes are those generally subsidised as 'Culture'.

McGrath proposed rules of engagement in terms of specific examples of popular culture in performance, like the pantomime in which sophisticated modulations of identity (the phenomenon I discuss elsewhere in this work as 'levels of pretence') are an integral part of the entertainment itself; and an evening's entertainment in a Manchester Working Men's Club in the 1960s that included singing acts, a comedy act, a wrestling bout, and bingo. From such roots, 7:84 Scotland toured shows like *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*, *The Game's a Bogey* and *Little Red Hen* like a performance equivalent of Gunning's 'Cinema of Attractions'.[10]

McGrath established to our satisfaction that popular culture contained all the modes needed for the full engagement of political dispute, in models of theatre in which each side of the audience/performer divide frankly acknowledged the other. This tradition also incorporated the work of the modernist German experimenters that grew through Expressionism and had their progeny in the subsequent growth of British political theatre through the 1950s, into the 60s and 70s; at which point I had collided with it in London.

But although socialist politics was a significant facet of the political aspect of the alternative society's culture and events, I was looking for something else in its performance aspects at that time: not the application of agreed principles but the exploration of the hope/idea/ideology that there WERE no principles, no rules, no limits; that possibilities were endless, that affect itself could transform, awaken, liberate. Even in the dark spaces of Oval House, enlightenment could occur—and enlightenment of what nature if not political? What kind of freedom could be sought if not that from oppression by a dominant class that rendered this world unspeakably unjust and unforgivably boring, that constrained all vision of what might be within the tedious bounds of an

10 Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde', in *Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative*, ed. by Thomas Elsaesser (London: British Film Institute 1990).

officially approved version of what already was? To break rules was to diminish capitalism—it was not merely the state that must wither away: first its iron bars of assumption and control would need to be shaken from our minds.

What I was looking for then was the opportunity to imagine what had so far never been; to find a way of life that needed nothing but itself to fulfil and involve, that was not based on the need for more but was all that life might be. This is the process that I identify as socialism.

I'm not going to try and define socialism, which is anyway a conceptual alliance of millions, billions of forgotten people spread through place and time: in the Peasants Revolt and before, in the Levellers and the Diggers in the seventeenth century, in the French Revolution's call for 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity', in the American colonies' invocation of 'Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness'. It was present in the Russian revolutions and the Long March, in revolutionary risings throughout the world throughout the history of what passes for civilisation. Regardless of how the powerful have suppressed or perverted it, the struggle for these aims always recurs, no matter how many times we are told that history has ended.

To be a socialist is to wish to progress the human project, in the knowledge that we are currently wasting our time, or rather that others are wasting it for us. Having to divorce our labour from ourselves and sell it in the market, not being able to achieve integrity, damages us in body and in consciousness. It is the certainty that there is a path to this progress that we can identify and it lies in the embrace of equality and working in common. When Proudhon said 'property is theft', he was not talking about your iPhone, he was talking about the planet and the things it holds that existed for billions of years before there were humans and, if we continue to be stupid, will exist for billions of years after there are none. Yet mysteriously it is all 'owned' by some very temporary people or entities they have conjured into being. When the last scorched landscape is enveloped by the exploding sun, there will be still a title deed in some earthquake-buried bank vault beneath a flattened city asserting Ozymandian claims of ownership on behalf of a dynasty lost for eons. If you could see through the past of the tiny patch of planet you cling to, you would see a time when it was appropriated with at least the threat of violence. That was the birth of property and of

kings. When their interests demanded the change that would eventually enable capitalism, their organised power enacted 'Enclosure' and took away your right even to be where and what you are, all achieved through various forms of terror, and drove our ancestors to their concentration-camp cities, their slums and factories, and delivered us to the rule of their markets. And this is where we are still, awaiting some next step. Socialists work to claim that step, so that it doesn't lead to some new circle of hell but instead takes us some way further towards being all we can be once we realise that is the achievement to validate human existence.

The availability and commitment to such a quest of someone from my class and background in itself marked one of the achievements of the Welfare State. The ending of unnecessary sickness and hunger—and the new-found (and, it turned out, short-lived) comparative wealth of working-class people—made it apparent that the end of urgent want merely revealed a new emptiness, that when the stomach ached no longer other forms of need could be discerned, as expressed in the songs of The Kinks and The Who,[11] in the nihilisms and working-class deadpan of the Mods. The uniform streets of suburbia, the commodities and clothes of mass production, were fertile ground for the seeds of their own destruction in new forms of revolution. The greatest triumph of the Welfare State was to create the knowledge that it was not enough. It was a starting point, a place of departure that had taken so many wasted lifetimes to attain, the least that civilisation should be.

So I looked to the art of the underground to begin to discover this place beyond the full belly and a job for life, four walls and a roof, a wage packet at the end of the week, an ambulance when you were ill, a fire engine when your house was on fire, and a coffin when you were dead. It was my generation alone that could name this quest, because subsequently all those things would begin to be taken away from us. And that huge larceny was just beginning in Thatcher's 1980s.

My earlier search would be answered in the bizarre, the extreme, the unplanned, the indescribable, the unscripted, the unspeakable, the unformulated; beyond form, beyond musical scales, beyond semantics, beyond sense. So the exercise of the skills and techniques that theatre

11 E.g. *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society; Muswell Hillbillies; Tommy; Quadrophenia*.

was did not attract me, though I enjoyed it when I saw it. I sought out The People Show, performance art, anything else that did undescribed things. I was a member of Birkenhead Dada for a brief season. I frequented the musical borderlands where performers often outnumbered audience, like the Little Theatre in the Tottenham Court Road, London home of free jazz; the guitar oddness of Derek Bailey, the saxophone abstractions of Lol Coxhill; the minimalist looped musical mantras of John Martyn; I pursued something truly new, or something truly old in the extreme modal guitar of Martin Carthy, with its odd tunings and drones, and in the early work of Steeleye Span—it is impossible now to recover how strange that music sounded.

3. One & All!

But in the 1980s the screws were tightening, the clampdown clamping down, the parties over—their celebrants retreating into the struggle for survival. There would be no more counter-cultural peacocks strutting out their trips; the butterflies had beaten their wings off against the window panes, the gossamer dragonflies had bloated into caricature, the humming from the drowsy psychedelic pond had now become the ode of bluebottle to swelling corpse. This was the time when those who had been merely playing at revolution ceased their games and the crowds parted to expose the serious soldiers who would now be attacked piecemeal.

So few turned out to be serious. But the miners—oh, the miners were serious. And how their strike exposed hypocrisy—the simple issue of the strike eviscerated solipsism and sophism. 'Are you for the strike or against?' was the Occam's Razor that trumped every other question. The strike was era, epoch, aesthetic, and intellectual environment.

When historical events occur, even in years and centuries of mass media conjuring up their own jagged sparks of hysteria, there is no way of knowing what really is going on. The daily bulletins of the BBC, expressed in the disapproving tones all labour disputes evoked in them, were constantly of the strike's deadly decline and imminent failure. As Seumas Milne would put it:

> To leaf through newspaper cuttings from the strike period a decade later is to be transported back to an Alice-in-Wonderland world of long-suffering policemen and saintly strikebreakers fighting the good fight against swaggering picket-line thugs with money to blow, of impossible return-to-work figures and fantastic power supply projections.[1]

1 Seumas Milne, *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners* (London: Verso 2014), p. 352.

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0329.05

We had effectively chosen with our own life choices our sides in this war, and we must also cope with a peculiar inversion of the class war: the progressive force and the bearers of the socialist flame were the miners, and yet rather than revolutionary change, the particularities of their struggle constituted a defence—the defence of their jobs, their industry, and communities; of the right to roam their roads from pit village to city to neighbouring regions, the right to their communities' indigenous lives, leisure, and culture. It was this defence of what already was that was portrayed as a radical threat to the way of life of a nation of which they were as much citizens as Margaret Thatcher herself, who nevertheless had referred to them on 19 July 1984 as 'the enemy within'.[2] Surely 'the enemy' would come to destroy ways of life, systems of values, traditions, family life; and this placed the mantle of 'the enemy' firmly around the padded shoulders of herself and her clones and cohorts: her public-school yes-men, her bought-in bullyboy Ian MacGregor, her national police force, and her security services.

I remember visits to the village of Betteshanger in the Kent coalfield. Before the strike, it was a neat oval housing estate that clustered around its mine. After the pit's closure it clustered around nothing at all. For all its rationalisations the Ridley Report really had not addressed technological change, but rather economic and social and political engineering.[3] Even its private claim that this should happen as an adjunct to 'the ultimate privatisation' turns out to be hypocrisy piled upon hypocrisy. The power of the miners' union would be destroyed ultimately by the destruction of coal mining itself. And the result of that in the landscape was that the very reason for the existence of the village of Betteshanger would cease to exist. What happens to places when their heart and institutions are removed? Betteshanger, and all the many places like it, would become no more than a cluster of buildings in the landscape, a list of addresses; purposeless, commonality destroyed, relationships between people severed by destroying what they had in common. Many of these communities were to become suffused with the problems of neglect, and then to become a symbol of those problems.

2 Hugo Young, *One of Us: A Biography of Margaret Thatcher* (London: Macmillan 1989), p. 371.

3 *The Ridley Report*, https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110795.

Thatcher's coterie radically intervened in the lives of British people to strengthen its own power base at the expense of organised labour, and the leaders of the labour movement did not even join the resistance. Neil Kinnock found his diary too full to appear on NUM platforms.[4] On 13 November, Norman Willis—Secretary General of the Trade Union Congress—addressed miners and their families at an event in Aberavon. In his speech, he blamed miners for violence on the picket lines: a notable assertion in a conflict in which one side was a new national paramilitary police force armed with clubs and riot gear and mounted on horses, ranged against the amateur endeavours of those whose real life was the winning of coal. As Arthur Wakefield described the comparison:

> When we were all there we set off across the fields to walk to Harworth pit. We got there at 4.45 am but the police were there in force. Coming over the fields we must have looked like an army but compared with the police we were more like Dad's Army.[5]

Willis's claim was aimed not at those present in the hall, but at an audience beyond it. In a theatrical moment a noose was lowered from the rafters to dangle just above Norman's head, in a crystallisation of the true stakes of the game in which his hypocrisy played. When told about this, Neil Kinnock was shocked. 'The one thing I regret is not being in South Wales with Norman Willis,' he said.[6] If only his diary had not been so full. Willis's assertion begs the question: if he truly believed these people were violent, would he have felt able to come amongst them and talk to them like this?

The TUC should have been mighty. Historically, the TUC should have been the Labour Movement's teeth, coordinating mass union activity to inexorable effect. Instead it was, to our perception, its soft pale puffy arse and an ever-demanding belly, its effectiveness traded for seats in the House of Lords, establishment respectability (mostly illusory) and good suits, rotten with the right wing, the bought-off, and the sold-out. It doesn't matter who or what you are, nobody is entitled to respect through status, it must be earned. And that is why windbags still hate

4 Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable 2009), p. 175.

5 Arthur Wakefield, *The Miner's Strike*, p. 54.

6 Becket & Hencke, p. 176.

Arthur Scargill, who earned his respect daily in absolute commitment to the cause—in being arrested alongside his members, in knockout blows from riot shields, in character-assassinations that persist to this day; in never failing inspiration, in the knowledge he would never ask another to do that which he would not do himself. People like Norman fear people like Arthur Scargill.

Even a sympathetic treatment of the activities of the TUC and the Labour Party leadership (see for example Becket and Hencke's *Marching to the Faultline*) reveals that they attempted no more than damage limitation in private and lip service in public, dominated by those who hoped for nothing better than the backroom compromise. Certainly, by Autumn 1984, they were acting with no belief in the possibility of victory for the miners.[7] But this was perverse. October saw the government and its collaborators at their nearest to defeat when NACODS (the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers) voted overwhelmingly to join the strike. This came within one day of closing every mine in the country, until the NACODS leadership was dissuaded by what turned out—of course—to be empty promises regarding closure review procedures from Chair of the National Coal Board Ian MacGregor, acting on desperate direct instruction from Thatcher's cabal, to the everlasting regret of NACODS members.[8]

And meanwhile the stockpiles of coal on which Thatcher's creatures had predicated their entire campaign were within sight of exhaustion. They had not reckoned on the miners' fortitude in sustaining solidarity for so many months. The TUC, the Labour Party, had their opportunity now to bring their weight to bear on a critical juncture. Instead, they lectured miners on tactics before the cameras and microphones of a hostile press while the NCB waited until the picket lines went home as the pits closed for Christmas, and moved the coal then.[9]

Responding to the covert activities of the right-wing millionaire David Hart in the coalfields,[10] members of the British judiciary manifested their own class position increasingly through the strike. All but dispensing with any pretence of separation from government, they

7 See for example Becket & Hencke, p. 134.
8 Milne, p. 328.
9 Ibid., p. 19; Becket & Hencke, p. 186.
10 Milne, p. 325.

blatantly embodied one of Thatcher's foremost fighting formations, denying the miners access to their own money and even ownership of their own union, which was put in the hands of a receiver. To maintain the strike, the NUM leadership sought support wherever it might be found, and despite the position of the Labour Movement leadership there was still huge and growing support for the miners throughout the UK and beyond.

One of the ways that histories of those days are misleading is that in concentrating on the cynical activities of the various officialdoms they ignore the huge festival of belief and commitment amongst the unofficial, ardent in their wish to support the strikers and their families whose bravery was increasingly undeniable. As Seumas Milne puts it:

> Throughout the dispute of 1984–5, in the face of a wall of hostile propaganda and nightly scenes of violence played out on television, rarely less than a third of the adult population–representing around 15 million people–supported the NUM and the strike: a strike for jobs and the defence of mining communities, but also a strike for social solidarity and a different kind of Britain.[11]

It was apparent that the strike had crystallised the issues of the coming of Thatcher and we were all involved in a proxy war whether we liked it or not. This is why we still look back to those days: they made apparent what was real and what was not; they also crystallised the effects of the decades of compromise by the official leaderships of the labour movement and revealed the extent to which they had effectively negated themselves. Worse than worthlessness was their soaking-up of the committed work of the good-hearted in local branches and workplaces, rendering it meaningless, its energies dissipated in compromise in the very worst sense of that word. The key qualities of these institutions in their foundations—commitment to change, belief in the possibility of a better world free of exploitation of one class by another, of one human by another, of one gender by another, of one race by another—had been dissipated for an elite's respectability and genteel reward. This institution of British society had come into line with all the others.

Despite them, money was collected by a thousand voluntary organisations and 'Victory to the Miners!' was heard on every high

11 Ibid., p. 59.

street to the accompaniment of the shore-shingle rattle of coins in a bucket. In Cornwall, the support was twinned with St John's Lodge in the Welsh valleys. Cash also came from overseas, some carried across by ferry by teams of volunteers; and in carrier bags of banknotes from the better unions—millions of pounds, and all handed over without receipt, confident in the honesty of truth that this money would get to where it was needed and would be kept out of the hands of banks and receivers.

It took Britain's greatest broadcaster, Ray Gosling, to achieve a key insight into the essence of the issues of the great strike that Autumn. On Radio 4 in early December, he presented *Behind the Last Brazier*, which he termed 'a personal appraisal of the state of the Miners' Strike' through reflections on conversations he'd recorded around Cortonwood—the mine where it had all started what now seemed a lifetime ago.[12] One of the conversations was with the manager of the mine, Alan Hartley, in his office at the pit. Gosling noted a silent National Coal Board representative was also present in the room for the interview.

Hartley spoke of good relationships with the union and workforce, and with pride of the colliery cricket team. 'Yes,' said Gosling, 'Some might say that things are a bit too cosy here. There's a picket line outside, but is it serious?' Hartley snapped back indignantly, 'My men do their duty on the picket line as they do at the coalface!'

After a pause, this astounding moment in radio was interrupted by a quiet but urgent interjection from the NCB minder, the words of which could not be discerned, but the burden of which was clear: this was not the vision of the strike Ian MacGregor or his government sponsors Thatcher, Peter Walker, or Leon Brittan would want to hear, and Alan Hartley must provide a different response. Nevertheless, we had heard the true voice of how things should have been: communal pride, an industry united beyond class and status; the workplace as community; a socialised industry that worked as part of its society.

Here was our issue, our content of discontent. Right here, right now, this must be what our work was about. Now: who was it for?

12 *Behind the Last Brazier*, BBC Radio 4 first broadcast: Sun 9 December 1984, 12:00 on BBC Radio 4 FM (https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/8d1d9e0c8d31dbe386a9b3d86ec1ee30). The programme itself seems to be unavailable–transcriptions are from my memory.

7:84 was predicated on the knowledge of who the audience was, to deliver a specific address in a specific context to affect reality; not pseudo-generalised angst at a mythologically generalised 'human condition', but rather an intervention in human conditions. The word I would come to use was 'efficacy': an effect on the world beyond the theatre, or rather beyond the village hall, the pub, or the open air; the theatres currently being occupied by the enemy's Psyops department. Our work would be for Cornish communities and would also be a working-class voice—that particular voice in this particular place, in the context of the historical struggle currently embodied in the civil war in the coalfields.

Content and context were now in harness, but what about forms? For Sue and I, our primary experience as performers was as musicians—an artform so culturally dominant that it could not only survive without public money, it could spontaneously generate earnings in the street. It spoke to the young and the uneducated and that appeal was immediate, loud, and powerful. And this was of course what anyone would want for their theatre who was looking for success beyond the critical. Like contemporary rock/folk/dance music, our work would happen in communities, in whatever spaces we could find there. We would go out to find our audience.

To Mark, Lucy, Sue, and I, these decisions seemed natural. They caused theatre to align with the cultural circumstances with which we had all grown up, and they brought to bear attitudes, political, cultural, and artistic, that seemed innate. Those days have now gone, and those who have not experienced them may find them all but impossible to imagine. To us, *The Wild One* opposition— 'to what? to whatever you've got'—seemed the only possible position.[13] We were outside the tent of our elders, betters, social superiors, teachers, pundits, politicians, the successful in whatever sphere; and our opportunity and expertise, and the vocabulary we had been bequeathed by experts like Lennon and Dylan and Rosselson and Orwell and Sartre and Kerouac (despite himself), provided the performative hand grenades we could toss into

13 The film *The Wild One* (László Benedek 1953), about nihilistic motor cycle gangs, contains this dialogue:

> Mildred (Peggy Maley): Hey, Johnny, what are you rebelling against?
> Johnny (Marlon Brando): What've you got?

that tent. For us, outside the organised left, as the New Punk Left (the name didn't catch on–unsurprisingly, as I just made it up), there was no wish to occupy the tent, but to rip it to pieces so that exploitation, alienation, and conspiratorial crimes against human freedom could never hatch within its shelter again.

We needed to invent something new, even if only for ourselves. Nothing would be frozen. A39 was to be a permanent research process to prevent a takeover by bourgeois assumptions but also, and predominantly, to prevent boredom—the enemy of sticking power for the readily excitable.

Here was our ideology as we formed A39, and for our first work the localism of McGrath and 7:84 interacted with our burning need to express the issues of the strike after our feeling of irrelevance the previous summer. Playing Place turned out to be, surprisingly, a pit village. Our council estate was a home to workers in two tin mines, Wheal Jane and Mount Wellington, on either side of the valley of the Carnon River below Playing Place. Cornwall is a place full of secrets, only some of which I'm prepared to tell you and only some of which I know, because I only have one lifetime's worth. One is that Cornwall had the UK's highest proportion of derelict land, a result of its own mining industry not of coal but of metal, copper, and tin. We had lived here for only months, and much of that had been spent wandering the UK with Miracle Theatre. We had not even visited a beach. Now began the exploration of Cornwall in every sense.

I would wander the mining wastelands below Playing Place with our dog Matty, kicking up the arsenic heaps and staring down abandoned shafts into unlit depths thinking myself—it is true—privileged beyond measure. No tourist came to these places, only I found it beautiful; I and the Cornish who walked it in rapture with their own dogs and stared up the hillsides at the engine houses emerging from their nests of buddleia mobbed by butterflies, slow circled by buzzards over the poisoned earth.

In this Carnon River Valley, around Bissoe and Twelveheads and Crofthandy, was clearly demonstrated the first of many revelations: the history of a place remains in and on it. It sits on the land and in the hearts of its people in judgement, a perpetual reproach, because what is gone is gone but its claims live on; its demands, its expectations that, because they are the property and the properties of the dead—as the Cornish

put it 'the Old Men'—can never be fulfilled. Our collective history looks us always in the eye and shakes its head in sadness, and it will always be that way until we eventually know we have transcended it to create a world that makes sense.

The two towering headgears of Wellington and Jane on the western and eastern slopes of the valley were surrounded—around, above, below, between, throughout the snaking poisoned valley—by the remains of the industry, granite engine houses going back hundreds of years and older workings in heaps and holes going back thousands. The air stunk of tin; these hillsides, the bottom of this valley, woodwormed with mine shafts and adits—some of them gaping empty holes, some of them crowned with steel lattices. Although the hard rock mining for which the Cornish were world-famous sustained, it no longer dominated world tin production as it long had, with United Downs, just beyond Mount Wellington, known in the nineteenth century as the richest square mile in the world.

With its history marked in massive granite monuments that defy time, never to be overrun by nature but grown over and round to become of it, mining is a part of Cornwall—a fundamental aspect of how the Cornish see themselves. We would create a show that supported the Miners' Strike through telling the story of Cornish mining.

It was clear that to pursue seriously this kind of theatre, it was necessary to immerse ourselves in the life and the culture and the history of Cornwall. Mark and I read books we found in libraries that discussed tin and copper mining with respect to other aspects of Cornish communities, and would sit the in library of the Royal Cornwall Museum in Truro reading the old newspapers: the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* and *The West Briton*. In the 1980s, the latter was still a significant factor in Cornish life. In those days before the internet, and with very limited local television coverage of Cornwall, the appearance each Thursday of *The West Briton* (or 'The Ancient Briton' as we called it) in village Spar shops and post offices would be the occasion of a visit from every household. It was thick and broadsheet in format, and the piles of each local edition would diminish rapidly. It still effectively functioned as a newspaper of record for Cornwall, and each copy would be worked through from the front-page headline to the euchre league results. It was a lot of reading; an old tradition of public service was still the unspoken

assumption. There is no contemporary equivalent, certainly not today's local press with its nationally owned and orchestrated reprints of the press releases of incumbent Conservatives, and tiny editorial staff told to focus on farming 'clicks' for the online version.

In those former times the local weekly newspapers—the *Briton* along with its sister papers *The Cornish Guardian* and *The Cornishman*, plus *The Cornish Times*, *The Packet*, *The St Ives Times & Echo*—and the Cornish edition of the daily *Western Morning News* enabled a large degree of shared knowledge amongst the Cornish public that was part of a wider feeling of coherence, also creating a sense of weight in public life through the demonstration of a sense of editorial duty. To fill some gaps there was also the monthly *Peninsular Voice* based in Penzance, with substantial, serious cultural coverage and a very well-informed waspish practice in local-political exposé that made *Private Eye* look cautious and understated. The resulting litigation eventually left the inspired and inspiring editor Peter Wright-Davis an exhausted martyr but the public, and A39 in particular, had much to thank him for.

The social media that is credited with now occupying the shared space then represented by print has almost nothing in common with that which it has usurped. For a while, that was one way things might have gone, but instead it has been monetarised into a market for, or the manipulation of, selectively commodified 'opinion'.[14] There is no usefully balanced view to be expertly discerned in the aetheric chatter of life in this nebulous murk of neoliberal capitalism; there is no forum in which discussion can attain significance. You can spend many days on Twitter and Facebook without coming across any ideas beyond your own, if you still have any; where they do contend it is through the rules and vocabulary of a cat fight. The sustenance of community through shared knowledge has been another victim of the profit motive. Once the focusing of attention was worth money irrespective of content, attention too was bought and sold-out. In terms of local news, this produces content as qualitatively undifferentiated parallel strands of gossip, trailed on the 'You Won't Believe What Happened Next!' principle.

14 For some idea of the full horrors of where we are with this, see e.g. Christopher Wylie's *Mindf*ck: Inside Cambridge Analytica's Plot to Break the World* (London: Profile Books 2019).

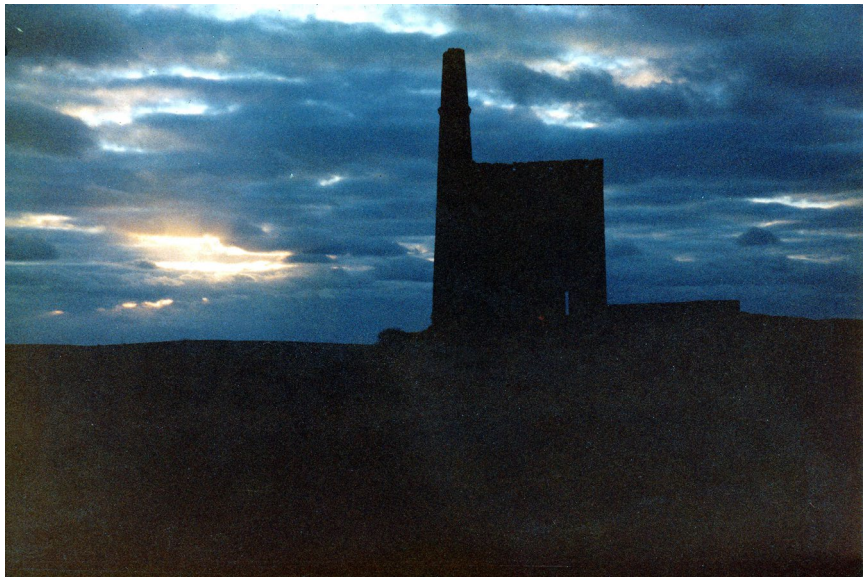

Fig. 7. The classic silhouette of a Cornish mine's engine house: United Downs, Cornwall, 1984. Photo by the author (CC BY-NC 4.0).

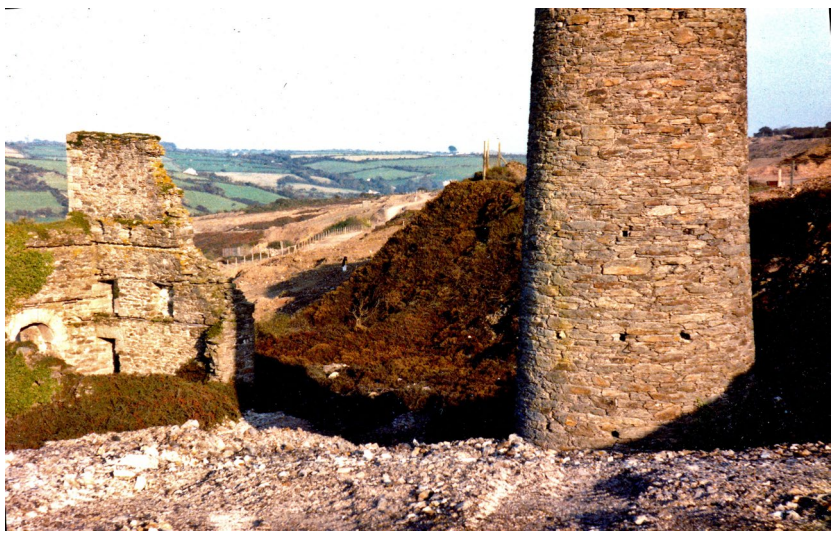

Fig. 8. Granite mine buildings on the slopes above Wheal Maid, 1984. The Carnon Valley can be seen in the distance. Photo by the author (CC BY-NC 4.0).

Fig. 9. The bare ground of Cornwall's hard rock mining, 1984, poisoned by arsenic and other heavy metals in mine waste. Much of this has now been reclaimed by vegetation but then, with the industry still active, the process had hardly begun. Photo by the author (CC BY-NC 4.0).

Fig. 10. Wheal Jane tin mine at Baldhu, 1984. Then still very much in operation, it was the great hope of modern Cornish mining. Photo by the author (CC BY-NC 4.0).

Newspapers in the archives, a few old books about mining and the people of Cornwall—it wasn't a substantial list of resources. It later turned out that Nick Darke, contemporaneously writing the Restormel community play *The Earth Turned Inside Out*, used an entire sermon quoted from a Cornish Methodist preacher in A.K. Hamilton-Jenkin's *Cornwall and Its People* that we also put into *One & All!*.[15] No doubt there was more out there, but, operating without assistance, we hadn't found it yet. (Other sources we used are detailed in the Bibliography.)

We collectively discussed the results of the research alongside the issues and events of the Miners' Strike, then Mark and I—as the would-be writers in the company—began work to put the show together. We did not approach it as an integrated play, but as a series of discrete episodes. Mark christened this form 'cabaret documentary'. We decided which topics we wanted to include and listed the forms we would use, then Mark and I composed the elements individually.

Everything was an experiment, everything an exercise in discovery. A repeated theme of the play, and much Cornish historical and creative work, is emigration. At each of the many times of slump, the Cornish have been forced to leave for far distant lands in order to pursue their lives and livelihood in hard rock mining. I wrote a song called *The Tinners' Jig*, and we worked on a comically minimal dance to go with it. In balancing the various demands on the song in terms of conveying information and McGrath's 'unwritten entertainment contract',[16] the piece turned into something we had not expected. The middle eight of the song was–

> All along the shorelines you can see the families kissing goodbye,
> They say, 'Good luck, good fortune, learn to write soon,'
> But the departing tinners are so sad, you can see they feel their lives are ending.

15 A. K. Hamilton Jenkin, *Cornwall and Its People: Being a New Impression of the Composite Work Including Cornish Seafarers 1932, Cornwall and the Cornish 1933, Cornish Homes and Customs 1934* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles 1970). *The Earth Turned Inside Out* was later reworked as *Ting Tang Mine*. See Nick Darke, *Plays: 1: The Dead Monkey/The King of Prussia/The Body/Ting Tang Mine* (London: Methuen Drama 1999).

16 John McGrath, *A Good Night Out*, p. 75.

> Haggard faces, dark-rimmed eyes, it certainly seems that they must die soon,
> But maybe they can live a little longer and some money to their families be sen-ding

Though the sadness of the verses was played bathetically for comedy, this section was delivered as melodrama, with the final syllable extended until the singer ran out of breath. As this indicates, there came to be a strong element of irony and mockery of the sentimental in the show. This section led into the story of Constable Rosevear: the true tale of a St Austell policeman who, during a food shortage, became so appalled at hoarding by warehouse owners to drive up prices that he led tin miners in an assault on the stores. This scene took the form of doggerel delivered by a music hall style cliché policeman, all knee-bends and hello-hello-hellos. The effect of this was to parenthesise his appalling fate, to be 'hanged in the town, then strung up in chains on St. Austell Down'. There is a vulnerability in laughter, and here the material played against audience expectation in a sudden, chilling ending (see Fig. 11).

The modular approach to the show was predicated on previous experience in music and in street theatre but also in the traditions of political theatre, including McGrath's description of the Blue Blouse movement[17] and, in particular, agitprop. We delightedly clasped these traditions to ourselves, demanded there should be capitalists in top hats, and insisted on workers with clenched fists (see Fig. 12). The show was avowedly didactic, conveying large quantities of information. It was eventually called *One & All!–An unofficial history of tin mining in Cornwall*, and was social history told entirely in terms of the tin miners, Bal maidens,[18] and their families. 'One and All', the official motto of Cornwall (in Kernewek 'Onen hag Oll'), was used here as a socialist slogan. The play worked through the history of the industrial revolution here in its mining and engineering heartland, and up to the South Crofty strike of 1939, which we used to satirise the distortions of the media in covering the Miners' Strike, their tacit deference to the elitist misanthropies of the employer, and the personal attacks visited on the

17 McGrath, p. 26.

18 Bal maidens: women who worked on the surface at Cornish mines, often breaking up lumps of ore for the 'stamps'.

trade unionist; the interruption of any statement of principle and intent so that the aim of the strike could be misrepresented. This strategy of the media was still shocking to us at that time, our demand for justice in better representation not yet replaced by the cynical resignation that is now the keynote national state of mind (see Fig. 13).

This led into a big finish item, the *Ode to Wheal Jane*. Wheal Jane mine at Baldhu (Fig. 10) was seen at that time as the great hope of Cornish mining, the first deep mine opened in Europe for fifty years. But it came into the world reliant on a global commodity market and now found itself operating amidst the ever-more untrammelled capitalism of the 1980s, with the new factors of Thatcherite monetarism and Reaganomics rampant in the world. In these circumstances contemporary Cornish mining maintained a perceptibly fragile existence. It needed a tin price of £7500 a tonne to keep it alive, at the time surpassed substantially but by no means securely. Behind the scenes, the price was maintained by an organisation called the International Tin Council (ITC) through strategic buying. We would be hearing much more about the ITC within a very short time.

In the 1980s, the industry still had the atmosphere of the gamble that was traditional in Cornish mining, never nationalised like the coal industry; resurrecting and dying through centuries of boom and bust, from ridiculous riches to poverty and pain, with the worst suffering reserved for the poorest, the working miners and their families.

The play began:

> Look up at the hillsides in almost any part of Cornwall
> and you will see the remains of some forgotten tin mine.

Contemporary Cornish mining was nowhere near as ubiquitous as it had been, but was totemic. Modern tin miners were now well-paid in Cornish terms and were firmly organised in the Transport and General Workers' Union. They were the custodians of the image that Cornwall cherished of herself: rather than a backwater holiday destination, for the Cornish she was the centre of a world wide web of hard-rock mining expertise and engineering excellence.

Ode to Wheal Jane, as an illustration of the precarious nature of the Cornish industry, proved to be all too prophetic.

The show also included a song in the Kernewek language—*Tre Bosvennegh*, which means 'Bodmin Town'—which we found in the book *Hengan* by Merv Davey, and used to introduce an impression of the famous Cornish singer Brenda Wootton in performance of her best-known song *Lamorna*. Again, this was McGrath's Unwritten Entertainment Contract in action. Audiences loved this character, 'Brenda Woodburner', with her backing band of musical tinners executing the Shadows' Walk, and Sue was a singer to equal even lovely Brenda, who would soon start coming to our shows herself (see Fig. 14).

Having come up with a list of the elements of the show and populated the list with performance styles and content, we began to rehearse. Sue and I had become involved—through Keith Spurgin, the local Workers Educational Association organiser who had helped to organise Roll Up Theatre—with a new community and unemployed centre in Truro. The ideological actions of the Thatcher government had thrown so many people out of work across the UK that unemployment was itself becoming an industry. The employment situation here was anyway usually chronic, with the Cornish proverbial 'proper job' generally considered an unlikely discovery. To the UK state, Cornwall was (and is) like a distant corner of empire exploited only for raw materials and the exotic. It was the place where recession hit first, and recovery came last and often not at all, commonly still experiencing the last depression when the next one hit. Cornwall had yet to completely recover from the effects of the Great Slump in the late nineteenth century when the Tin Boom had burnt out, her people as so often before assembling at her ports like their Irish Celtic cousins, to be shipped overseas. It took until the 1960s for Cornwall's population to reattain the level of a century before.[19]

Altogether, this was a great market for a centre to mitigate the issues of unemployment; not financially but socially, emotionally, and intellectually. It was set up in the basement of St Paul's Church on Tregolls Road in Truro, a Victorian edifice ill-advisedly constructed from some kind of crumbling stone (these days abandoned and perpetually

19 Bernard Deacon, *Population Change in Cornwall Since 1801*, https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/bitstream/handle/10036/19712/PopulationchangeinCornwallsince1801?sequence=1.

awaiting demolition), and so it was called The Crypt Centre. It was supported by Church Action with the Unemployed and the Bishop's [of Truro] Forum and it would also host office space for the WEA and other humanitarian initiatives. It was proposed that our new theatre company be based there, and we also became involved with its organisation and management. We had absolutely fallen on our feet.

There was a long, stone room in which we could rehearse (working around the pillars that held up the church above) and hugely useful photocopying facilities. There was even a CBM microcomputer, though being without a printer or even a word-processing programme (both hardware and software were very expensive in those days), nobody knew what to do with it, so I wrote it a programme to randomly generate poetry.

Our decision that the new company was to be called A39 Theatre Group was made in the face of ideas for more characteristically agitpropista names, Red this and Red that (hmm, come to think of it 'Red This & That' was an opportunity missed). 'Red Jelly' was one of my suggestions, I remember. With nomenclative inspiration of this quality to draw on, perhaps we were wise to name ourselves instead after the road that connected our two towns, Falmouth and Truro, with its genesis in a mini roundabout almost under a railway bridge, then winding south west to north east across Cornwall. We liked the fact that the A39 was so inclusive while being generally overlooked in favour of the A30 and the A38 as the recognised highways into Cornwall, as though it sneaked out somehow and slipped in sideways.

We started rehearsing *One & All!* (musical theatre was not yet such a big sore on the face of the drama, so I demand we are forgiven the exclamation mark) in the Crypt Centre in early 1985. There is a newspaper cutting from, of course, *The West Briton* with a photo of the three A39 performers taken at one of our first rehearsals, dressed in randomly selected costumes: Sue wearing a striped jumper she had knitted for me, Mark sinister in shades and suit, me in a tailcoat and that bloody blue beret doing a Chuck Berry 'duckwalk' with a black Fender Stratocaster. It was published the following Thursday in the *What's On* arts section. We were a media fact, if nothing else yet.

Part of the deal with the Crypt was that we ran theatre workshops for the WEA, and through this we began to build what turned out to

be another necessity of what would these days be termed 'socially engaged art': a hinterland; a social and/or cultural and/or political/personal context. Through participation in the unemployed workers' movement, we began to make contact with other community groups in similar situations to the Crypt, and members of Cornish Labour parties (who were on the whole to the left of Neil Kinnock's soggy-stumbling yet divisive leadership), trade unionists, and those we met through our research. The piece in *The West Briton*, we discovered, made us known to the Cornish theatre world. Although we had not yet done anything, apparently not doing anything could be quite a good career move.

I also participated in, and sometimes ran, Truro Writers' Workshop, inaugurated at The Crypt. At first this consisted mainly of volunteers at the centre, but then began to attract those from further afield. It was an uncommon kind of initiative in those times. We would set each other exercises: to write from titles or first lines perhaps. I found the working through of formally constructed writing tedious, especially the application of punctuation that steered everything onto railway tracks of conformity. I preferred free verse or concrete poetry and the short and the strange generally—odd assemblages of words that seemed to suggest each other, their peculiar combinations leading to unsought places. The question was what to do with such writing. In the capitalist world, writing too must be distributable in the commodified packaging of books, otherwise it seemed cursed to remain private. Such insights were clues to where my own work would need to go.

The logistics of the time, in a Cornwall that was all but job-vacancy free, was that the journey of artistic discovery mixed with community volunteering was supported in the form of Supplementary Benefit (supplementary to the Unemployment Benefit that had to be qualified for and which was time-limited to one year), for which we must all 'sign on' once a fortnight at the Jobcentre, identifying ourselves with our yellow (later white) 'UB40' cards. It was through the existence of this support mechanism that the UK Welfare State had become the basis for British revelation in the arts, with a global significance far beyond its population size. In this capacity it was even celebrated in Wham's/George Michael's breakthrough hit *Wham Rap*. Much of this benefit money was thus an investment, reaping rewards in national kudos and foreign exchange, but this did not prevent the Thatcher

government essaying early skirmishes in the war on its existence, as an aspect of the class war that the Conservative Party never ceases to fight. So another activity at The Crypt was a Claimants Union to defend people against the increasing number of Catch 22s being built into the system. We never lost a case, and enjoyed an excellent relationship with the union branch of the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) at the local Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) office on Truro's Lemon Quay. At one stage, The Crypt Centre would be assailed in the pages of the local press for being 'run by communists' and 'displaying anti-DHSS posters', and we could happily reveal that the posters had actually been provided by the very workers we were supposed to be attacking. It was important that A39 had such a hinterland of community engagement.[20]

At first, the work in our rehearsals was to share and work up the ideas for the sections, arranging and rearranging the order. So the show was structured to a set list like a music act, which for Sue and I at least was what we were used to. This encouraged an aesthetic imported from the music mode too, of performance straight out to the audience rather than towards each other. There was no attitude to a fourth wall, that dividing line and defining relationship of most theatre, because there was no possibility of any such pretence, or of any pretence at all. The audience was frankly acknowledged at all times. The play was performed as a performance. The attitude was that the creative act in theatre should itself be part of the spectacle; that the value of the performer was demonstrated in the ability to conjure up a character before the audience's very eyes. This was the showbiz of agitprop.

The previous October, Elvis Costello and the Attractions had played at the Cornwall Coliseum along the south Cornish coast at Carlyon Bay. I loved Costello's work, but live he brought new dimensions to the music: he didn't just sing it, he didn't just play it—he lived it, and this was the mode in which he *performed* it. The bitter world his lyrics explored, a musical equivalent of the literary Greeneland, was conjured up as the world of the stage.[21] The driving, intense music of The Attractions formed

20 An example of a statement of principles of 1970/80s Claimants Unions can be found at https://www.eastlondonbigflame.org.uk/files/9.3_ClaimantsLeaflet.pdf

21 '"Greeneland," as critics have called it, is a place of seedy degradation where the possibility of moral identity is always qualified by a sense of conditional failure,

the soundtracks of a series of films that were invisible but embodied in the figure of Elvis Costello as he expressed it all in everything he was. He is an astonishing performer, intensely theatrical while staying absolutely true to his material.

But this was hugely exceptional. Theatrical moments in music were most commonly present as a group emerged onstage and seized the world by beginning to play, the miracle of their music born again; performance, *theatre!* But this quality was then generally abandoned, its excitements and demands allowed to deflate as the small repertoire of possibilities of the mainstream gig played itself out and the performance moment was hopefully resurrected only in clichéd gestures to get the audience to clap along as the band built up to a big finish, to invoke the ritual of the encore: this even in the heady days of the counterculture when musicians were both prophets and gods—even in *punk* for Christ's sake! It was all a bit pathetic.

What if that moment of intense possibility at the beginning of it all was not abandoned? What if it could be just the beginning of an event of continuing significance? In *One & All!*, the theatre moment was also evoked in the opening and closing of the show: it started and ended like a gig with an adaptation of a traditional song performed by Dick Gaughan, *Craigie Hill*—a song about enforced emigration from Ireland, also a continuing motif of Cornish history.[22] So we arranged it as *Carnkie Hill* to evoke the cost of dead Cornish mines, a cost the coal miners were about to discover in their own communities as Thatcher and her hard-man McGregor at the National Coal Board set about systematically destroying England's, Wales's, and Scotland's mining communities simply in order to remove their union as a political force.

What were we as performers? How would we perform this stuff? Was it slow, was it fast? Was it passionate? Was it kind? Was it hard?

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where "the center cannot hold." It is a world in which [novelist Graham Greene's] protagonists find their moral identities in terms of rebellion and reaction, and seem unable to conceive of a world they might support. In Greeneland, apparently, the reader can discover a world as it should not be, never its obverse ideal.' Laura Tracy, 'Passport to Greeneland', *College Literature*, 12.1 (1985), 45–52.

22 *Craigie Hill* can be found on Dick Gaughan's album *A Handful of Earth*, Topic Records 1981.

Was it loud or was it quiet? Was it neutral as though performed by masks? Keith Johnstone's *Impro* was a major theatre text of the time.[23] His theories on story were compelling and have influenced me ever since—we had less time for his exploration of mask work as possession, instinctually perhaps reacting against its metaphysics. This was not the way A39 would go.

Through *Impro*, Johnstone's work on improvisation at the Royal Court and afterwards had informed the theatre workshops around which Roll Up Theatre, including Mark and Lucy, had formed in Falmouth. The practice that informed the book had much in common with Chris Waddilove's improvisation sessions at Group 64 in London, at which Sue and I had first met in 1974. Johnstone's iteration of improvisation as a part of theatre, and his techniques for stimulating and developing it, rendered *Impro* not only a standard manual but pretty much a philosophical treatise. The book is founded on Johnstone's own perceived need to cure himself of his education through the development of a teaching practice that was stimulating and freeing, rather than punishing and inhibiting. The effect on a theatre practitioner of undertaking extensive improvisation is analogous to the effects of LSD on musicians. Instead of being a machine for the replication of lines of dialogue in response to the stimulus of the appropriate cues, suddenly your entire intelligence and creativity are present and engaged in the entire performance. The transformation is permanent. You find yourself alive and exploring on stage and eventually you find the tightrope where you and the audience meet in the tension of their attention. The easiest way to locate this is through the stimulation of laughter, which is perhaps why most improvisation goes immediately for the comedic. But having found yourself awake and aware on stage there is certainly no temptation ever to go back to more traditional performance. A39 was always a product of this awareness and used its techniques in rehearsal to feel ourselves towards a performance style that we discovered to be big in dynamics. We came to formulate our theatre as being of and in the everyday, a dialogue with audience.

23 Keith Johnstone, *Impro* (Bungay: Methuen 1981).

Yet how could we assume a shared aesthetic basis with this notional audience of which no knowledge yet existed? We would need to invent everything from scratch live in the public view in the most public of public places. And this could assume no prior knowledge of the social event of theatre: who could go, where to go, how much to pay, who to pay. I found a formulation of this approach in Brecht's *Messingkauf Dialogues*:

> The other day I met my audience
> In a dusty street
> He gripped a pneumatic drill in his fists.
>
> For a second he looked up. Rapidly I set up my theatre
> Between the houses. He
> Looked expectant.
>
> In the pub
> I met him again. He was standing at the bar.
> Grimy with sweat, he was drinking. In his fist
> A thick sandwich. Rapidly I set up my theatre. He
> Looked astonished.
>
> Today
> I brought it off again. Outside the station
> With brass bands and rifle butts I saw him
> Being herded off to war.
> In the midst of the crowd
> I set up my theatre. Over his shoulder
> He looked back
> And nodded.[24]

We were performers who set up our theatre in these public places in the public gaze. We performed in the end exactly who we were—we ourselves in the presence of this audience of these people here in this place, Falmouth, Truro, Helston, Hayle, St Ives, Pendeen, Bodmin, Calstock, Liskeard, Wadebridge, Newquay, St Agnes, Redruth, Camborne: wherever, whenever, here/us/now, performing or enacting or being/living this thing now; not hiding.

24 Bertolt Brecht, 'Fragments from the Fourth Night', in *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, trans. and ed. by John Willett (London: Bloomsbury 2012).

Fig. 11. 'There are laws more important than those made in court'–the true story of Constable Rosevear. Photo by George J. Greene (CC BY 4.0).

Fig. 12. The class war, wrong side winning: Lord Knacker gets his topper shined. Photo by George J. Greene (CC BY 4.0).

Fig. 13. *One & All!*–the 1939 South Crofty Strike: the Convener gets to speak. Photo by George J. Greene (CC BY 4.0).

Fig. 14. *One & All!*–McGrath's 'Unwritten Entertainment Contract' in action: Brenda Woodburner And Her Boys. Photo by George J. Greene (CC BY 4.0).

4. Street Theatre and Cabaret

A39 continued the street theatre practice that Miracle Theatre had based on mine and Sue's street repertoire. But with A39, far more confident and confrontational–and louder!– in the face of the shopping public, street theatre was more integrated and central to what we did and had a definitive effect on our developing performance style. We created and continually refined an original street set, and used the same material and attitude to also develop a cabaret act.

It was important that every aspect of the work enacted our prime purpose. So now we performed political songs, often with acoustic guitars in our assorted styles: Mark jazzy, and me very loud even though unamplified, through a drone-based punk-folk style I had developed (often to remarkably little enthusiasm from the organisers) in upcountry folk clubs. I broke a lot of strings, which I would repair and use again.

Mark put his style to good use from the very first in his song *U.S. Marines*, which began:

> Have you ever been to Laos, watched the setting sun
> With a Singapore queen?

It was complex material for street performance, and an excellent indication of just how ambitious we needed to be, constantly placing demands on ourselves to find the ways practically to express facets of things we needed to say. Without communication there was no point to us. We could never be 'just' entertainment—McGrath's contract was binding on both sides.

We also used acapella singing, with harmony and syncopation influenced by Bristol's 'Mr Sprat's Twenty-First Century Popular Motets', who we had seen performing at Elephant Fayre and at Ashton Park when we were touring with Miracle; or accompanied by Ringo, my drum machine. After years of practice, I could hold Ringo in one hand

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0329.06

and switch between rhythm patterns with my thumb without looking. It was amplified through a battery-powered practice amp. This was an unusual sound in the streets in the mid-1980s, and also served to underpin some really daft dancing.

So we had *The Stockbroker Rap*, not quite as much a cliché then as that sort of thing would later become, performed wearing cardboard bowler hats. Less expected was *CND and the Greens*. Over a doo-wop backing of 'Ban that bomb–ooh', after verses and chorus revealing this was a comment on the Greenham Airbase anti-Cruise missile protests, now of hallowed memory, this finished:

> We tied ribbons to the fences
> Saying 'Heseltine's a silly sausage!'
> Then we climbed in our Morris Traveller
> And went home to our cottage
> Went to sleep, we all have lovely dreams
> I'm CND, these are my friends the Greens.

Material like this used to cause some confusion—surely we were attacking those who should have been our allies? But we wanted to make things quite clear: we were not liberals; we were not interested in single-issue campaigns that inferred a wish to correct a particular blemish on the face of Capitalist society. For us, its violence, injustices, and inequalities were expressions of an unacceptable essence. As a member of an audience on the political cabaret circuit in London would say to us a few months later: 'The others pretend it's all simple, but you don't do that.'

We also had some more avant-garde performance pieces. The *Political Alphabet*, Mark's idea, was twenty-six elements of movement with vocal sound effects, each denoting a political concept or event beginning with each successive letter. After running them all bafflingly fast as a sequence, we would go through them one by one, and hence got to deliver several minutes of pure socialist propaganda, keeping it funny and entertaining. In cabaret we would get the audience to shout out guesses at what each item was, and this was very effective in getting people involved and interacting. We encouraged mockery. The A39 that would turn up to perform plays were serious chaps, but our street theatre and cabaret were full of punk irony and insolence.

One of the skills I had picked up while living in East Anglia (alongside the ability to drive a bus) was the Morris dance *Shepherd's Hey*. We now adapted this as *The Policemen's Morris*. Sue would play the tune on a bucolic recorder while Mark and I—with bells attached, and dressed in plastic police riot helmets and carrying shields and truncheons in a joke-shop version of the gear the police had used to attack the miners—did the dance. During the 'B' part of the tune, when proper Morris dancers would knock their sticks together, we would knock truncheons together; then formally and rhythmically beat each other senseless to the ground. We made no comment on this satire on events on the picket lines outside Britain's pits. Everybody got it. It was funny; it was the needle.[1]

Altogether, our performance group of three (Lucy would bottle, i.e. work the crowd for money) was powerful and brash. The drum machine rhythms were a crowd-gatherer. The big performance styles necessary in the street fed into our indoor style of play performance and gave it a particular quality of personal engagement, each with our own public persona and an unusually extended range of performance dynamics. The composition of these short performance pieces was freeing, allowing lots of different kinds of experiments in possibilities of form and content, like the short abstract pieces of writing I had discovered to be so much to my taste at Truro Writers' Workshop. And we found new ways to express engagement: as our cabaret practice developed, we found ourselves performing often on the same bill as The Thundering Typhoons—a brilliant punk-folk group of travellers living on Rusudgeon Common, between Helston and Penzance (see Fig. 29). When their community was evicted, I wrote an acapella song called *Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Hee, the Property Owning Democracy* that A39 would perform for the next twenty years:

> Property is power and there's none to spare
> Where's your piece of paper saying you can live there?
> Now play the game, you've got to quit the scene
> Because you've been evicted by legal means.

1 You can see a proper stick version of *Shepherd's Hey*, without the violence, performed by the Knightlow Morris Men at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CT8NuoN2fvg

Our earnings through street performances were vitally necessary. We had no money and no financial support. No one in the world of funding would answer the phone to us, even if we'd had a phone. The only people we came into contact with in such circles saw A39 as at best an inconvenient irrelevance, at worst a threat to a carefully rationalised *status quo*. We had arrived as a result of factors beyond the realm of art and our cause defined us, who we were, and what any of us could be—describers of another world, socialists.

And we were not easy to know, brusque working-class contrarians. When it came to staging our show, we rejected what we perceived as the Thatcherite privileging of production values—shiny lights, shiny things, shiny people. Our props came from the joke shop. We would hitchhike to Camborne or Penzance for a particularly plangent tatty piece of plastic. Our costumes came from charity shops, the shiniest suit trousers and waistcoats and cloth caps and braces, sensible shirts. We actively embraced clichéd portrayals of the timeless worker as a homage to our own precarious tradition, part of constructing a performative identity by inventing and discovering an aesthetic every day in every action.

We had no van, just Lucy's green Renault 12 after my old Saab 96, Emerald, was abandoned to the breakers of United Downs, so our staging needed to be transportable in or on a car. Mark designed three screens with thin wooden frames stiffened with a diagonal, covered and coloured with bed sheets, assembled using coach bolts, wing nuts, and drawing pins. When hinged together, by angling the side frames slightly forward the assembly was self-standing and stable—a backdrop behind which we could change costumes and hide our props and musical instruments: a guitar, a melodica, a mandolin, and a tambourine. Otherwise, everything was created in full public view, no illusions.

We were working towards our first performance of *One & All!* at the Crypt Centre when, historically and heartbreakingly—and inconveniently—on the third of March 1985, the great Miners' Strike ended.

The miners went back to work without a deal: as Thatcher wanted, as MacGregor wanted, as all those of bad faith and bad hearts wanted. Thatcher's PR man Tim Bell said that they wanted the miners to go back

'With their tails between their legs'.[2] All those who kept their true views beneath the cloak of hypocrisy wanted their sneers to be decorated with the word defeat.

The winter had been hard. NUM photographer Martin Jenkinson's photos[3] show miners and their families digging up lumps of discarded coal between railway tracks and from the snowy, dirty deserts of slag heaps and wastelands, to bring some ironic warmth to the homes of those who had once dug tons of it daily. Some children were killed at this scavenging when the bank they had undermined fell on them. And always there was the slow pox of the individual crises as once-proud striker turned to shame-filled scab, to be bussed to the pithead by the contemptible and contemptuous paramilitary police. Some couldn't stand it and would return to the strike, but overall the drift had become inexorable.

The miners marched back to work beneath their banners and behind their brass bands, both of which would in their different ways soon be consigned to the class of the historical, in an impression of victory that brought no spoils. There were some holdouts, notably in Scotland and in Kent, to demand the reinstatement of miners sacked during the strike for some alleged misdemeanour, but this stand too would be denied. In the smug arrogance of Tory victory, even those found not guilty in a court would be sentenced to sustaining unemployment by Thatcher and MacGregor in places where there was no other work.

And soon the closures would begin, and would continue till there was all but nothing left to close—an industry killed to pursue a mad, sick politics that has now played out over decades into the chaos always implicit in Thatcher's most famous assertion: '[W]ho is society? There is no such thing! Only individual men and women, and there are families…'.[4] Her true legacy is now clear: a country without values in which everything has been market-tested to destruction; the communities once occupied by miners and their families without work, without any kind

2 Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable 2009), p. 220.

3 See Mark Metcalf, Martin Jenkinson, and Mark Harvey, *The Miners' Strike* (*Images of the Past*) (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books 2014).

4 Margaret Thatcher, interview for the magazine *Woman's Own* (23 September 1987). Transcription at the Margaret Thatcher foundation, https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689

of bond, ragged and rotted away. Places once strong and self-educated, the seats of class consciousness and the autodidact, attained the full array of the implicit products of Thatcherism, Majorism, and Blairism: unemployment and drug addiction; closed shops and broken hearts; without mining, without pride, and with no reason for themselves.

Closing this industry to destroy the collective voice of the miners cost Britain half the profits of the North Sea gas and oil field, and burned wastefully through its products in order to negate King Coal; while Norway used such profits for a sovereign wealth fund.[5] Pioneering investigation of the potential for clean coal power—at which the British industry, with the commitment of the miners, led the world—was closed and flattened along with all the rest.[6] The transition to low pay, low security, low-skilled 'service' industries has seen the UK's steel works, factories, and pitheads levelled, capped, and concrete-rafted to support shopping malls and heritage sites. Through the attack on Britain's extraction and manufacturing industries by its own government, from a position of industrial power and self-reliance Britain has mutated into a museum of itself that nobody should be bothered to visit.

> 'I've often been asked the question: had the miners any alternative in 1984? Yes, they had. The miners could have capitulated. Scargill, Heathfield and McGahey could have said: "There you are, walk over the top of us." You had an alternative in 1984–I'm proud you did not take it. Be proud that you defended the interests of the British people.' Mick McGahey, speech at Mayfield Labour Club, Dalkeith, Midlothian 11 March 1994.[7]

We agreed. And we felt the burning need for revenge and to avenge; and we carried on working towards the debut.

5 Becket & Hencke, p. 256.
6 Seumas Milne, 'Preface', in *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners*, 4th edn (London: Verso 2014); Becket & Hencke, p. 255.
7 Quoted by Milne, p. 352.

5. Touring *One & All!*

That first performance happened in what was also our rehearsal space in the Crypt Centre, as if the show had formed itself from extrusions of the stone walls and floor. The transition into public performance was to step forward into another level whilst still in our everyday surroundings. And this seemed analogous: A39 finding its material, its attitude, and its relationships in the everyday of our lives and offering it for an audience to judge the significance of our findings in their history and the stuff of their own contemporary lives. This was how we found our way to a theatre of modern Cornwall, not from the repertoire of the History of The Theatre with big teary-eyed sentimental Capitals, not in the history of art of any kind or any of the other assumptions and accoutrements of privilege, but in our lives on the council estate and cold Cornwall winter lets. We believed there was hope in the everyday people who were our neighbours and targets, whose parents and grandparents had survived and maintained the knowledge of all that past pain. Together we would redeem that history by unlocking it and using it to found hope in the belief that a better world could be made of this one.

That first performance at The Crypt was before a small audience of members and invitees. It was hard to assess its success in these circumstances. The predominant reaction seemed to be surprise at what we'd made. Or that we'd made anything. To continue this investigation, we would need to set out on tour.

Lucy, the administrator of the collective, had been busy contacting various groups with which we could claim some affinity. The Crypt Centre led us to other community initiatives under the aegis of the Bishop's Forum, Social Services, or the Youth Service. Lucy and Mark had been Labour Party members and we contacted local Labour groups, and anyone else we could think of who might arrange a show for us.

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While researching in the Royal Cornwall Museum, we had seen a poster from 1847 headed 'From the Mayor and Magistrates of Helston to the Mining and Labouring Classes'. It was effectively a reading of the Riot Act in visual aid form in the time of riots against food shortages that we dealt with in *One & All!* through the story of Constable Rosevear. I asked one of the staff if a copy was available to buy. Having seen my fascination with the poster manifested on every visit, he simply took it from its frame and photocopied it for me. The man was a people's hero. With the aid of Tippex and Letraset, the lingua franca of 1980s graphic design at the budget end of the market, we turned this into our master poster for the show (see Fig. 15).

Without a phone, postage stamps, phone boxes, and foot-slogging our posters round local shops were our promotional tools. In the times before the web and social media, people were prepared to work at communication, supported by nationalised state structures. I remember posting a letter in Playing Place to George Greene one Friday morning and him receiving it in Falmouth that afternoon. We could get phone messages through The Crypt. Slowly gigs began to assemble.

First, I think, was Hayle Labour Party, who organised a performance one evening at Bodriggy School, the primary in the council estate above the town. Again it went OK, but the interval was a pain. There was nowhere to go and nothing to do except mill about. Intervals are pointless without merchandise, even if it's just tea and coffee and a few saffron buns, and we didn't have the time or inclination to organise that. We hadn't done all this to become caterers, though it would have helped with our finances, especially as we felt we should keep our tickets cheap. To our surprise, there were members of 7:84 England in the audience. Goodness knows what they thought; we didn't ask, aware that these were early days and things weren't yet what they would come to be. Every aspect of everything we did was part of a constant experiment to discover what it meant to be a Cornish political theatre company, to be a revolutionary theatre company, to be a working-class theatre company, to avoid all assumptions of what theatre had to be. We wanted to discover the least it was so we could make it do the most work with the minimum of wasteful tradition, with the most intensity and efficacy; to cause people to fight for change in the real world. We wanted it to be a part of everyday discourse.

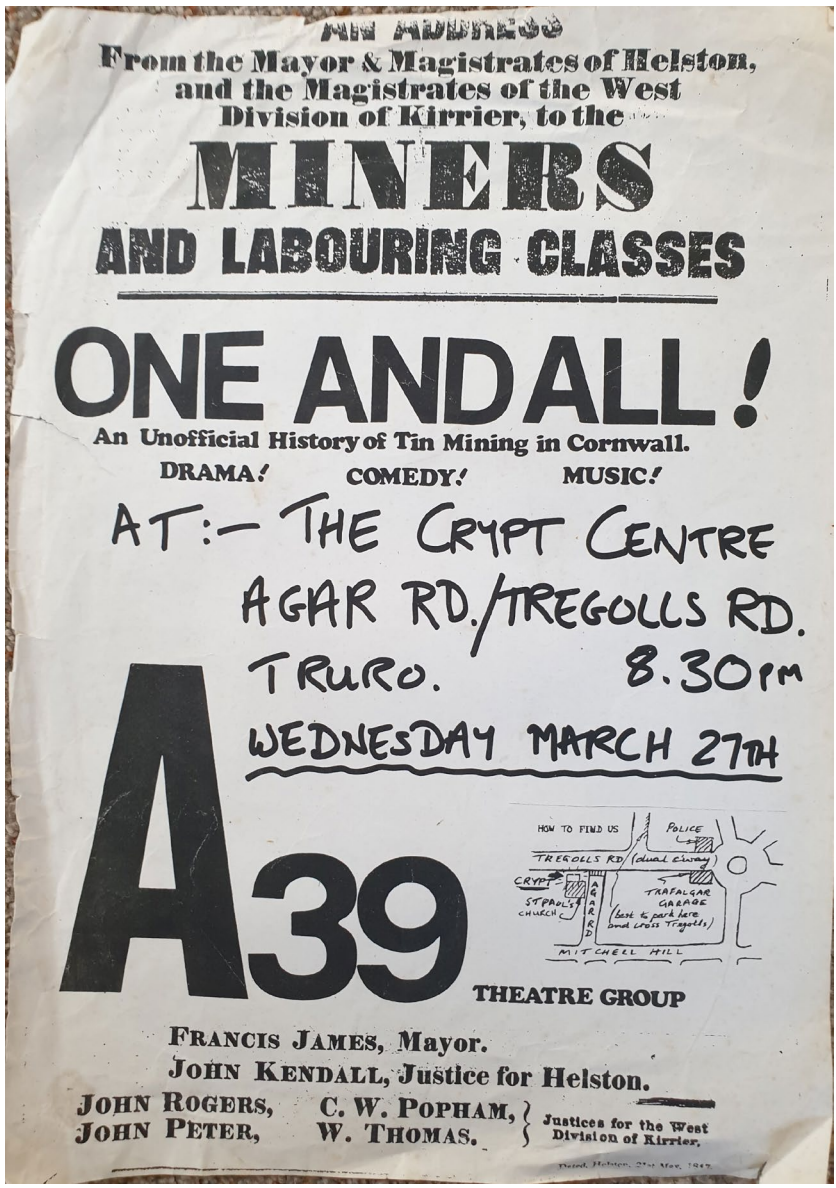

Fig. 15. *One & All!* poster for A39's first performance at The Crypt Centre, Truro, March 1985.

One aspect of this experiment was already demanding urgent attention. We had sought performance spaces that had their own controllable, aimable lighting because we did not have our own. Bodriggy School's hall had such lighting of a very basic kind, but the late-spring evening light streaming into the circular hall from unreachable windows up in the roof rendered them all but entirely ineffective. It is important in community venues to be able to take over the space. That moment when performance happens is easier to evoke when there are signs it is happening. Later, we learned to give other clues and could conjure it anywhere, but theatre lighting helps the human mind to focus its attention and jettison what is not intentional in the event. It is this psychological facet that explains why a successful piece of theatre can look dead and pathetic when it is filmed. We can imagine even when sitting on a tiny chair in our kids' school hall that we are sharing a space with a nineteenth-century woman who has lost her man to a mining disaster, or a man choking to death with pneumonoconiosis in the garden of a 1920s bungalow in Illogan Highway. We can ignore the children's paintings on the walls around us, the notice board with its inspirational motto, the accoutrements of school dining; but insert a lens and a screen and time between us and the enactment, and our ability to focus our attention and with it our creative imagination is taken from us and involuntarily delegated to the medium. We can watch it on our own television and block out the wallpaper alongside it and the framed photos of our dog and the noise of the street outside, but our mental and optical equipment relinquishes control of the image on the screen and allows its meanings to be dictated to us. This is why the art of film relies so heavily on framing: the close up, the two-shot, and on expert control of the depth of field, on the grade, or look, of the image—all so that the focus of our attention and the emotional resonance of the action can be precisely provided for us. But the equalised light of everyday auto video, with its tiny lens aperture allowing no focusing clue with regard to what is crucial and what is accidental, leaves us to notice all the wrong things. We don't suspend our disbelief.

Unfortunately, in this instance the circumstances of performance in the translucent light of West Cornwall in the all-too familiar context of a school, charming though Bodriggy is, left us stranded in a circumstance and an atmosphere I later came to associate with Theatre In Education (TIE): an excellent pathway to professional acting, no doubt, but to my

eye institutional and constrained. (For me it would come to seem that TIE was one of the ways—along with Equity contracts, Arts Council respectability, and a misguided quest for parity with 'proper' theatre—by which alternative and political theatre campaigned themselves into organisational vulnerability and out of existence.)

So despite our desire to oust the unnecessary in the self-referential ritual of theatre, we decided we needed to carry our own theatre lighting. Such discoveries were all part of the experiment but this one came with a substantial sinking feeling. This equipment was very expensive—far more expensive in real terms than it would be now, perhaps partly because it was seldom paid for by those buying it, but rather by public grants or institutional funding, which were not available to us. At that time, the nearest supplier was Stage Electrics in Exeter, and I was well aware of the deluxe status of these lamps and wires and stands and electronics because maintaining them had been one of my responsibilities in Miracle Theatre. Boxes of bulbs would arrive unescorted on the train three hours after ordering by phone to be collected from the train guard on Truro Station platform, invoice to follow by post. Such an unfamiliar world! Fast delivery in a strictly linear manner was one of the services offered by the nationalised railway in a very linear peninsula. I acquired a Stage Electrics catalogue, but no matter how hard I stared at it, the prices remained impossible or at the very least highly implausible. So we contacted the Cornwall Drama Association, the alliance of amateur dramatic societies, and visited their dark technical store in the car park of Redruth Community Centre, famously the kingdom of Mr Don Hill. After discussion of our practice and economic circumstances, he looked out for us two very large ancient round lamps with thick 'Fresnel' lenses and tall, heavy stands. To dim these lamps, there was a pair of huge rheostats mounted on a thick ply board, that inspired in the operator a constant fear of random electric shocks at 240 volts of Alternating Current. Two thick cables completed our technical department, to be operated by a well-insulated Lucy from a seat amongst the audience. Now we could be seen, albeit by a means more brutal even than Brecht's beloved Steel Blue gels. And it was all still transportable in Lucy's car, now substantially down on its springs.

We removed the interval, and with a tightening and editing process the running time of *One & All!* now came in at seventy-five minutes, on the 'always leave them wanting more' principle. When it comes to

live entertainment, most people like short. They are grateful for short. If they've hired a babysitter, they also get a chance to go to the pub, often with us.

We made a programme, twelve pages of A5 pasted-up from images photocopied at The Crypt with text typed on a manual typewriter, then cut and pasted together. It was intended to form a useful adjunct to the play and it included considerable content, including the ethos of the whole work:

> ... (W)hen an industry has dominated an area as tin once dominated Cornwall, its rises and falls must surely be as deeply felt in the culture and the character of the people who live there as in the landscape around them. The lives of the tinners were blasted every bit as much as the hillsides around Twelveheads. From this fact arose the main issue of the 1984/85 Miners' Strike in the British coalfields; and also the show *One & All!*[1]

There was a bibliography of source material for the show and useful statistics from the 1984 report of the Cornish Chamber of Mines, from which audience members could learn that the total production of tin concentrate by Cornish mines in 1984 was 5047 tonnes, with 7159 tonnes of zinc, 756 of copper, and 2.58 of silver; and that the industry directly employed 1521 people and brought £27m into the local economy. Production, they were informed, was the highest for sixty-nine years and the average wage for mineworkers was £205 per week—a very good wage indeed for Cornwall in the 1980s. This section concluded, 'Concern was also reported over the large reserves of tin currently held around the world: 250,000 tonnes, compared to an annual world production of 160,000 tonnes.' This 'concern', it turned out, was more than justified and would lead to significant reformulation of both the programme, the show, and thousands of people's lives within a matter of months. Meanwhile, this first version of the programme culminated in a section called 'The Future–RTZ and ITA'.

RTZ is Rio Tinto Zinc, the company that had come to dominate the Cornish industry—owning, through their subsidiary Carnon Consolidated, Wheal Jane, Mount Wellington, South Crofty, Wheal Pendarves, Wheal Maid, and a twenty per cent stake in Geevor. The

1 Paul Farmer and Mark Kilburn, *One & All! Programme*, 1st edn (Cornwall: A39, 1985), p. 3. Author's holdings.

section began with a quote from Sir Auckland Geddes at the 1937 AGM of Rio Tinto: 'Miners found guilty of trouble-making are court-martialled and shot.'

The ITA was the International Tin Agreement. We would all soon be hearing a great deal more about this.

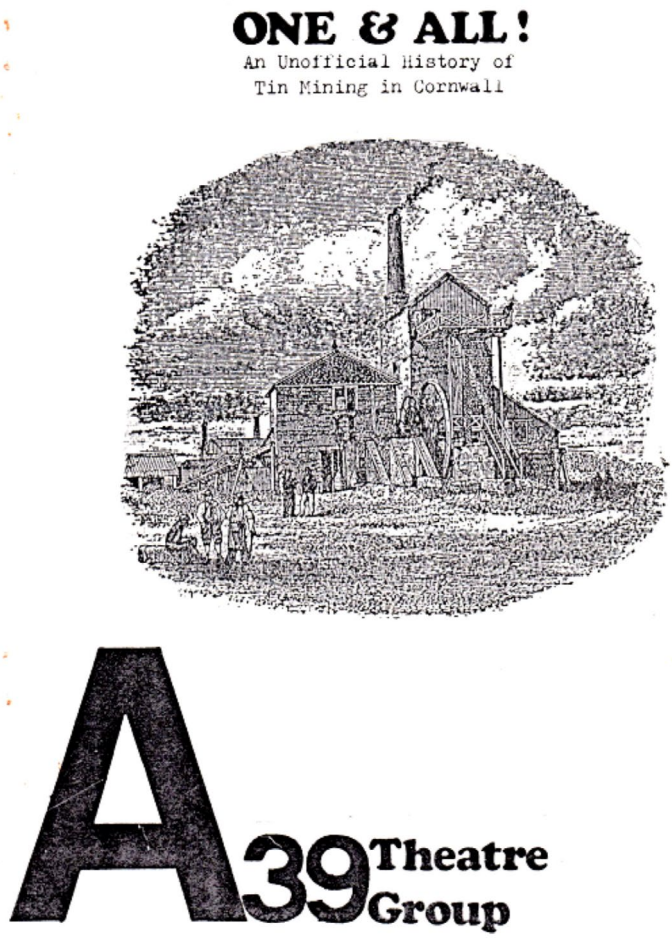

Fig 16. *One & All!* programme cover. Cut and paste, Letraset and photocopying: state of the art 1980s alternative publishing!

With practice came fluency—as we did more performances, we became better at delivering the show, which had considerable dynamics and yet was absolutely full of words. But it wasn't dull. Each section fed into the next. We used narration to cover screened costume changes so audiences were shown a large number of characters in a chronology of exploitation and decay while also enjoying the element of play in the play, the flaunting of the pretence. In village halls and schools and pubs and community centres, we presented this cocksure quick-fire conjuring act, a history that was also Cornish folklore transmogrified into drama in a way that did not accord with anything seen here before. Political theatre and cabaret turned out to work well in Cornwall, where you could say anything you liked as long as you were entertaining. There began to be some feeling of ownership of A39. After shows, in the pubs, audience members could come up and discuss things with us. People liked this. We might have foreign accents, but we took Cornwall deadly seriously—we believed in her experience, we argued her significance every night. We were proud to do it. In our research, we had discovered what A39 must be and had written the company into being Cornish no matter what anyone else might think. We never asked for permission to delve into Cornwall's deepest depths because we were implicated too.

We began to be approached by quiet people representing what is now known as the Cornish cultural movement. In those days they were just dismissed as 'nationalists', a useless word. If you so much as flew a Cross of St Piran, the beautiful Cornish flag, you were considered a dangerous lunatic by all the powers-that-be. Now it is everywhere, systematically invoked by those powers-that-be. A39 would come to perform at conferences and festivals dedicated to the discussion and display of the very essence of what Cornwall was and should become.

We had not anticipated this aspect of the A39 'hinterland', but we embraced it. The Cornish cultural movement is predicated on the conservation and development of what is of value and distinctive in the cultural ecology. It is a celebration of communities, of its people's relationships with work and with their part of the planet. These were too the causes for which the Miners' Strike had been fought. Our commitment to the movement was to continue the struggle for which A39 had been formed, here where it had not yet been defeated.

As socialists our duty was to protect and strengthen these intangibles–ideas and feelings and ways of being without monetary value but worth so much more than money. They must be cherished, because they were our clues to a better way to be; we would need them in a socialist future. Once they are gone, they are gone forever.

Outward signs of Cornish distinctiveness were not hard to spot. There was the language, Kernewek, the revival of which was an achievement of huge significance. Many were by no means unique: there were the brass bands like those of the Northern English mining communities, doomed there now by the defeat of the Strike; there were the male voice choirs shared with Brythonic-Celtic cousins in Wales; there were the ritual-festival events often attended by many thousands, like Flora Day in Helston, Padstow Oss, Hurling the Silver Ball, Crying the Neck, alongside the strength to restore lost celebrations like Golowan in Penzance or even to create new traditions like Trevithick Day in Camborne, or the Gorsedh itself. In Cornwall, Rugby Union and cricket were working class sports, rather than Association Football. Above all there were distinct qualities of community, which are hard to specify but together gave a feeling of reflexivity in everyday life I had never experienced in England: I remember feeling continually affirmed by the simplest encounters. A bizarre concomitant of this was that, in a population of over four hundred thousand,[2] everyone seemed to know everyone else, or at least their cousin or sister-in-law. How could that be? There were zero degrees of separation! Of course, this was illusory: my brother, in Cornwall for a visit and having witnessed various interactions, commented that he could not tell who I had known for some time and who I had just met. For all its grandeur and much-marketed otherness, perhaps the dimensions, plus the persistent historical awareness, of Cornwall encouraged a feeling of inclusivity, of belonging, of integration with a popular whole available to anyone prepared to committedly identify with her. But here we are in the nebulous–that is how quickly we find the need to grope after those intangibles simply in order to describe our lives here, or indeed anywhere else. And how vulnerable that makes the most significant aspects of our lives together.

2 Bernard Deacon, *Population Change in Cornwall Since 1801*, https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/bitstream/handle/10036/19712/PopulationchangeinCornwallsince1801?sequence=1.

Cornwall was (and is increasingly) threatened at its very heart by the inequities of wealth. Cornish homes, indeed entire communities, could be simply bought out for their views, for their access to the sea, for their picturesque qualities, for their 'investment' value. Those from richer parts of the UK simply outbid the Cornish. Though this phenomenon was already recognised, and was named in *One & All!*, Cornwall in the 1980s was still protected to an extent by distance. It was a hard place to get to, and this was one of the reasons it felt radically different from England. West of Exeter the A30 had yet to be dualled and the journey around Dartmoor and into the great length of Cornwall was often a series of tailbacks winding out of sight across the hills. The sheer length of time it took to get here not only inhibited the purchase of holiday 'properties', it rendered it impractical to deliver to Cornwall and return to depots in the M5 corridor in a single tachometered day, discouraging the development of large supermarkets and allowing Cornwall's town centres still to be dominated by local shops–even Cornish chain stores. Cornwall felt like the island it nearly is. One of the first things I remember being told when I arrived was the Cornish definition of a peninsula: 'an island surrounded on one side by England'.

Things changed faster once the roads were upgraded. It was as though Cornwall was moved physically closer to Upcountry, which in terms of travel time it certainly was. Her larger town centres are now dominated by the same tedious chain stores as everywhere else, albeit interrupted by indigenous pasty outlets. And the second home owners swept in like a big tide. Though they meant no harm, they have depopulated their purchases by only coming sometimes. Their inevitable lack of exposure to and understanding of those intangibles of Cornish life meant that, where they prevailed, the culture effectively ceased to exist locally and was damaged generally. Progressively this could threaten everything: there is only so much of Cornwall, so many of the Cornish.

There was a need for education. Only by keeping the awareness of the culture of Cornwall available could others participate in it and avoid damaging it, in the old solution/problem inverse equivalence. By telling Cornwall's history, by retelling her lives, A39 was participating in her defence.

But in this regard, it wasn't all praise. At the comprehensive school in Camborne, a teacher who would later be a great Grand Bard of Gorsedh Kernow complained about our portrayal of the Bard who declaimed the *Ode to Wheal Jane*, at that stage still the penultimate item in the play. Our punk Bard, played by Mark, wore a dustbin liner *sable* with Cross of St Piran *ermine*. The headdress was a tea cosy *azure and or* with Cornish Chough *proper, displayed*. She believed we were demeaning the Gorsedh. For more than twenty years now I have been a Bard, and I have a real blue robe made of a fabric so artificial that it gives me electric shocks worthy of Don Hill's long-binned rheostats; and I have never mastered the headdress. I think there was something to be said for A39's version.

But this demonstrated a difference of viewpoint: we of course supported Gorsedh Kernow and assumed it to be sufficiently secure to enjoy being sent up; she felt it to be fragile enough to be existentially threatened by satire, needing to be caressed with reverence to present an ineffable front to an undependable public and a hostile, mocking State. This may have been oversensitive, but we supported the cultural endeavours of which we saw ourselves to be a part and her feelings deserved respect. There are many ways it is necessary to support the good guys and awareness of their vulnerabilities and sensitivities is one. The Gorsedh has no political power and it has influence only amongst those that respect it. It is not the Establishment. We needed to clarify the basis of our portrayals as well as going for laughs.

On into the summer, we continued to tour intermittently (Mark was also performing in a small tour of *Waiting for Godot* with Miracle Theatre). On at least one occasion some unannounced asset wrote a report for South West Arts—the Regional Arts Association that would function as an agency of Arts Council of Great Britain until 1990—dismissing our work and, because uninformed by any kind of communication, criticising us for failing to do things to which we were specifically ideologically and aesthetically opposed. Nevertheless, the professional arbiters needed our engagement for validation: in the peculiar inverse world of the management of the arts, people sitting in offices on very comfortable salaries are dependent for all this on the continuing activities of artists who are sometimes paid nothing at all. You cannot administer or curate or critique art that doesn't exist. The art industry is a prestigious superstructure tottering on foundations of

the impoverished and even despised. We, with a basis in proletarian politics, saw the entire edifice as parasitic like any other aspect of bourgeois exploitation. That kind of analysis is what we were for. It is true we were not tactful in expressing these views, but what future was there for tactful agitprop? And it would have been ridiculous to criticise the power superstructures and economic base of society in the abstract while ignoring the particulars of our own branch of our own industry.

The distance between A39 and South West Arts (SWA) was geographically one hundred miles, but in more abstract ways it was much further than this. SWA was based in Exeter and assumed a collusion in a concept of England that attached Cornwall as its most westerly appendage. We could not share this assumption and would never refer to Cornwall as a part of a 'South West Region', or to A39 as an English company. A trivial illustration of its cultural remoteness from what we were occurred one day when we crossed the border for some kind of conference at SWA's Gandy Street headquarters, no doubt held to convey some information without relevance to A39, which would never gain the support of its Theatre Department. In such circumstances it was very nice of us even to turn up, though this opinion did not seem to be shared. At the break, we went for a cup of tea in the café (we couldn't afford to eat there) but we couldn't see any sugar. On asking, we were shown a bowl of small brown shiny ovals. 'I'm not putting currants in my tea,' I said, such decadence according entirely with our preconceptions of the Upcountry bourgeois elite. Some aesthete later told us it must have been a bowl of crystallised sugar, which we had never seen in Cornwall and seems anyway to have been only a short-lived affectation even amidst the metropolitan.

In fairness, I should add some context with regard to South West Arts and its Theatre department in that time of all-pervading Thatcherism. To quote the leading British theatre critic Michael Billington, 'Under [Thatcher's] watch from 1979 to 1990 we saw a shift away from public subsidy to corporate sponsorship, a transformation of the Arts Council from an independent agency to an instrument of government, and the growth of a siege mentality in arts organisations.'[3] Robert Hewison specified the two mechanisms for achieving this: 'apply[ing] financial

3 Michael Billington, 'Margaret Thatcher Casts a Long Shadow over Theatre and the Arts', *The Guardian*, 8 Apr 2013.

pressure, in the name of reducing government spending, and us[ing] the power of appointment to ensure that institutions voluntarily bent to the government's will'.[4]

Consequently, according to Robert Leach:

> The Arts Council now became a tool of government policy, constantly trying to reduce subsidy and suggesting companies seek financial sponsorship from the private sector. [....] In 1983 the Council published The Glory of the Garden, outlining its new policy of devolving the funding and reorganising of theatres to Regional Arts Associations, which were now expected to concentrate on 'centres of excellence'. The policy led inexorably to a slow decline in theatre activity and quality.[5]

So the fact that we were here in Exeter rather than arguing our case with the Arts Council in London, with reference to UK-wide policies and discourses, was itself one symptom of Thatcherism; alongside that cited by Peter Cox OBE in his Chairman's Report for the 1984–85 SWA Annual Report, but referring to 1985–86, A39's first year of operation:

> We are in an unprecedented situation. For the first time in its history the Association has received in the current year an increase in its base grant well below the level of inflation, which implies a reduction of grant in real terms.[6]

This was the moment when the true nature of Thatcher's government was brought to bear on the regional arts, at the time it was being visited on miners in the shape of policemen's truncheons. The Chairman's Report in the 1985–86 Annual Report reflects this reality:

> [...] [O]ne is reluctant to claim any feeling of success at a time when so many arts organisations are fighting for their lives and feel inevitably disappointed at the limited support we are able to give them. In

4 Robert Hewison, *Culture and Consensus: England, Arts and Politics Since 1940* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 229. Quoted in Mathilde Bertrand, 'Cultural Battles: Margaret Thatcher, the Greater London Council and the British Community Arts Movement', *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* 26.3 (2021). DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/rfcb.8435.

5 Robert Leach, *An Illustrated History of British Theatre and Performance: Volume Two–From the Industrial Revolution to the Digital Age*, 1st edn (London: Routledge 2018), p. 697.

6 South West Arts, *29th Annual Report 1984–85* (Exeter: South West Arts, 1985), p. 2. I am indebted to Nick Carter, Senior Officer, Information Management at Arts Council England for providing copies of SWA reports.

> particular, we are disturbed by the real shortage of funds to support a growing multitude of interesting work.[7]

There was a positive aspect to this negative relationship: without grants, we could not be subject to the phenomenon becoming known as 'grant addiction'. In rejecting their judgements we had removed the arts establishment's power to remove us, as long as we could survive without their money. And we had discovered a way to get support from the unlikeliest source for a socialist theatre group: Margaret Thatcher's government, the primary teetering target for our exercises in cultural demolition.

As previously noted, the Thatcher government's ideological attack on its own people, in the form of organised labour and the communities that sustained it, had thrown millions of people out of work, the *One In Ten* of the UB40 hit song. Thatcher's horrible goblins came up with measures to try to massage the embarrassing figures downwards. (Subsequently her successors would not bother, but would massage the media instead; so unpleasant phenomena are not reported or are reported favourably: 'spin'. The transition to this state of affairs was in the 1980s only in its infancy, but I remember reading a *Guardian* editorial that stated, 'The government has won the argument over unemployment', in the same edition in which was recorded another huge rise in the number of people out of work, more tens of thousands of lives ruined.)

One of those statistical massagings in 1985 was the 'Enterprise Allowance Scheme'. You could set up your own 'business' and the government would pay each of you forty pounds a week for the first year of operation. This was significantly more than Unemployment Benefit or Supplementary Benefit, without the need to jump through the hoops of seeming to search for non-existent jobs. Now you could make your own non-existent jobs. It was a nod and a wink to the new reality of indefinite mass unemployment, largely amongst former manufacturing workers as Britain transitioned to a non-unionised 'service economy'—or as the US Ambassador reportedly described it to Thatcher herself, 'making a living by opening doors for each other'. Manufactured goods were now to be imported from places where wages were almost nothing at all, on the assumption that the world would be forever locked in colonial

7 South West Arts, *30th Annual Report 1985–86* (Exeter: South West Arts, 1986), p. 2.

relationships. The British working class would have to compete for jobs with 'Third World' labour, setting wages spiralling ever lower with no more uppity workers using union power to attain better lives. To ensure this, anti-union laws had been introduced worthy of the nineteenth century. They perdure to this day.

A39 of course did not see itself as an 'enterprise' organised by 'entrepreneurs'—the Thatcherite term to describe its adherents, with their embraced image of expensive double-breasted suits with shoulder pads and blow-dried hair, as hymned proudly yet risibly by the BBC Television series *Howard's Way*. Our alternative word for such people was 'arseholes'. But to refuse this income merely to avoid reducing the unemployment statistics seemed irrelevant.

So we attended an inaugural course where we expected to be initiated into the freemasonry of 'business', but were surprised to find it instead to be practical and mostly about the technicalities of achieving the necessary one thousand pounds in each of our bank counts that would qualify us for the scheme. There was even a sympathetic bank manager. Apparently, abstract grands could mysteriously manifest themselves—theoretical, untouchable, and temporary—just long enough for the relevant certification to occur. We did not know that in such deceptions and sleights of hand it was indeed entirely congruent with the indigenous British expression of capitalism. This was a contingent extension of the techniques of the 'Old Boy' network to those usually excluded from it. In fact, excluding those like us is pretty much what it is for.

Effectively, those who worked the Conservative con of the Enterprise Allowance Scheme managed to con the Cons. From a blatant attempt to meaninglessly massage the unemployment figures, thousands of people managed to make concrete their dreams, even if only for twelve months. People do not try to avoid work. They seek it out and find it day by day, minute by minute. It is probably a fault of humans that most are forever busy. If we all calmed down a bit, perhaps we wouldn't mess up the world so much. People took that forty pounds per week pittance and did what they wanted to do, became *pro tem* what they wanted to be—theatre workers or potters, interior decorators or builders, writers, musicians, carpenters. We were presumably meant to take the money and sit on our arses for the year de-statisticated. Instead, we did what the scheme pretended it wanted us to, often very inconveniently.

We set up an A39 bank account and each donated 25% of our payments each week to the company. With regular money coming in we set off—on a European tour!

6. A39 International

This tour was to be radically different to our everlasting barnstorming round Cornwall. Now we would be moving country to country, city to city—this was a big deal. Such wanderings were more unusual in these days, at least for people like us. For example, apart from my times in Cornwall and one night spent camping in Wales, I had left England only once in my life and that was a day trip from Felixstowe to Bruges on a temporary passport you could buy from the Post Office. Now we all had proper passports and we set off from Cornwall in Lucy's battered Renault 12, the four of us packed inside with our clothes, costumes, instruments, two tents and camping gear. It was pretty crowded, and those in the back had to share with various bags. Only Lucy and I had driving licences.

On the A303, still fifty miles west of London, there was a loud bang from the engine. It wasn't serious. The core of a spark plug had blown out and put an inside-out dent on the bonnet. I had to walk into Amersham to get a new plug in the dead quiet of its provincial Saturday afternoon. We seemed a long way from getting anywhere. There were so many ways for this adventure to go wrong, a heavy load for my mechanical skills and carrier bag of tools.

We took the ferry from Dover to Ostend and spent our first foreign night illicitly camping in a midge-bitten copse in a flat nowhere on the road to Brussels. We roamed southwards and eastwards day by day, through Germany, then Austria towards the hard border where western capitalism confronted Eastern Bloc and what it termed 'Actually Existing Socialism'. We progressed and performed city by city, and each night we camped in the resting places of the Autobahns.

Our usual street act was augmented with pastiche instrumentals for international purposes, like *Quando Quando* and *Egyptian Reggae*, performed on an odd assortment of instruments. In Brussels, the waiters

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0329.08

emerged from a Turkish restaurant to dance in the street. In Bonn we busked the late-night crowd leaving a performance by Dog Troep, a heavily state-supported company from Amsterdam paid well for this performance by the German regional authorities. We existed in a different twilight world of performance, literally picking up coins discarded by official culture. We busked Munich and Salzburg and Vienna. When we could, we would cook on a gas stove in the space between our tents—in the shadows of a 'Rastplatz' created to be passed by hundred-miles-an-hour Mercedes but the nearest thing to stability for isolated Brits. We quickly adapted to a rootless life, grabbing necessities amongst its contingencies, suppressing our needs for certainty until the concept of security slipped all but entirely away. We had become travellers, as had so many of our kind before, at home most in movement between places that until now had been just exotic names, ideas of elsewhere. It seems hard after that to regain rootedness, even though that was a core idea in our work in terms of place and culture. For now, we had discovered the primeval framing of human consciousness, the eternal circulations and migrations of the hunter-gatherer before humanity settled to earth in the First Disruption and began to get on with really doing some damage. Any particular place seemed no more than random; even the memory of Cornwall, just a slice through time. The traveller finds huge significance in brief experience of people and places before they skat and move on, forever reneging on their duty to contribute to the lives and lifetimes they smell and touch. This was a profound experience.

The nominal terminus on our journey away was Budapest on the far side of the Iron Curtain. This was not because we had any illusions about the nature of the Soviet satellite system, or any romantic attachment to it—but whatever it was we wanted to see it for ourselves. Eventually we approached the floodlights of the Austrian-Hungarian border at Hegyeshalom, with considerable trepidation; but we had the right visas in our passports and passed through without problems. We drove through pitch black miles across the Central European Plain. 'So,' we said, 'This is communism....' (It wasn't. A39 was consistent in its practice of facetiousness as artform, even in the privacy of our own car.)

There was almost no traffic on this highway. Every so often, a blaze of light would appear on a far horizon. As we eventually neared and passed, it would reveal itself to be a stall, lit like a palace in proud display of huge vegetables luxuriating in the light in astounding colours

and numbers, the pride of the countryside. The Hungarians know how to value their produce.

We stayed some time in Budapest—radically different to any city we had seen before, like a better Vienna completely devoid of advertising. At first we stayed in industrial Pest in one of the brutalist apartment blocks so derided in the west, near a workers canteen and an immense government stationery shop. Then we moved to luxurious Buda on the other bank of the Danube. We didn't busk in the street because neither did anyone else and we had no idea what the reaction to that would be, and no safe way to find out (Vienna had been bad enough: we had been forcibly informed that we could only perform after 5pm and *as long as none of us moved!*). But we were booked to perform in a technical college and we put together a show that was a strange amalgam of *One & All!* and the street theatre act. After performing every day in a huge variety of circumstances we were by now extremely adaptable and sharp and all but telepathic. Nevertheless I, for one, found this show a bit baffling, though the audience was loud and enthusiastic. We were invited to parties in the old brown apartment blocks that dated from the heights of Austro-Hungarian arrogance. Led Zeppelin was played very loud and people argued vehemently, so a splendid time was had by all and people got very, very drunk. Contrary to all the insistences of western propaganda, politics was the obsessive topic of conversation, with universal disdain for the Hungarian government. Rather than being repressed, these people were more engaged than the British.

In our flat in Pest were some British records, including Roy Bailey and Leon Rosselson's magnificent *If I Knew Who the Enemy Was*. The opening song on the LP has always fascinated me. Apart from anything else, *Barney's Epic Homer* is a very catchy folk-pop song, and Rosselson's and Bailey's very different voices intertwine wonderfully. But the nature of the way the song expresses its political message was inspirational. For example, the hapless Barney's teachers dismiss him for 'living in a kipper-coloured dream'. Kipper-coloured! Why? It doesn't matter, I'm already laughing with satisfaction at the sound of it and the alliteration, but also at the inclusion of such a random image *just because they can*! And Barney's subsequent dispiriting career is 'turning little piggies into plastic-packaged sausages to sell in the Heliport canteen.' Just listen to the rhythm of that. But even more importantly, it is so brilliantly, bizarrely specific! Don't they sell them anywhere else? Why is there

such a notable taste for sausages amongst those engaged with rotorcraft aviation? It doesn't matter, I don't care, I love it anew every time—it gives me immense *pleasure*. The song squarely identifies the necessary qualities of a worthwhile revolution as liberation, creativity, and love, and that for me sustains as the appropriate checklist.

With the inspiration of material like this to hand, we began working on new material for our act. There was also a copy of *Songs of Alex Glasgow Two*, and we developed a version of Alex's *Turning the Clock Back* as a crowd-gathering kick-off. I wrote a rock'n'roll song about Murdoch's *Sun* called *Clever Man* and a song with a mechanical rhythm, with actions, called *I Am A Factory*; Vulgar Marxism set to music. Using the mixed-up languages of the traveller, Sue—with the perspective on our home nation that can only come from a thousand miles of hard road—wrote *Nous Sommes Les Anglais*:

> Nous sommes les Anglais, no parler Francais,
> We like beer and chips and getting up late on Sunday
> Our illustrious Leader is a nasty bleeder
> She talks out of her arse and she looks like the back of a donkey.

—illustrating highly effectively that when the dialectic seems insufficient, there's always abuse; and also lots of 'la-la-las':

> La la la la la, la la la la la laaaah
> Lah-la la, la la la la la laah.

This was the influence of Rory Macleod, who Sue and I had come across playing late one night in the rain at Elephant Fayre. He was drenched, and by the end half his guitar strings hung broken, but a crowd of about twenty of us wouldn't let him stop. Part of Rory's glory is that when his brilliant political, personal, or romantic lyrics end, he wordlessly continues to sing out emotion and joy, and sometimes anger, using the vocable. In the hands of A39, this technique created an impression of us gleefully dancing on the graves of our home country's imperial history and dreams of glory.

The inclusion of oddity in creation would continue throughout this iteration of A39, and within months we would be performing *Leon Brittan does not ask forgiveness*, a sparse Ringo-based Eisler-type song about the Westland Affair and the Miners' Strike; and on the main stage at a music

festival hammering a pile of oil drums with heavy sticks while chanting the string of anti-imperialist insults that constituted *Reagan-Nixon Man*.

When the time came to turn our wheels west, Lucy's car began to demonstrate the strain of so many years and miles: the starter motor ceased to start the motor. Not even the standard encouragement with a hammer would motivate it. I could fix this for a tenner in Cornwall, but the chances of attaining parts and repair on this side of a global historical divide seemed beyond our diplomatic and economic resources and we resigned ourselves to a thousand miles of bump starts. It was going to be a long road home.

The first point of crisis came predictably when we reached the hard iron border at Hegyeshalom. Again, it was dark. The autumn was turning mid-European, with cold and pointed rain slanting through the yellow lights of frontiers here at the heaviest armed historical confrontation of all time, a standing conference of contempt that an officious young lieutenant in the Hungarian border force decided to visit on us. To his obvious frustration we made a pitiful icon for the bourgeois west in our battered and scratched-up non-starter of a car, a semiotic subversion that seemed to him to deserve punishment. So he sent our car backwards and forwards, here and there on a tour of the doors of transnational officialdom. Each bureaucratically inspired movement was three person-powered across wet and oil-slicked concrete; each time we surprised the engine into life the lieutenant insisted we turned it off again.

The inevitable tailback included a coachload of Rapid Vienna football supporters returning from a match in Tatabánya, who disembarked and joined our backwards and forwards pushing in a pretence of being too frightened to refuse us; not that we'd asked for help and not that we had the power to refuse it. Even the sight of the guns of the border troops could not get them back on their coach. In the wake of the Heysel Stadium disaster earlier that year and consequent fear and contempt for the British across Europe, the saluting and mock-cowering Austrian football crowd turned the whole episode into a comedy act with implicitly threatening overtones, and the lieutenant finally decided to wave us all on our way. So we were redeemed by international solidarity between football fans: Vienna, Villa, Charlton, and Palace.

We made our way west and north with no particular enthusiasm to attain the object of the journey or for any particular place on its arcs, the

inevitable mindset of everlasting travel reducing all possibility of home to the shell we are condemned to inhabit on the day we are born. Those that travel aimlessly are not holidaymakers. To roam comes to seem an inevitable blessing/curse that has been waiting to claim us all our lives.

As the year and the evening grows late, cities darken and evacuate. In Salzburg, performing to an all but empty shopping street, we were engaged by a passing nightclub owner to perform in his establishment in the small hours of the morning. We would also be fed, and the drinks were free. Through a stroke of logistical madness, the liquid aspect of the fee arrived first and kept coming. It was now more than twenty-four hours since our last meal. This was not unusual: in these days before the Euro, we often found ourselves in one country with currency only for another, or just without the opportunity to cook. Soon it was apparent this performance was not going to happen, and that the many empty glasses on the table in our curtained alcove were harbingers of an impending contractual dispute.

I quietly slipped out to fetch the car that had been thoughtfully parked above a steep downhill; but less thoughtfully it was in my absence (I had been roaming the tramways for gas for our cooking stove), and the only clue I had to the car's whereabouts was a description of the nature of the gradient. I roamed the hillier suburbs seeking a green Renault on a substantial slope and miraculously found it. I drove to a dramatic tickover outside the club entrance and the others made their escape. We fled into the night west towards the Tyrol.

The next evening, in a cold mountain downpour, we found Innsbruck city centre deserted except for a gang of would-be punks who surrounded us to paw at our instruments and demand cigarettes and money. They quickly withdrew in the face of our impressive repertoire of Anglo-Saxon and stood grumbling about us on the far side of the central square. The Heysel factor definitely helped, but evening Innsbruck left us exactly in the mood to deal with this. We didn't even have to raise our voices. Ever hungrier, we camped at the foot of a huge escarpment, then moved on to cross another border, then another, another, another, back to Ostend and crossed the Straits of Dover in a Storm Force Ten. Less than eighteen months later, the Herald of Free Enterprise would sink here in these same conditions and kill nearly two hundred people.

We returned to Cornwall thinking we would get to work on a new touring play; an intention we found ourselves forced to postpone.

Fig. 17. Our customary accommodation on international tour, a 'Rastplatz' on a European autobahn. In the background, left to right: Mark Kilburn, Sue Farmer, Lucy Kempton. The tent in the foreground is the one Sue and I shared. It was also the tent I lived in when I first arrived in Cornwall and for several months with Miracle Theatre. Photo by the author (CC BY-NC 4.0).

Fig. 18. Hungarian parliament building with Ladas and Dacia, Budapest, 1984. Photo by the author (CC BY-NC 4.0).

Fig. 19. The view from our borrowed apartment in Pest. Here we put together our Hungarian show and reworked our street theatre act for the return journey. Photo by the author (CC BY-NC 4.0).

Fig. 20. Brewing up at the top of an Alpine pass, 1984. We couldn't afford to use the tunnels. Left to right: Sue Farmer, Lucy Kempton, and Mark Kilburn. Photo by the author (CC BY-NC 4.0).

7. A39 and the Tin Crisis

On 24 October 1985, the tin market collapsed after the buffer stock manager of the International Tin Council ran out of money and could no longer buy up tin on the London Metal Exchange to maintain the high price that kept Cornish mines viable.[1]

To quote the revisions we would be forced to make to the programme of *One & All!*, 'We were aware we would be chronicling a story of decline; we had no idea we would have to deal with the Fall as well'.[2] Without artificial maintenance through manipulation of the markets, Cornish clean, unionised, and safe hard rock mining could not compete with quick-buck open cast ripping of the rain forests and landscapes of the Far East perpetrated by international mining companies exploiting neo-colonialism. It became clear that this event threatened the absolute end of thousands of years of Cornish mining, the industry that provided Cornwall with an image of itself to resist the self-interested wheedling of the tourist industry—a parasite making ever more demands and wreaking more destruction on the fabric of its weakened host, already emptying its homes into holiday cottages, closing schools and local shops by filling Cornish villages with absence.

The remaining mining operations—Wheal Jane and Mount Wellington just down the road around Bissoe and Twelveheads, South Crofty at Pool in the industrial heartlands, Wheal Pendarves in Camborne, Geevor in the far west at Pendeen and the more mysterious

1 For an analysis of the collapse of the International Tin Agreement see for example Ian A. Mallory, 'Conduct Unbecoming: The Collapse of the International Tin Agreement', *American University International Law Review*, 5.3 (1990), 835–892, https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1593&context=auilr#:~:text=In%20October%201985%20the%20International,activi-%20ties%20in%20the%20market.

2 Paul Farmer and Mark Kilburn, *Programme for 'One & All!'*, 2nd edn (Cornwall: A39, 1985). Author's holdings.

https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0329.09

operations, Wheal Concord at Blackwater, Tolgus Tin (a streaming works between Redruth and Portreath), and dredging operations off the coast—paid the best wages in Cornwall and supported a highly-skilled engineering industry. This was a crisis of all the things Cornwall felt itself to be.

In the face of this, A39—with an original play in *One & All!* that was effectively a chronology of the industry—decided to take it back on the road with a new section to follow the *Ode to Wheal Jane*, now proved to be an all-too accurate warning of the fragility of the industry. This new element would adopt the old Blue Blouse theatre form of the Living Newspaper. For this section we used an urgent guitar 'carrier wave' backing over which we ran narration and a sung element. The content changed from performance to performance as the crisis developed; the sung aspect framed the tale in terms of the stakes of the games being enacted, circling back to the active question: 'Will the government intervene?'[3]

It was becoming ever more apparent that only such an intervention would prevent the complete collapse of Cornish mining. Previous administrations might have nationalised the tin mines, but Thatcher professed a macho hatred for 'lame ducks'. The International Tin Council was dissolving in an acid mire of recrimination and the growling threats of international bully boys like the United States and China, both of whom bore blame for the situation, while small fry like Bolivia and Cornwall could only look on.

An extra aim in this revival of *One & All!* was to show the workings of capital and international commodity trading as they manifested themselves in the everyday lives of people who did not exploit the arcane properties of markets to make the enormous riches that built palaces on Cornwall's coasts and populated her marinas with mysterious yachts. It was for those with a simpler view of the world in terms of labour and due reward—who maintained some belief in justice, that it was the business of governments and regulators to make sure that they kept

3 For discussion of the Blue Blouse movement and its Living Newspaper practice, including its influence on John McGrath and 7:84, see Rania Karoula, 'From Meyerhold and Blue Blouse to McGrath and 7:84: Political Theatre in Russia and Scotland', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 44.1 (2018), 21–28, available at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol44/iss1/4

Fig. 21. *One & All!*–the Tinners' Jig live at Geevor Mine, days before closure. Photo by George J. Greene (CC BY 4.0).

Fig. 22. *One & All!*–the tin crisis explained at Geevor. The 'Tin Not Dole' placard echoes the 'Coal Not Dole' Miners' Strike sticker on my guitar. Photo by George J. Greene (CC BY 4.0).

their side of the bargain that there would be work that gave a living. Of course, this is no part of capitalism, which is based on profit; on wealth being rewarded with more wealth. Any other benefit was an incidental by-product or the result of statutory constraints. As wealthy commodity traders lobbied for their own interests in fora far from Cornwall, her voices calling for justice—detailed in the new programme—seemed more and more powerless.

So we toured again over the winter of 1985/86. We also presented this new crisis section of the show live on Radio Cornwall to explain what was happening. Thatcher's government eventually agreed to support South Crofty in the form of loans for capital improvement that allowed it to stagger on for a few years. The other mines soon closed, beginning with Wheal Pendarves. In the spring, almost exactly a year after its first performance, we presented *One & All!* at the miners' social club at Geevor, the most westerly working mine on the cliffs overlooking distant Scilly and spreading two thousand feet beneath the sea bed. The audience was the miners and their families, and the Mayor—Jack Hendy ('The only Marxist mayor in the UK', as he told me)—and Town Council of St Just; and we told the tale of the history of mining right up to the latest events in the current disaster by way of all the disasters that had befallen the forerunners of those watching (see Figs. 21, 22).

This was probably the fulfilment of all A39 had set out to achieve by building a voice into events that represented and spoke with the Cornish working class. But it didn't feel like any kind of success. Just a few days later, productive mining would cease at Geevor. A few miners would remain to pick over the stones and the rest of the workforce would fall away to drift over the seas or out of the industry. Here, now, was the end of hard rock mining in Cornwall and Geevor was destined to become a museum of itself. The great Adventure was over.

8. A39 Into 1986: The State of Things

The A39 that set itself to create a new show at the turn of 1985/86 was differently situated to the company that had made *One & All!* a year before. From the peripheries of the arts in Cornwall, we had come in to form an obstreperous part of the core. The comparative ease with which this happened was characteristic of Cornwall, which lent itself to personal and institutional self-definition, perhaps because economically there were so few opportunities that professional definition of any kind would often remain entirely abstract anyway. Anyone can be a writer, if no one is ever going to be published even if they write *Ulysses*, *The Caretaker* and *The Waste Land* in a single Thursday. As far as the arts establishment was concerned nothing had happened in Cornwall, save perhaps Footsbarn, since the St Ives School of Artists; and even here it was now all but forgotten that this phenomenon was instigated by Alfred Wallis, the working-class Back Road West version of Albert Steptoe, amateur-painting in second-hand yacht paint on pieces of cardboard begged from his local grocer.[1] That is how truly important things happen: unless prevented, anyone can be anything and Cornish people would encourage all such self-transformations warmly, while rolling another cigarette and offering a third cup of tea as one more unemployed afternoon segued into evening.

At this point it seems relevant to assess the nature of the company that had come to be through the experiences of a tumultuous few months.

Many of A39's characteristics derived from its beginnings, from those very first discussions in Falmouth and Playing Place; from its

1 Sven Berlin, *Alfred Wallis: Primitive*, new edn (Redcliffe 1992).

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0329.10

formation specifically to contribute to the support of the Miners' Strike. We were never tempted to engage with any 'angels on the head of a pin'-type discussions of political intricacies: we would always identify a common task then set about fulfilling it. A key difference from much of the Left was that even after the strike was over, A39 conducted its affairs and expressed an ideology in terms of what its members had in common; and never perceived any need to search for what divided us, like someone picking round with their tongue to find the sharply broken tooth.

Perhaps because of this, A39 was never abstract. I would call it 'point of action' socialism: you don't go in for speculative discussion when you're constantly approaching a barricade. The conditions of Thatcher's Britain meant that every day was a crisis for a socialist.

A39 made decisions by consensus. In this book, when I have failed to specify whose idea was this, whose decision was that, it is because predominantly I just do not know. We all took responsibility for all of it. We were a true collective, something I would later discover (and I'm ashamed to say it took several sad experiences to learn and affirm) is not possible without that definitively shared commitment that functions as an external daymark, and against which activities can be assessed. That reference point was the tenets of socialism within parameters encompassing any radical egalitarian critique of capitalism and its elements, societies, institutions, and nation states.

The members of A39 shared experiences of the British Left that rendered us highly aware of its shortcomings and its pitfalls to stymie effectiveness. With only four members, there were no factions. If we didn't agree, we didn't do. There was mutual respect. It was a quiet company, wry. Its constitution was tacit except when a piece of paper was necessary as currency in dealing with arts and funding institutions, when one would be copied from the most basic model offered by the Independent Theatre Council. At meetings with the institutional we would sit and wait for them to tell us we would not be funded, then we would leave to frustrate them by getting on with the job. We did not expect their support. We were there only to parenthesise their preference to give public money to those most like themselves. We assumed any pauses in such conversations were for us to tell them who

we knew, who we might call on who was of influence and might cause a refusal of funding to lead to embarrassment, and the answer in their terms was: 'No one'. We found our friends and our audiences within our organisational hinterland: the unemployed; those with problems in their heads or homes; the political; the urgently active young; in ordinary members of Cornish communities.

But we believed we had assets that anyway could not be bought: we knew what we were for; we knew what must be broken; we were friends; we were comfortable together, though officially we were nothing more than a bank account and a claim—a good claim, a claim for the future. We insisted on the right to communicate and the right to create, not just for us but for everyone. What are human beings for? Not just to eat, drink, fuck, decorate themselves and their boxes and donate their lives to the market of alienated labour that enables the produce of the earth to be rationed in favour of those who already have most of it. Humans, all humans, are that aspect of the universe obsessed with significance. We must comb reality for meaning like a lice nurse searching for nits. Without us to perceive it, there is no significance and the universe is meaningless. This interpretation, this nomination, is the function of art; is why humans insist on making it and always have. It is an investigation of whatever the hell this all is, every bit as rigorous as science but without its particular inhibitions. Art is where we can postulate our predictions and our prayers for the achievement of all that humans might be; but only once we finally shake off all that is forced on us by artificial systems that benefit the tiny few. That minority also manifests its power in telling us what art is and is for: boring rituals that fail to accuse them or name their crimes; baroque pseudo paradoxes, low-dynamic tragedies of errors, charms to restrain the world, edicts to restrict us from pointing out their deceitful capture of the world's resources.

A39 was driven by the steady state of indignation generated by lived experience of capitalism's institutions and its distortion of the very concept of education; and by the knowledge that the capitalist hegemony had inadvertent or unadvertised allies within the Left. We were mobilised by the Miners' Strike to manifest all this in performance because that was the only skill we shared that might make a difference, or at least let us name our stand.

There was now another strand to our work that also shaped it. One of our founding principles was that theatre was for everyone, a fundamental aspect of human communication. Its withdrawal or withholding from the widest population was an elitist affront. One thing we learned through this stance was that if you really are available to work with anyone, you will inevitably come to work with those who have least of all, for whom things are hardest of all; to work with whom demands the most care and caring, because others who take an easier path cannot do it. Though all arts institutions pay lip service to universality, nearly all of them are effectively lying. Unless you are explicitly and primarily egalitarian, you are intrinsically elitist because it will be beyond your scope to bridge divisions, something that cannot be achieved casually. So we were increasingly in demand to undertake theatre with and for those people who had the bummest deal of all, the people then known as the Mentally Handicapped and now termed People With Learning Difficulties And Those With Special Needs.

This was no hardship. Their institutions, the Adult Training Centres they could attend in the day and the Gateway Clubs that furnished important factors in their social lives, provided some of the most joyous experiences you could find, in which you were always in imminent danger of getting a great big hug. Those with the greatest issues of all might find themselves at Budock Hospital, run by George Greene (1953–2022)—one of those who had been most supportive of Roll Up Theatre and became a lifelong friend not only of A39 Theatre Group but also of all its members, a bastion and ally through many adventures over the years and decades. He also took many of the photos in this book.

A39 was well equipped to undertake this work. Sue Farmer had worked with children and adults with learning difficulties for years, specialising in drama: leading workshops and making plays. The money this work generated made A39 ever more viable and, importantly, the verbal and physical vocabulary of street-corner demonstration stipulated by Brecht as encapsulating epic theatre (see Chapter 9) was the lingua franca of the work we did in the Adult Training Centres. It was both how we communicated and the kind of performance we encouraged, though

the students also enjoyed improvising a close-up naturalism that we would much later turn together into films.

We began to work with the agency Artshare Cornwall, who shared many of our least political precepts and commissioned us to create and tour a pantomime that could be instantly adaptable for a huge range of audiences: for the Adult Training Centres and Gateway Clubs, for old people's residential homes, for primary schools and kids in hospitals, and even for matinee performances in pubs. We devised a kind of show that could be improvised around a skeletal map, with lots of opportunities for participation and mayhem; and in the winter of 1985/86 we toured the first, our *Alice in Wonderland*. Things were moving fast for A39, work generating itself organically from what we did and who we were.

We had also now formed links with the other Cornish theatre companies in accordance with socialist principles of solidarity and industrial organisation, though it seemed wise to have only moderate expectations of what could be achieved by this Cornwall Theatre Alliance. A39 worked, despite the hardnut nature of its calling and its personnel, because it served a bigger cause to which we all subscribed, and this, in turn, served A39 not only as a founding principle but as code of conduct, rule book, constitution, and operating manual. None of this needed even to be written down—its formulation was tacitly agreed: to adopt the most austere and hardest edged version of the code, because there must be no compromise with anything beyond the bounds of the shortest path to a better world. We could even play this for laughs. In those druggy days if we were ever offered anything by anyone, we would shake our heads and say that drugs dissipated the revolutionary impulse. Then we would laugh. So they would laugh. But we meant every word of it.

The Cornwall Theatre Alliance (CTA) initially constituted A39 (Truro–Falmouth), Kinetik Community Theatre (St Austell), Kneehigh Theatre Company (St Austell), Miracle Theatre Company (Truro, then Falmouth), and Theatre Rotto (Penzance). Shiva Theatre (Penzance) attended the foundational meeting but chose not to participate further. At first the CTA felt like a somewhat uneasy truce. In various offices and around assorted pub tables, this sometimes-tense atmosphere was

perhaps most comfortable for A39 members experienced in industrial, trade union, and political contexts. But the unease here was due mostly to struggles enacted in the corridors of the repurposed school that housed South West Arts across the border and a hundred miles away in Exeter. Footsbarn Theatre's departure for Europe had left a creative space to be filled. Which company would be supported to fill it?

Footsbarn had formed in 1971, core countercultural days.[2] They were part of a commune near Liskeard and theirs was theatre as lifestyle and/or lifestyle as theatre, with everything centred on the art and anything extraneous sacrificed to it. Using techniques that drew on mime and circus, they developed their plays through intensive investigation, something they had in common with practitioners such as Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski. Music was also fundamental to what they did, with their arrival in a place often announced by a bizarre brass band. These other companies had formed in their shadow and now the question was, which of them would emerge to seize the light?

The starting line-up strongly favoured Kneehigh Theatre and Kinetik, also supported by South West Arts. Theatre Rotto was receiving some commissioning funding (which would not go to them, but to an 'approved' writer), but Miracle Theatre, and Shiva Theatre were currently outside this hallowed loop, and A39 was just the new kid in town.

We differed from the others, but they all differed from each other too. Although both Kneehigh and Miracle were influenced by the legacy of Footsbarn, up to now Kneehigh had specialised in young people's theatre—hence the name. Now they were changing in ways that might fill the Footsbarn-shaped void. I had seen Kneehigh twice, once at the Royal Cornwall Show when we were there performing Miracle's street theatre act. Kneehigh's core members—Mike, Tim, Dave, and Jim—were dressed as cowboys and duelling by throwing baked beans at each other. Later, I saw them perform their *Three Musketeers* in a hall in Mevagissey. It was loud, elaborate, and fun.

2 For a history of the Cornish phase of Footsbarn's practice see Rupert White, *The Giraffe That Swims: Footsbarn Theatre's Early Years*, 1st edn (Cornwall: Antenna Publications 2018).

Kinetik were, in their way, as austere as A39 were in ours, but based on an Alternative Theatre model of the kind I might have found myself watching during my years in London. Their (what would now be termed) engaged practice had provided the route into theatre for Mark and Lucy, as Kinetik's Keith Johnstone-influenced workshops, supported by the WEA, had caused the unemployed workers theatre company Roll Up to coalesce. I had seen Kinetik perform Stephen Berkoff's adaptation of *Metamorphosis* at the Truro City Hall Annexe, a less angry reading than Berkoff's practice.

Miracle Theatre, as we have seen, was and is very much the personal creation of Bill Scott. It had begun by drawing on Bill's circle of friends, and then on Roll Up personnel too, to mount outdoor performances of the first play of the Cornish Ordinalia miracle play cycle *Creazen An Bys*, or *The Beginning of the World*, before moving very much into Footsbarn territory with *McBeth*.

Shiva had a track record dating back to 1978. Based at the far end of Cornwall from Footsbarn, it seemed completely uninfluenced by them. Shiva, also known as Cornwall Theatre Company, operated as an extraordinarily prolific touring Repertory company and had provided opportunities for members of other companies to first find themselves engaged in Cornish theatre, mounting a wide variety of plays—including Orton and Shakespeare—around the halls and little theatres of Cornwall and beyond.

The company with whom A39 found most in common was Theatre Rotto. What each company shared was a ragged edge where we frayed into a wider context. For A39, this was the world of political engagement: left-wing Labour, anarchists, Trotskyists, trade unionists, and also Travellers and poets; for Rotto, it was the cultural milieux of West-Cornwall musical and festival culture that gave them practical links with Footsbarn in the form of The Barneys—the music-based performers who had remained in Cornwall. There was enough in common in our raggedy-edginess for A39 and Rotto to collaborate on performances and projects, especially as they too had a specialist practice in cabaret based on the accomplished singing of Julia Maclean and Lucy Fontayne and Julia's musical skills, alongside a group of accompanists led by the brilliant jazz guitarist Ufi (see Fig. 23).

Economically, Kneehigh and Kinetik were the companies supported by South West Arts, enough to indicate the official approval that could bring more support in its wake. But as the Cornwall Theatre Alliance formed itself, it was apparent that it would be Kneehigh who would be major beneficiaries of future SWA funding in Cornwall, along with special support from SWA's 'Theatre Worker in Cornwall'[3] Jon Oram, who wrote the script of Kneehigh's breakthrough show, the ambitious and expensive *Tregeagle*. The figures from the South West Arts Report 1985–86 would be Kneehigh receiving £8700 ('Production of Tregeagle and work in schools'), Kinetik £2000 ('Touring production of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*'). Theatre Rotto were included with £500 'To commission *The Nutcase Suite* by Dave Humphries'.[4] The Theatre Officer's Report included, as one of the 'highlights of the year' 'Kneehigh Theatre's production of *Tregeagle* which will take the Company outside of the South West for the first time'. Below this was a photo of a scene from *Tregeagle* occupying more than half the page.[5] Kneehigh's inexorable rise had begun.

It was these changing circumstances that were the stimulus for the first Cornwall Theatre Alliance meeting. Though there was a general suspicion of done deals, being together regularly in one room inspired a distant relative of collectivity which grew significantly as time went on, though Kinetik would quite soon call it a day as a company. But the Cornwall Theatre Alliance sustained and would mount two substantial showcase festivals in Falmouth (see Fig. 24). The CTA was a context in which lots of misunderstandings were re-understood and collaborations initiated. In a few years it would transmute into the Cornwall Theatre Umbrella–but that's another story.

3 South West Arts, *29th Annual Report 1984–85* (Exeter: South West Arts, 1985)
4 South West Arts, *30th Annual Report 1985–86* (Exeter: South West Arts, 1986), p. 11.
5 South West Arts, *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Fig. 23. The raggedy edges: A39 and Theatre Rotto would often collaborate after coming together in the Cornwall Theatre Alliance.

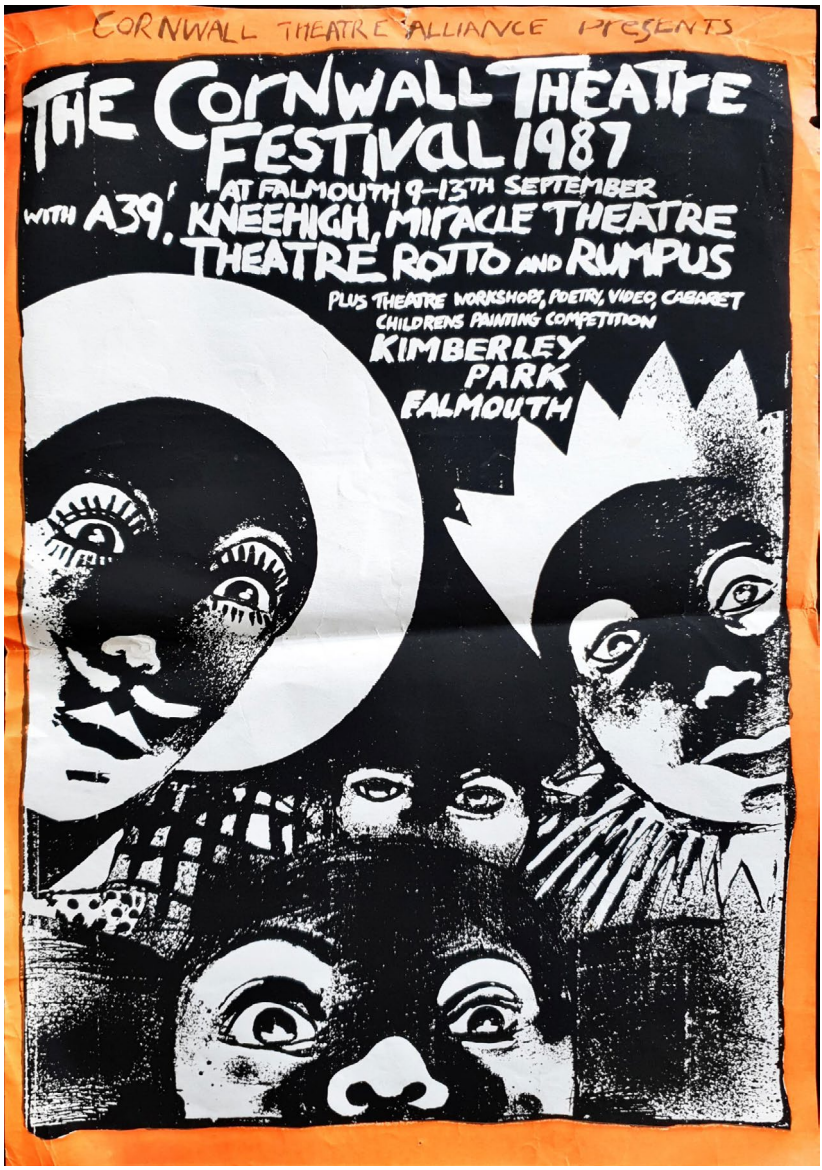

Fig. 24. Poster for the first theatre festival put together by the Cornwall Theatre Alliance. Poster design by Antony Duckels (CC BY-NC 4.0).

9. Building the New Show

I see from a note I made on its title page that in November 1985, after we returned from Europe and just after the Tin Crisis broke, I bought my copy of *Brecht On Theatre*.[1]

This was profoundly important, even though it only really changed the specifics of Brecht's influence rather than its extent. A39 operated—though we could not know it—in the dying years of an artistic era. It coincided with what academics believe was the transition from Modernism to Postmodernism, but this was not that phenomenon, though the death might have been due to their dogmatic assertion of something entirely nebulous.

By the time of the *Points of Contact: Performance Politics and Ideology* conference at Lancaster University in April 1990,[2] at which I would see Boal describe his Aesthetic Space theory, academics present obsessively wanted to discuss the issue of whether political theatre was even possible 'in the light of the current crisis', as one of their number put it—referring to some kind of metaphysical zeitgeist accompanying the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The political theatre workers present expressed bewilderment that such nonsense was even given conversation room. Of course it was possible—we did it on a daily basis! Nothing had changed in our communities simply because the spectacle of pseudo-confrontation between various flavours of oppression had temporarily ceased to compete for our attention in the international arena. Most of us were strictly of the 'A plague on both your houses' school of thought. We were just disgusted that the USA thought it had won—American neo-triumphalism was all the worse for its

1 Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, trans. and ed. by John Willett (London: Methuen 1978).

2 Organised by the Centre for Performance Research.

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0329.11

essential reaction to the post-Vietnam handwringing stage. It had a face and it was Ronald Reagan's, full of Botox blankness and preternaturally white teeth. This had nothing to do with our daily struggles to build communities with the aim of helping capitalism to destroy itself.

But that strange, abstract version of the world—constructed in the minds and internal dialogues of those in academia and institutions who are paid to formulate cultural analysis and to determine how the times come to be written down—had been fomenting through the 1980s as a response to the deformations of the world associated with the regimes of Thatcher and Reagan. While participating in that sad procession from scientific Structuralism, to obscurantic Poststructuralism and its ultimate staking of a claim on the era as 'Postmodernism', many of these professional thinkers would abandon Marxism, and then denounce it as 'teleological' and therefore impermissible—that had been a bedrock of the whole business as one of Lévi-Strauss's 'three mistresses'. This 'turn' was reflected in a failure to notice that it all represented nothing more profound than that aspect of the superstructure known as philosophy reflecting the development of the economic base into globalised neoliberalism. This abandonment of the most basic insight made me wonder if they had ever really been Marxists at all, or merely moved from one costume of poseur to another.[3]

The period of the 1960s/1970s and earliest 1980s, culturally the most democratic of the capitalist era, was now being closed down by its primary beneficiaries; but the rich soil of those years was where we had rooted, we unlikely artists. The countercultural tendency ascribed a general cachet to outlaws of many genres, a tendency perhaps inherited from earlier intellectual traditions like Sartre's reverence of Jean Genet. In these terms, Brecht was acceptable but Coward was not; Beckett, Pinter too, despite McGrath's disdain, because they were sufficiently weird to dismay the traditional.

Around theatre, the dominant figure in this regard was Brecht because he was anti-establishment, was the historic poster face for political theatre, and was for a revolution. For many, it did not matter which one. Of course, the details of Brechtian praxis were more complex than

3 For a simple (well, as simple as it gets) introduction to the terms of this story see for example Donald D. Palmer, *Structuralism and Poststructuralism for Beginners*, reprint edn (Connecticut: For Beginners LLC, 1995).

that and unfortunately the English language cannot even distinguish between 'Entfremdung' and 'Verfremdung'—it's all just 'alienation' to us. But now there was detail in our invocation of Brecht, and we could compare our findings so far in the ongoing experiment that was A39 with the theories of our cigar-smoking Uncle Bertolt.

An immediate resonance was Brecht's stipulation that theatre is a *virtuoso* art. So insistent is he on this that the word has a substantial index entry of its own in *Brecht on Theatre*. This reflects McGrath's demand for:

> The extraordinary sense of the imaginative, creative leap out of alienated living that is communicated by a good performer in a good, but dangerous, part, as he or she takes the audience on a vertiginous adventure along the tightrope of invention and wit and imagination, the free man, or woman, free in the gaze of the audience, creating him or herself as they go along, surviving, and surpassing mere survival....[4]

We knew ourselves in this quotation because we knew that journey, that situation which McGrath—though not a performer himself (he had to be persuaded not to play the drums in the 7:84 ceilidh band)—recognised: that tension of attention, holding the audience and feeling its weight and power almost physically as you are enfolded within those individual imaginations. Though this could be taken to defy our egalitarian instinct to anonymise ourselves within our collective entity, it felt true. The new show would consciously realise such possibilities.

What else did Brecht help us know about the coming work? In the section *A Dialogue About Acting*—a dialogue apparently entirely with himself, because who else could Brecht trust to formulate sufficiently intelligent questions?—there is the following call and response:

> Oughtn't the actor then to try to make the man he is representing understandable?
> Not so much the man as what takes place.... [I]f I choose to see *Richard III* I don't want to feel myself to be Richard III, but *to glimpse this phenomenon in all its strangeness and incomprehensibility*.[5]

This brilliant statement of the 'V-Effekt' was liberating because we had hitherto not dealt in individuals. The only mysteries in all our actions,

4 John McGrath, *A Good Night Out–Popular Theatre: Audience, Class and Form*, 2nd edn (London: Nick Hern Books 1996), p. 91.

5 Brecht & Willett, p. 27 (my emphasis).

on stage and street, had been ourselves, because we, like all our subjects, had been generalised. We were not individuals but statements of kind. Brecht made clear that we could deal in personality as long as we did not employ the disempowering lies of Aristotelian tragedy regarding the inevitability of the Fate of the Hero. If we displayed the strangeness of the individual our issues could include what it means to be a subject, what it costs.

On Form and Subject Matter contains a famous quote that we had used in the *One & All!* programme, invoked specifically too by McGrath[6] :

> 3. Simply to comprehend the new areas of subject matter [e.g., the extraction and refinement of petroleum spirit] imposes a new dramatic and theatrical form.... Petroleum resists the five-act form; ... Even to dramatise a simple newspaper report one needs something much more than the dramatic technique of a Hebbel or an Ibsen....
> [...] 5. Once we have begun to find our way about the subject-matter we can move on to the relationships which at present are immensely complicated and can only be achieved by *formal* means.[7]

This was immensely encouraging. Our practice differed from McGrath's. The 'new dramatic and theatrical form' Brecht refers to is that which he termed 'Epic Theatre' and, despite our smallness of scale, A39 was Epic. Although the subject matter of *One & All!* was not new (until the Tin Crisis happened), it was conceptually of a piece with the extractive industry of oil production famously cited by Brecht in insisting that it 'resists the five-act form' (*five* acts! the German bourgeoisie must have had arses of steel!); and we were certainly engaged in tasks of this type. The quotation above continues and concludes:

> The form in question can however only be achieved by a complete change of the theatre's purpose. Only a new purpose can lead to a new art. The new purpose is called pedagogics.[8]

'Pedagogics'? Teaching? Was that what we were for?

This, with its assumptions of authority, made us uneasy. But that was trumped by another uneasiness that lay at the specific point where

6 McGrath, pp. 38–39
7 Brecht & Willett, p. 30 (original emphasis).
8 Ibid.

McGrath joined battle with Brecht, embodied in Brecht's chart that yields a comparison between the old theatre and the new, Epic model.[9]

DRAMATIC THEATRE	EPIC THEATRE
plot	narrative
implicates the spectator in a stage situation	turns the spectator into an observer, but
wears down his capacity for action	arouses his capacity for action
provides him with sensations	forces him to take decisions
experience	picture of the world
the spectator is involved in something	he is made to face something
suggestion	argument
instinctive feelings are preserved	brought to the point of recognition
the spectator is in the thick of it, shares the experience	the spectator stands outside, studies
the human being is taken for granted	the human being is the subject of the enquiry
he is unalterable	he is alterable and able to alter
eyes on the finish	eyes on the course
one scene makes another	each scene for itself
growth	montage
linear development	in curves
evolutionary determinism	jumps
man as a fixed point	man as a process
thought determines being	social being determines thought
feeling	reason

McGrath quotes this chart in full, with this commentary:

> What is perhaps most striking about that list… is its hostility to the audience. Pedagogics, after all, is the art of passing *down* information and judgements, the art of the superior to the inferior. Distance, in place of solidarity, pseudo-scientific 'objectivity' in place of the frank admission of a human, partisan and emotional perspective–coldness, in place of shared experience: politically Stalinism rather than collectivism.[10]

9 Brecht & Willett, p. 37.
10 McGrath, p. 40.

Hmm. That last comment is foul, unworthy of McGrath—which he seemed to feel himself, qualifying it by clearing Brecht of the crimes of Stalin, which was nice of him. But the criticism generally is weak and, I believe thanks to this statement by McGrath, was once used against me by a theatre officer who accused me as a playwright of putting myself in the position of 'the one who knows'. My response to that was exactly as I would respond to McGrath: that there would be no point, whatever genre, form, or content you espoused, to put the performers up before an audience with nothing at all to say for fear of inferring superiority if anyone told anything to anyone. There is an implicit context: 'Listen, this issue is important to me, I have thought about it a lot and I have done some research on it and this is what I think, these are my feelings about it.' Brecht's techniques are entirely focused on encouraging the audience to weigh and critique what they are told—that is the whole point of that chart.

And a certain type of coldness was something Brecht *cultivated* in the work, as he describes again and again. Here is an example from early in the book (and thus in his career):

> I don't let my feelings intrude in my dramatic work. It'd give a false view of the world. I aim at an extremely classical, cold, highly intellectual style of performance. I'm not writing for the scum who want to have the bottoms of their hearts warmed…. The one tribute we can pay the audience is to treat it as thoroughly intelligent. It is utterly wrong to treat people as simpletons when they are grown up at seventeen. I appeal to the reason.[11]

He is determined to interact with the intelligence rather than the emotions. Later in the same piece he continues:

> I'm for the epic theatre! The production has got to bring out the material incidents in a perfectly sober and matter of fact way. Nowadays the play's meaning is usually blurred by the fact that the actor plays to the audience's hearts…. Contrary to present custom they ought to be presented quite coldly, classically and objectively. For they are not matter for empathy. They are there to be understood. Feelings are private and limited. Against that reason is fairly comprehensive and to be relied on.[12]

11 Brecht & Willett, p. 14.
12 Brecht & Willett, p. 15.

We saw the parallels between Brecht's intentions and our own in his statement '*Der Flug des Lindbergh* is valueless unless learned from. It has no value as art which would justify any performance not intended for learning.'[13] This was precisely our position when we were creating *One & All!*: not art for art's sake but theatre as counter-information, theatre as communication.

This serious disagreement between our influences was focused practically by McGrath in *A Good Night Out* through his inclusion of a long speech from his play for 7:84 Scotland, *Little Red Hen*, in which the character Old Hen recounts how her husband was victimised out of his job in 1930s Glasgow, eventually to die fighting fascists in Spain.[14] The speech was delivered in McGrath's transcribed lecture and in the original play by Elizabeth MacLennan. It is written in dialect and recounts historical events (Ramsey MacDonald's second premiership, cuts in unemployment benefits—what an arsehole he was!—the fate of the protagonists of Red Clyde, the treachery of the official organs of the Labour Party) interspersed with or illustrated through personal experience. We had been very influenced by that speech in particular—and such writing by McGrath in other plays using the same combination of factors—in writing the section of *One & All!* in which an old woman talks of losing her husband in a mining accident. The tone of the delivery of Old Hen's speech is thoroughly coded into it, we can easily imagine it in performance and that is equally true for our equivalent.

The result was that whatever Sue did with it, our 'Grandma' speech felt cosy and cloying in performance. I disliked that part of the show, an aesthetic dislike of the principle of individuals wistfully and lovably recounting the effects of the passage of history reflected directly in their own lives. It's 'warmth' (in contrast to Brecht's espoused coldness) felt horribly analogous to the ominous warmth experienced when pissing yourself. (I'm told.)

My own experience of history felt nothing like that, more like Aimé Césaire's 'My ear to the ground, I heard tomorrow pass by'.[15] If it didn't feel true, it was simply using emotion to make a political case. It was dodgy. It was icky. It was emotional manipulation—and it failed as

13 Ibid., p. 31.
14 McGrath, pp. 68–69.
15 *'l'oreille collée au sol, j'entendis/passer/Demain'* –Aimé Césaire, 'Les pur-sang', 1946.

agitprop in also being ambiguous: a fascist too may mourn her husband and we may mourn with her, but what do we learn of fascism from that?

I did not want to work through emotion—or rather there was only one emotion I was interested in and that was anger: to keep putting fact on fact, knowledge on knowledge, understanding on understanding until the audience walked out in disgust into the night and burned something down, preferably capitalism.

So—pedogogics. As it turns out, not a million miles from agitprop anyway, and perhaps they are actually synonyms.

There were other aspects of risk in an 'Old Hen'-type holiday in naturalism from the rigours of the Epic. One is the well-understood perils of essentialism. What are we showing in our work? Well, the possibilities are many and various but even if we accept the pedagogic role—that we are members of our communities who have researched and formulated our ideas and brought our audience here tonight to pass on our conclusions—we of course cannot deal with all the issues and oppressions of capitalism, imperialism, and war at the same time. McGrath accepts a need to critique the working class too—after all, the treachery detailed in Old Hen's speech was permitted and perhaps partially enabled by the Scottish working class—but neither he nor we had got round to that yet. In the meantime, to dip into the granny musing on her past in terms of close family and political awareness and commitment was to infer much that needed to be examined. The view expressed here by McGrath of our heritage and experience had nothing much in common with the working-class histories of any of the members of A39. Unexamined, McGrath had chosen to counter an artificial Scottish heritage that was the target of *Little Red Hen* with his own equivalent.

Worse than our echoing of Old Hen reminiscent was my experience in a performance in St Ives. During the scene we called *Camborne Tram*, I was playing a 1920s Cornish miner retired from the gold mines of the Rand, now living in their spoils in the form of my big bungalow in Illogan Highway. I came out into my garden, greeted my neighbours stage right and stage left, sat in the Cornish sun, and opened my copy of *The Camborne Packet*. But I began to cough; coughed and coughed; coughed and coughed and coughed until I froze into a seizure. Then I was discussed like a laboratory specimen by two posh comedy doctors,

Dr Knacker and Dr Benefactor, played as though by James Robertson Justice and Dirk Bogarde, who diagnosed my Miner's Con and described the tiny quartz crystals from dry rock-drilling glittering in my lungs, wearing them away with every breath. They shared their prognosis of my imminent death as though I had never really been alive, just one of a mine's inventory of mechanisms.

This night as I coughed and coughed (I hated doing this: eventually the retch reflex would kick in), one of two women sitting four feet from me in the front row of the audience began to well up, then lost control and the tears streamed down her face as she turned for comfort into the arms of her younger neighbour. At the end of the show the younger woman approached me and apologised for her mother, whom I had reminded of her dead husband—a Cornish miner who had himself died in just that way, of pneumonoconiosis. She thanked me!

After this I dialled the performance down to diminish the realism. I don't want to emote for a living and I don't want to puke for a living. I don't want to make people cry—I would rather they punched me. Brecht was right. McGrath was wrong.

Brecht describes the development of his aesthetic, but it was apparent we needed to realise our own. His work and thought is more contingent than people assume. I have seen the Royal Shakespeare Company perform *The Good Person of Szechuan* and it was awful. They appeared to have no idea of Brecht's purposes, or they had chosen to disregard them and plaster on their own, which left it too insubstantial to justify all this effort. Once you discounted the idea that theatre is a virtue in itself (which Brecht himself ardently rejected), there was nothing worthwhile left. The best Brecht performance I have seen was by Havant's amateur Bench Theatre Company in May 1982. In the area to work on a boat on Hayling Island, I saw a poster advertising their production of *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*. Despite the monstrous nature of what the play depicts, this was a *joyful* evening. They gave us the text to use for ourselves, they didn't roll it round their tongues to wring out every iota of meaning in actorly indulgence. And they did this in their own community. It was light, it was playful; they enjoyed it and so did we, in exactly the same way. And yet we understood the ways Hitler happened, shared the insight of a German who lived through it and fought it every step of the way and yet could not stop it happening in his name.

If A39 was not going to charm with our heart-warming character studies like Old Hen, what was *our* aesthetic? The comic-strip doctors? The capitalist in the top hat? The neutral narrators of *One & All!*?

We can only be influenced by the things we know. One of the greatest art forms of the second half of the twentieth century, the one I had grown up with along with millions of others like me, was the television situation comedy. If we look back at the hermetic worlds of examples like *Hancock's Half Hour* and *Steptoe and Son*, or later examples such as *Nightingales* or *Fifteen Stories High*, we see how close they are to the Theatre of the Absurd—nearly as much NF Simpson as Galton & Simpson.[16] In the Theatre of the Absurd, as in Magic Realism, the world is consistent even though it is not our world. This consistency is the aesthetic, which can encompass certain elements of form and content, but is strained and undermined by others. *Steptoe and Son* could venture into the horrors implicit in the 'situation', the emotional dependency in symbiosis with emotional exploitation that kept the characters together in eternal confrontation and frustration; but the system must quickly be redeemed by an appeal to/by the familiar and the familial in the face of a hostile world 'outside'. Tony Hancock continually put his career at risk in an attempt to discern and refine whatever it was that was essential to his 'situation', discarding catchphrases, co-stars, and writers to ensure and reassure that it was himself that embodied that essence. No successful examples of this genre could survive the introduction of a single 'sensible' character, i.e. one that was not entirely of its world, devoid of any aspect that extended beyond its boundaries.

The aesthetic has a real power, it is not arbitrary. It relates to something significant though abstract, a feeling of life. Old Hen was not a part of our aesthetic (and, I would argue, undermines McGrath's), though the two-dimensional comedy doctors were. What else was? What else was not?

16 *Hancock's Half Hour*, BBC Television 1956–61, written by Ray Galton and Alan Simpson; *Steptoe and Son*, BBC Television 1962–65, 1970–74, written by Ray Galton and Alan Simpson; *Nightingales*, Channel 4 Television UK 1990, 1992–93, written by Paul Makin; *Fifteen Stories High*, BBC Television 2002–2004, written by Sean Lock, Martin Trenaman and Mark Lamarr. Other examples are legion – pick your own!

Brecht came up with a simple description of how Epic theatre was to function in the twenty-ninth item in Brecht on Theatre, *The Street Scene–a Basic Model for an Epic Theatre*:

> It is comparatively easy to set up a basic model for an epic theatre. For practical experiments I usually picked as my example of completely simple, 'natural' epic theatre an incident such as can be seen at any street corner: an eyewitness demonstrating to a collection of people how a traffic accident took place[…]. [T]he demonstrator acts the behaviour of driver or victim or both in such a way that the bystanders are able to form an opinion about the accident.[17]

Oh! That simple! Pedagogics—what happened on the street. Not acting, but demonstrating what happened. It was not necessary for anyone to believe the demonstrator really was any of the people involved, just for them to engage with the 'performance' (in the lightest sense) of events. In Bench Theatre's *Arturo Ui*, they didn't so much recreate the play as, yes, demonstrate it, as though they were showing us the sort of thing it might be. Rather than 'The Play's the Thing!', *to* play is the thing.

Brecht's demand for virtuosity could be reassessed in the light of this simple formulation, not just of epic theatre itself, but also its social, cultural, and political role, the depiction of the car crash that is late capitalism. No one was going to sit down in a shawl and deliver a naturalistic homily in this form of theatre. In terms of our sense of our own developing aesthetic, this was entirely useful and would strongly influence the play that was forming—an Epic theatre biodrama of the Cornish engineer Richard Trevithick, described as though his whole life was an incident in the street.

Richard Trevithick was a name that had already come up within *One & All!*, so there was a strong element of continuity of content between the two shows, with a sense of a single developing practice. Trevithick's fate was a scar on the benevolent face that capitalism presented as its own; a scar carved as industrial capitalism came into its own in the Industrial Revolution, of which Cornwall was a major centre through its world domination of hard rock metal mining. This demanded ambitious engineering in order that it might happen at all, so Cornwall dominated

17 Brecht & Willett, p. 121.

that too: the equipment to make significant inroads into her granite was a very specialist construction.

Just as significant was the need to pump Cornish mines clear of water so they could be driven deeper and the lodes and veins followed down into the world. Left to themselves, Cornish mines would be nothing but deep black wells, vertical lakes of metal-tanged silence. They must be pumped clear all day and all night or be abandoned forever and surrendered to stillness—the death that was now being enacted in the vestiges of Cornwall's defining industry, as though her lungs were being surrendered to a slow pneumonia. Then her engineers, too, would fail.

Newcomen had brought Savery's steam engine to bear on the task of mine drainage, the stationary pumping of water being one of the few things for which these cathedral-like constructions were suitable. Their inventions were merely developed by James Watt—this we had described in *One & All!*. The capital demands of these machines brought the need to keep the miners' work eternal, without the free time necessary to tend smallholdings and fishing nets. This trampled on the culture of the miners and drove them down into that wet night in all the hours there were, to make profits for the mine owners, the Mineral Lords and Adventurers, the beneficiaries of Cost Books and Count Houses who paid a heavy toll to the need for steam because there was no coal to be found in Cornwall. To heat the water to boil into steam, coal must be brought here by ship. It was expensive.

Trevithick was, from his earliest years, a prodigy in iron, and he soon joined other Cornish engineers in using all their ingenuity to make the giant engines more efficient. James Watt demanded high licence payments for the use of his steam condenser and used his patent to inhibit Cornish developments that could turn their inventors into competitors of Boulton & Watt. Trevithick, a natural hothead nicknamed the Cornish Giant in a land of small Celts, found himself in the unnatural surroundings of the courtroom. His literary skills were vestigial and so the giant was constrained to his disadvantage and to the benefit of the greedy and the cunning or, as they were now known in Thatcher's Britain, of the 'entrepreneur'.

When Watt's patent ran out, Trevithick—legal chains removed—rose from height to height and higher yet. Using high pressure steam, a technology Watt struggled for years to suppress, Trevithick rendered

Watt's condenser obsolete and drove the effective size of the engines down from monument to table top. For convenience he mounted them on wheels, then connected them up to those wheels; and on Christmas Eve 1801 himself made the first journey on a steam propelled vehicle 'Going up Camborne Hill coming down,' as the Cornish song says, and caused the new century to give birth to the modern world. In 1804, at Pen-y-Daren, Trevithick ran a locomotive on rails to tow a train of trucks, twenty-five years before Stephenson's Rocket. He went on to pile innovation on innovation but gained no lasting fame or fortune and died in poverty in 1833 working as a manual labourer at the age of sixty-two, a long way from home.

We would use Trevithick's story to 'demonstrate' how capitalism came to be what it is and why its time is gone.

What form could this demonstration take?

10. 'How much easier it is to honour the dead than to value the living'—*The Tale of Trevithick's Tower*

The new show would be the result of all we now knew about ourselves, all the performing experience we had accrued and new opportunities we had perceived since we put together *One & All!*

To understand these developments, a key issue was those 'levels of pretence'—the principle derived from McGrath's observations on the sophistication of popular engagement with issues of identity in the performance of pantomime.[1] Thinking about our experiences of performing *One & All!*, some issues could be investigated through the unity of playwrights and performers; for example, who were we being when we were narrating? When we spoke directly to the audience was it as ourselves, like a singer announcing the next song? Or were we being some kind of neutral nobody? What about our accents, postures, mannerisms? We were still performing but were we still 'acting'? We were speaking lines of a script in a manner that was actorly, using the skills of projection and engagement—we were making it clear and convincing; but how much was pretence and how much of it was just being? Was this an issue of 'gestus'—that the lines were said with a certain underlying attitude that meant we were acting not-acting?[2]

Perhaps all pretence really was being dropped *pro tem*. The audience knew we meant what we said, we believed it to be true. When we put together our perceived truths to make arguments it was still clear that

1 John McGrath, *A Good Night Out—Popular Theatre: Audience, Class and Form* (London: Nick Hern Books 1996), pp. 28–29.

2 See editor's note (p. 42) in Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, trans. and ed. by John Willett (London: Methuen 1978) that 'Gestus' conveys a sense both of 'gesture' and 'gist'.

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this is what we were doing, no deception was being attempted. We were not newsreaders trying to evoke tablets of stone. But in the substantial part of *One & All!* that was narration, were we making the most of the possibilities available to us?

We felt it was necessary for the form, in the attempt to communicate the content we believed to be vital, that we could direct this necessary information to the audience—statistics, facts, quotations, contexts. Apart from direct speech we could have used Brechtian captions or signs, but we could not rely on the blackout qualities of non-theatre spaces to allow projections, and anyway we did not have access to the technology, or the will to use it. With Miracle Theatre, Sue and I had participated in rudimentary and very early use of video in theatre and we did not feel this was a path we wanted to follow. Our beliefs here we shared with those expressed by McGrath:

> For one further–perhaps the most important–feature of theatre as a form is that its dimensions are essentially those of the human figure, its communication essentially between one group of people and another present in the same space.[3]

We felt it fundamental to embody this communication. Despite the changes in and availability of technology, this is still my position. I do not believe in projected scenery or recorded music, throat mics, and amplification, just people alive in the presence of other humans in the evocation of the aesthetic space.[4]

How could we develop the possibilities of these human relationships in the perpetration of our form of theatre? What other opportunities were there within our tatty aesthetic? We shared some of the viewpoints implicit in Grotowski's 'Poor Theatre', which Mark had explored in workshops in Exeter, though the kind of cult-like discipline urged by Grotowski was alien to A39. We shied away from all such hermetic approaches—even Brecht's own tedious workshop exercises of endless mimicry in movement, Peter Brook's neo-votive communes, as well as Grotowski's physical tortures.[5] Our theatre was about finding itself

3 McGrath, p. 86.

4 See Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire. The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy* (London: Routledge 2003), pp. 16–23.

5 Jerzy Grotowski and Eugenio Barba, *Towards a Poor Theatre* (London: Eyre Methuen 1976); Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1972); Brecht & Willett, p. 129.

within our everyday relationships; it was not just of us but of our lives beyond A39, of the daily experience of being of Cornwall. Besides what we said and performed, it was the communications beyond words, the spaces between places, the long roads towards the sunset and the End of Land, the high ground diversions from holidaymaker traffic jams over and along Cornwall's spine to suddenly materialise in the centre of St Ives or the streets of Penzance. It was the clean moist air of the Atlantic that barely acknowledged Cornwall's existence but blew and beat over and through her to bend the lichen-covered trees. A39's theatre was all of us all of the time, whatever we were doing. This was its validity and credibility. We lived this place. It was in us whenever we were devising, rehearsing, or performing. That was why its nature was becoming clearer as time passed: place and work and we were inseparable. That was what was available to us in our poverty without any external means to surmount Cornwall's demands. It made us the real thing.

We were performers of the room. It could suddenly just happen, completely unexpectedly. It was like a kind of conjuring. This quality was helped by the growing significance of our cabaret act, while our street theatre work diminished. The creation of these short, discrete pieces that often occurred within musical rather than theatrical contexts was very influential on the creation of the new play, *The Tale of Trevithick's Tower*. While still immediate, they were growing in ambition and increasingly *avant-garde* in an austere, punk kind of way. The average age of our audiences became ever younger. I am still accosted by those who spent their youths watching The A39s (the name we went under in non-theatrical contexts), which makes me feel very old.

From the first, there had been a 'recitative' (rhymes with Steve) quality in *One & All!* that corresponded, weirdly, to the storytelling aspect of operas that develops the narrative between arias. 'Recitative' singing had always sounded to me like an attempt to excuse a failure of composition, dialogue just pretending to be sung to a tune that remains the same throughout the work. To the opera hater, among whose ranks I have to include myself, it is the most annoying aspect even of an artform the perpetrators of which seem to flaunt its elitism and irrelevance.

But there was a correspondence here to the formality of our delivery of narration. We had chosen through instinct to maintain this formality as an alienation technique (Brecht's 'V-Effekt'), but meanwhile there we were in costume, so therefore not 'ourselves, performing' but characters

whose defining quality was authority; or rather, as there were no contradictions in these portrayals, as stereotypes of authority.

There is nothing wrong with the use of stereotypes for the purposes of drama. Theatre 'characters' and 'stereotypes' are equally artificial, equally a tool of pretence; it's just that one of these figures will display 'realistic' internal alterities and the other will not. The stereotype is actually the more honestly presented stage inhabitant as it does not pretend to reality but is presented as a symbol. Hence, *One & All!* repeatedly featured Lord Knacker, with his top hat and tailcoat, as Mineral Lord, Adventurer, capitalist, and 'patriot', his nature identified through the knowledge the audience brought in with them of the semantics of the genre (cf. Robert Altman's semantic/syntactic theory of film genre[6]). Through our costume in the narrative sections and our formality, we were placing authority with the working-class miners and identifying the play as their version of history. Would this approach also underpin a Brechtian street-scenic 'demonstration' of the events of Trevithick's life?

Thought and discussion originated another way to go that could obviate any 'ourselves, performing' or 'transfer of authority' confusion—there were aspects of these approaches that had uncomfortable resonances with McGrath's 'Old Hen' form. We could push the whole show up one 'level of pretence' and remove any implied authority figures: no godlike 'newsreaders', even working-class versions; rather than ask audiences to take anyone on trust, we could insist they distrusted everybody and free them to ascribe authority where they felt it belonged. The new play would not be presented by anyone like us but by characters whose information obviously could not be taken entirely at face value.

So we formulated the new show not as a play at all, but as a public meeting—the logical conclusion to McGrath's insistence, with which we agreed, that:

> Theatre is the place where the life of a society is shown in public to that society.... It is a public event and it is about matters of public concern.... [T]heatre is by its nature a political form, or a politicising medium....[7]

6 Rick Altman, 'A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre', *Cinema Journal,* 23.3 (1984), 6–18.

7 McGrath, p. 83.

Fig. 25. Tony Duckels's poster for *The Tale of Trevithick's Tower*, screen printed by Lucy Kempton. This one advertised the premier at Camborne Trevithick Day 1986. Antony Duckels (CC BY-NC 4.0.)

The material the new play would be dealing with was known in part by many Cornish people: Trevithick, the great innovator cheated out of

his due recognition by 'history', or something. It's a tale that has much resonance with the Cornish, their own collective engineering and hard-rock achievements disregarded and forgotten, their spoils systematically taken away. In dealing with this feeling, we would out it and turn it into a political discussion.

As a means to this, we seized on an issue that was the subject of real public meetings at the time. The plan was afoot (and eventually realised) to take over Truro City Hall, a cavernous, echoing space in a conurbation of old municipal masonry right at the city's heart, much used for flea markets and gigs, and turn it into a prestigious theatre. There was angry opposition to this from a number of different viewpoints. The perspective we shared was that the urge to a prestige bourgeois culture palace was a symptom of a distorted metropolitan, centralising vision of Cornwall that would later be referred to by the Cornish Social and Economic Research Group (CoSERG) in their influential book *Cornwall At The Crossroads*[8] as an outsider's patronising 'Bring them Shakespeare and streetlights!' attitude. It assumed Cornwall to be a backward, uncultured place that needed to be more like the Home Counties from which many of those hosting such assumptions had come. (This source and such insights were to be central in A39's third touring play *Whole New Towns*.)

We felt that the decentred nature of Cornwall, with multiplex small settlements, each with their own character and institutions, was actually what a better vision of the UK—and indeed the 'developed' world—would look like. One of the reasons we detested the Arts Council's new *Glory of the Garde*n policy was that it specifically favoured the provision of the arts in urban 'Centres of Excellence' (the capital letters being urgently obligatory).[9] Those living in rural outer darkness would pay occasional visits in their Sunday best, pausing in the municipal car park to brush the straw off each other's clothes before achieving their access to officially approved Excellence. We believed that it was no coincidence that Cornwall, without a designated, prestige cultural centre, could support—albeit in poverty—so many more theatre companies than the

8 Bernard Deacon, Andrew George, and Ronald Perry, *Cornwall at the Crossroads: Living Communities or Leisure Zone?* (Redruth: CoSERG 1988).

9 Arts Council of Great Britain, *The Glory of the Garden: The Development of the Arts in England; A Strategy for a Decade* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1983).

much bigger, much more populated, much richer Devon that looked to Plymouth and Exeter and even Bristol.

As eventually realised the 'Hall for Cornwall', as it was named, would have only a single auditorium and no studio theatre; so unless Cornwall's own companies could draw a thousand people to drive to Truro, equivalent to the capacity of dozens of village halls and an entire tour's-worth of audience, this was no venue for us. And if we could exert such an attraction, what would we do then? Should we originate complete shows for a single performance? A model for the performing arts was imposed implicitly and unexamined, and it is obvious that this venue was not intended to host anything ontologically responsive to Cornish cultural conditions. It was instead designed to import theatre; it was to replace the Cornish companies on the supposition that what we did had no value, although this formulation certainly flatters the amount of analysis that went into the scheme on the part of those for whom prestige is its own reward.

So our new show could do work in the present as well as enabling new analysis of the past. And for A39 to intervene in this way in this issue was nicely needling for all those who we would most enjoy to annoy, those who made no art themselves but for whom culture and artiness was a function of received wisdom and social status: of class.

We embellished their plan for our own purposes. Our public meeting was part of a fictional campaign to demolish the City Hall and build in its place the tower Trevithick designed in 1833 for a competition to commemorate the passing of the Reform Laws. Trevithick's tower would have been a thousand feet high—higher than the Eiffel Tower, which would not be built for another fifty years—built of cast iron plates and topped with an enormous equestrian statue and containing its own steam engine to facilitate construction and later to power the lifts. We prepared questionnaires for our public meeting. I built a twelve-foot-high model of the tower out of cardboard using techniques I stole from Buckminster Fuller, but it was too tall for any of the venues we played and eventually we lost it.

To present the public meeting, we recruited three of Cornwall's own 'Great and the Good' from the realms of our imagination. Sir John Doddle, to be played by Mark, would be an ex-Thatcherite cabinet minister, unmitigated capitalist, and urgent advocate of everything

oppressive that was and had been. Sue would play his wife, Lady Julia Doddle: a genteel host of daytime television in the most unchallenging of women's programming, a televisual equivalent of *The Lady*. I would play the Reverend Gerald P. Green, named after the *Cluedo* character and inspired by certain clerics I had met while helping to run The Crypt Centre. The Reverend represented Established piety, i.e. an ethics entirely contingent on the status quo that forswore any morality that rocked boats, all ethical discourse to be constrained by the interests of capitalist society. Wherever this clashed with conscience or the Bible, it was the Bible or conscience that would have to give way.

These three unreliable witnesses would conduct Brecht's specified 'demonstration' of our subject, though they appeared to have made some quite bizarre decisions regarding the portrayal of Trevithick's life. Trevithick himself appeared only once in the entire show, as a baby, when he was represented by Lady Julia's capacious handbag. Our three hosts did not entirely see eye to eye on the interpretation of history, and the demonstration was made more difficult by Sir John's insistence on describing historical events through the lens of contemporary Thatcherite ideology. In these terms, Trevithick's failure to gain credit for his work and his death in poverty demonstrated his failure as an entrepreneur and thus was absolutely as he deserved. Any part of the demonstration that did not support this viewpoint (much of the formulation had been apparently the responsibility of the Reverend Green), Sir John would deliver with a sneer and disparaging comments.

The vicar evidently found Sir John's red-in-tooth-and-claw Thatcherism distasteful, though failed to counter it substantially, as though it was really the vocabulary that was embarrassing and his disdain mostly aesthetic, as befits an Anglican Church described as 'the Conservative Party at Prayer'. In his brusque dismissals and outright contempt, Sir John was very likely indeed to frighten the horses in a way that disturbed the illusion that there were any operative ethics at work in the British Raj, especially now it was reduced in scope to ruling over only those it despised the most: the British working class. The Reverend Green, like other High-Church figures, both symbolised and embodied the 'spirituality' of the state and also defined its limits, not defying establishment hypocrisy but sanctifying it through mystification.

Lady Julia mediated between the two theses of this low-dynamic dialectic and thus naturally synthesised the role of Chairwoman. In

her suit, flesh-coloured tights, pearls, and blouse, all topped off with a Thatcherite hat (for there is such a thing), she was an establishment jolly-upper, verbally slapping down Sir John's wilder ravings as though smacking the legs of a naughty child with the familiarity of a mother/lover; meanwhile steering Reverend Green with flattery and mock-humility.

Beginning the play with fulsome introductions by Lady Julia, our panel for the evening then moved into its scenes of the life of Trevithick through often ridiculous characterisations, returning to panel form with much mutual congratulation. As the show unfolded the techniques extended in scope, the commentary on the demonstrations coming to suggest that the presenters were losing control of their material and a story was coming to tell itself despite them (see Fig. 26).

Having pushed the execution of the play away from ourselves and into movement between the onion skins of 'levels of pretence', we could use these contemporary characters to critique contemporary society and government. The new script also took the time to develop scenes comedic in terms of dialogue as well as characterisation. The influence this had in relaxing the straightforward pedagogic drive of *One & All!* was reflected in the overall structuring of the show. This was partly through the demands of the form—public meetings and dramatic enactments seldom being technically rigorous in their unfolding—but also reflected a wish to take our time in performance. The virtuosity espoused by Brecht and backed by McGrath itself needed to unfold. And there was time for the characters to comment on their own performances and content.

Following the use of the Blue Blouse movement's 'Living Newspaper' practice in the later iteration of *One & All!*, now we adopted their 'Living Machines' form—human bodies enacting the functioning of mechanisms, here mainly played for laughs.[10] Musical segments also moved up and down the 'levels of pretence' (the move into song itself is a fundamental demonstration of the principle), some being sung by Sir John and Lady Julia and accompanied by the Vicar on voice and guitar, some by characters they were performing, some by a mixture of the two.

10 Rania Karoula, 'From Meyerhold and Blue Blouse to McGrath and 7:84: Political Theatre in Russia and Scotland', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 44.1 (2018), 21–28, https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol44/iss1/4

We extensively used unaccompanied doo-wop style singing with hand percussion of a kind we made much use of on the street and in cabaret.

The transitions between levels were initially clearly and pointedly marked out, but once the practice was established it could occur quickly, without commentary. Progressively, new characters could stretch the outlines of those supposed to be performing them. There was something of a shamanic sense to these developments. If the audience was being led to these places by Sir John, Lady Julia, and the Reverend Green, what was happening to our protagonists that they could now encompass such knowledge and opinions when they seemed in themselves so constrained by the conventions that both bound and served them? This became part of the unfolding insight into the vicious economic system to which Trevithick was sacrificed: they could not recount a coherent story within its strictures, they had to break out of them in order to make any useful sense of the world.

Early in the second half the play seems to be employing the 'Old Hen' approach once again, like the grannie in *One & All!*. But here, in the story of John Bryant, it had a sting in its tail. The apparently homespun yarn became the story of machine breakers, Luddites. It was here that we pushed furthest from our 'demonstrators' for the evening, Lady Julia, Sir John, and the Vicar. Where the first half of the play ends with *The British Entrepreneur*, a new National Anthem proffered both for Trevithick's time and Thatcher's:

> The poor must take their chance;
> The hungry must just eat their cake;
> Ye Rich, rise and advance!
> We praise those on the make.
> The Army and the Law,
> Your property will store;
> While ye make money for
> The British Entrepreneur,
> The British Entrepreneur!

the Bryant section contains its counter in *The Great Enoch*, named after the iron sledgehammer of the Luddite:

> Our hammer is the Great Enoch,
> The clever and the sly
> have imprisoned all you common people,
> Told you that you must not fight,

The clever weaklings know what's right:
They make the Combination Laws,
That stop you talking on street corners,
Saying you won't work for nothing.
Follow King Ludd! Smash their prisons!
Great Enoch will smash their prisons!

After this, in the *Herland* section, we reached down to tabula rasa in terms of 'levels of pretence', something like the three performers who had delivered the narrative segments of *One & All!*, but here delivering the lines not formally but dispassionately; the words alone doing their work in telling the story of how Trevithick transcended his own technology and conjured up something its materials could not sustain, the ghost of a technology to come.

Trevithick, father of the train,
Was driven from his home by steam
The first of all the Cousin Jacks to go.
In future days, the trains would come
With economics to each home
And turn them into Cornish caves.
Driven overseas by hunger
When the mines could work no longer
The Cornish folk embraced their brother.

And thus, we entered the retelling of Trevithick's sojourn in Latin America.

As the programme noted, here lies the problem in portraying the life of Trevithick: it comes to seem unbelievable. It seems inconceivable that this same man, forgotten then beyond Cornwall, who invented the steam locomotive and innovation after innovation after innovation, then went to the Americas and found himself aide and engineer to El Libertador himself, Simon Bolivar, as he perpetrated a revolutionary war of liberation through the mountains, jungles, and cities of South America. This aspect of Trevithick's life has received the least attention, perhaps because Trevithick's earliest biographer, his son Francis Trevithick, was attempting to rehabilitate him and to overcome an unjust ignorance of this historical giant amongst the Victorian public. In this regard, the part of his life spent as a revolutionary republican freedom fighter would not be helpful. Queen Victoria would certainly not have been amused.

It could be argued that it was too much for us to include this story alongside everything else we had to portray, and that we should instead have made it the centre of another work. Maybe Sir John could have refused to play his part in portraying the rising of the oppressed against the tenets of imperialism. Perhaps we should just have shown that row. This would also have shortened the show, which was exhausting to perform. On the other hand, we would have been perpetuating the diminution of this important episode in a life. As it was, we went straight for maximum knockabout, complete with Simon Bolivar played by Groucho Marx and even a bit of Shakespeare (see Figs. 27, 28).

Most controversial in the performances tended to be the show's almost-culmination with the singing of William Blake's *Jerusalem*. There were complaints that we should finish such a Cornish play by inferring Cornwall's inclusion in a song specifically about England. This indicated that the subtleties of the 'levels of pretence' were confusing some of the audience with regard to who was saying what to whom, but it fuelled some apposite after-show discussions: 'Yeah, it's wrong,' we would say, 'But that wasn't us!'

The Tale of Trevithick's Tower premiered in the Trevithick Arms in Camborne on the evening of Camborne Trevithick Day 1986. You could not get more Trevithick than that. We spent the day roaming the streets in our Panel characters and costumes, meeting the crowds in a royal-type walkabout, asking appropriately patronising questions, Sir John brusque and offensive, Lady Julia breezily ameliorating, the Reverend Green ever unctuous and prone to *ad hoc, al fresco* sermonising (see Fig. 29). The premiere was included in the Trevithick Day programme and publicity so for once the promotion was taken care of for us, though we had placed an item in *The West Briton*'s *What's On* section and I had done an interview on Radio Cornwall.

We toured *Trevithick* around Cornwall. As the Tin Crisis worked through its grim unfolding, *One & All!* had a sustaining interest and we found ourselves touring both plays at the same time—a bizarre political repertory theatre. In performance, *One & All!* now seemed like a holiday compared with *The Tale of Trevithick's Tower*, not only because the newer show was longer but also because of the nature of the performance *Trevithick* demanded. Virtuosity—it became apparent—when allowed the opportunity to run riot, is extremely tiring. And there was more

conventional emotional range too. Because our main 'demonstrators' were not objective critics of the status quo but members of Britain's ruling class junta, allowing their subjective variants on the hegemonic story of history to contend for the fruits of this public meeting led ultimately to them contradicting not only each other, but themselves; and it was draining to get them to this place nightly without logistical support.

An interesting insight came in the form of a report for South West Arts on *Trevithick's Tower* in performance at the Blue Anchor in Helston, a favourite venue of ours. The report noted that the average age of the audience was under twenty-five, astoundingly for a theatre audience. It was a very positive report and the writer of it was thoughtful enough to get a copy to us. It was ignored. A39 would never receive Arts Council support, though by now we were receiving funding from Cornwall County Council and several District Councils, which sat better with us anyway. We were being funded by the locally elected representatives who came to see our shows and discussed them with us afterwards. The members of A39 were used to a lifetime of having been squarely Oppositional and it was a shock to realise that in the Cornwall of the 1980s it was possible to make such arguments within mainstream discourse, and for them to be valued.

As 1986 came to a close, big changes were coming for A39, as well as further developments in styles and forms that I will discuss in my second volume with reference to the shows *Whole New Towns* and *Driving the New Road*, and the development of ideas around playwriting *per se*. I will also discuss in detail the developing ideology and context of the work and its theoretical underpinnings; its nature as a Community Theatre practise and its position relative to the Community Arts movement; a comparison with other practice; and an assessment of what in the history of A39 may help others develop a political theatre practice for the decades to come.

Meanwhile, we had successfully created a new kind of theatre for Cornwall. We were getting through to new audiences and our arguments in terms of both theatrical and political ideologies were having some effect. We were professional theatre workers. We had made all we had out of our heads and ideas we read in books, and we had told some stories. In telling those stories, we had written this story of ourselves so far.

Fig. 26. *Trevithick's Tower*, 'a story coming to tell itself despite them': Mark Kilburn as Sir John Doddle; Sue Farmer as Lady Julia Doddle; Paul Farmer as the Reverend Green. Photo by George J. Greene (CC BY 4.0).

Fig. 27. Sue Farmer as Lady Julia as the Marauding Nationalist Forces; Mark Kilburn as the Ghost of Don Francisco Uvillé; Groucho Marx as Simon Bolivar. ('Levels of pretence' renders it difficult to say who is playing what to whom.) Photo by George J. Greene (CC BY 4.0).

Fig. 28. Sue Farmer as Lady Julia/James Gerard, with Mark Kilburn (wearing Sir John Doddle's socks) and Paul Farmer as the Montague Twins. Photo by George J. Greene (CC BY 4.0).

Fig. 29. The *Trevithick's Tower* panellists meet up with A39's frequent partners in crime, punk-folk band The Thundering Typhoons, on the Trevithick Day streets of Camborne shortly before the World Premiere. Photo by George J. Greene (CC BY 4.0).

Fig. 30. The Reverend Green, Lady Julia and Sir John with Richard Trevithick himself, sculpted by LS Merrifield (1928), locked in an everlasting gaze up Camborne Hill. Photo by George J. Greene (CC BY 4.0).

PLAYS

ONE & ALL!

An unofficial history of Cornish tin mining

by Paul Farmer and Mark Kilburn

ACTOR 1..... Sue Farmer

ACTOR 2 .....Paul Farmer

ACTOR 3 ..... Mark Kilburn

STAGE MANAGEMENT, TECHNICAL & ADMIN Lucy Kempton

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SONG—'CARNKIE HILL' (Trad.) VOICE (ACTOR 1), GUITAR (ACTOR 2), MELODICA (ACTOR 3).

It being in spring season, the small birds they were singing
Down by a shady arbour I carelessly did stray
Where the thrushes they were warbling, the violets they were charming
For to view two lovers talking a while I did delay

She said, 'My dear, don't leave me all for another season.
Though fortune may be pleasing I'll go along with you.
I'll forsake friends and relations, and quit this Cornish nation,
And to the bonny Fal banks forever I'll bid adieu.'

He said, 'My dear, don't grieve me, or yet annoy my patience.
You know I love you dearly although I'm going away.
I'm going to some foreign nation to purchase a plantation,
For to comfort us hereafter all in Americay.

'The tin lords and their agents, their bailiffs and their beagles,
The land of our forefathers we're forced for to give o'er;
And we're sailing o'er the ocean for honour and promotion
And we're parting with our sweethearts, it's them we do adore.'

If you were in your bed lying and thinking of dying
One sight of the bonny Fal banks, your sorrows you'd give o'er
And if you were but one hour all in her shady bower
Pleasure would surround you, you'd think on death no more.

So fare thee well, sweet Carnkie Hill, where oft times I have wandered
I ne'er thought in my childhood days to part you any more,
But we're sailing on the ocean, for honour and promotion
And the bonny boat is sailing way down by Meneage shore.

EXIT ACTOR 3.

SCENE: INTRODUCTION

ACTOR 1: Look up at the hillsides in almost any part of Cornwall and you will see the remains of some forgotten tin mine. Although operations continue at places such as Geevor, South Crofty, Whea1 Maid and Wheal Jane, a large majority of the mines stopped their pumps in the late nineteenth century. The great days are long gone.

Tin mining in Cornwall can be traced back to pre-Christian times. As tin is a major constituent of bronze it was traded with the Phoenicians before 1100 BC, making it Britain's oldest export. In fact, Ding Dong mine in Penwith is said to have been worked over two thousand years ago.

Because tin is needed to make alloys such as pewter and brass, and a whole host of other commodities such as illuminated manuscripts, solder, even telecommunications, tin mining has always been an important industry; so important that by the twelfth century the tin miners—or tinners—had an autonomous parliament and judicial system, known as the Stannaries. The tinners were given special rights. They were exempt from military service, for instance; excused from paying church taxes and had the right to work on unenclosed land under a system known as 'bounding'.

ACTOR 2: In those days tin miners would scratch about the surface looking for 'lodes'–vertical layers of tin ore. Legend has it that they were led to the lodes by phosphorescent moorland lights or information from dowsers or diviners. Some would listen for the underground knockings of the buccas, or mine spirits, also known as knackers. In later years exhausted mines would be termed 'knacked' or 'knackered'.

As the hillside lodes became exhausted shafts were sunk underground and tin mining as we know it began. This was probably in the fifteenth century. An eighteenth-century historian, Hals, described a mine as a 'place deadly that bringeth danger; wet, deep and miserable occupation to the labouring tinners therein, wherein great numbers of them are infected by the damps with incurable disease, others slain by accident and come to untimely deaths'.

As their digging took the miners beneath the natural level of water in the rock, flooding became a problem and methods of drainage had to be devised. 'Adits', or tunnels, were dug into the lowest part of the mines, also providing ventilation. For instance, the Great County Adit was enlarged for fifty years until it covered thirty square miles and forty-six mines from Redruth to Poldice.

Deeper mines were baled by the by the 'rag and chain pump', or by horse whim, which hoisted buckets of water on a rope wound round a drum turned by horses. The limitations of these simple machines determined the depths to which the mines could be sunk.

Then came the Industrial Revolution.

SCENE: SERVING THE STEAM

ENTER ACTOR 3 AS THE MINE CAPTAIN

MINE CAPTAIN: Oi... you lot! I'm the captain of this mine and I look after the everyday running of the place. My duty is to, er... [CONSULTS PAPERS] 'See that every man fills his appointed place and time. Now on a superficial survey this inspection and the fines that are levied on defaulters may seem severe, especially as the men who neglect their labour cease to earn wages when they are idle. But it must be recollected that the regular expense of the mine in engines, coal and other concomitant disbursements will admit of no suspension. And, consequently, if the idle were to be encouraged general confusion would ensue and, in proportion to their neglect of labour, the best mine in the county would inevitably sink'. In other words, you lot had better pull your socks up. The Adventurers and Mineral Lords reckon you've been having too much time off. That might have been alright in the olden days, before we bought all this modern machinery, but we've got to feed these machines coal, whether you're working or not—else the mine will flood, and we can't have that now can we?

TINNER 1 (played by ACTOR 1): What about our days off?

MINE CAPTAIN: The expense of pumping the mine goes on whether you're working or not.

TINNER 2 (ACTOR 2): Do we have to work St. Piran's Day?

MINE CAPTAIN: Aye.

TINNER 1: And Jeu Whydn?

MINE CAPTAIN: Aye.

TINNER 2: What about St. Paul's Pitcher Day and Picrous Day?

CAPTAIN: The mine must still be pumped.

TINNER 1: But you'll give us New Year's Eve and New Year's Day off?

MINE CAPTAIN: From now on you'll get Christmas Day and Good Friday and like it.

TINNER 2: What about Whitsuntide?

TINNER 1: What about Midsummer Day?

TINNER 2: And what about Parish Feast Day? We always have three or four days for the Parish Feast Day!

TINNER 1: And Black Friday!

MINE CAPTAIN: From now on you'll be working.

TINNER 2: Now look. We tinners have always had time off. It's at our own expense, isn't it? If we don't dig tin we don't get paid. We like having time off—for our hobbies.

MINE CAPTAIN: Well that was alright In the old days, before we started investing In all this ere magical machinery. Your lives will have to change to suit the new engines. I mean, nowadays we've got things like Thomas Savery's steam-pressure pump. Now this is placed at the bottom of the shaft, but you might find it uses up all the oxygen.

TINNERS 1 AND 2 GASPING FOR BREATH.

It's not quite perfected yet. It's also known as the 'Miner's Friend'. Then there's Thomas Newcomen's much improved pumping-engine.

TINNERS 1 AND 2 APPLAUD.

With this you tinners can dig tin at 90 fathoms.

TINNERS 1 AND 2 BEGIN TO REGISTER DISAPPROVAL.

And then, with the machine invented by Boulton and Watt, you tinners can dig tin at 200 fathoms.

TINNER 2: But that's twelve hundred feet!

MINE CAPTAIN: And over here we have the 'Cornish Boiler' invented by Richard Trevithick.

MINE CAPTAIN STANDS PROUDLY OVER TWO CHAIRS. AS HE SPEAKS ACTOR 1 AND ACTOR 2 MANIPULATE CHAIRS AS IF THEY WERE A MACHINE.

With this twelve- to sixteen hundred gallons of water can be pumped out of the mine every minute. (TO ACTORS) Ere—steady on. It's not a toy, you know! (SWITCHES OFF MACHINE).

TINNER 2: Look, coming back to our days off. What about Friday-in-Lide?

MINE CAPTAIN: (CONSULTING PAPERS) Friday-in-Lide?

TINNER 1: Yes. That's the first Friday in every month when a boy is sent to the top of the hill to see how long he can sleep. . ..

TINNER 2: And the length of time he sleeps determines the length of our afternoon nap.

MINE CAPTAIN: There will be no Friday-in-Lide!

TINNERS 1 & 2: No Friday-in-Lide?

TINNER 2: Well how are we going to know the length of our afternoon nap?

MINE CAPTAIN: There will be no afternoon nap!

EXIT MINE CAPTAIN.

ACTOR 1: Up until the early nineteenth century tin mining had lived in the shadow of the copper industry. But this changed when China began importing vast quantities of Cornish tin for use in religious ceremonies. This 'China contract' lay in the hands of the East India Company, which enjoyed a complete monopoly of all official trade with China. Between the years 1789 and 1813 over 18,500 tons of tin were shipped to Canton, worth a total of £1.4m.

ACTOR 2: But there were initial problems with the contract. The prevailing duty of three shillings and four pence per hundredweight would have eaten deep into the company's profits or, alternatively, the price paid to the Adventurers—rich people who bought the shares of tin mines and divided the vast profits between themselves. In other parts of the world these people were known as Capitalists.

ACTOR 1: Now in normal circumstances this problem would have been overcome simply by paying the tin miners less for their labour. But these were not normal circumstances. The starving populace were taking up arms against the Corn Laws. Concessions had to be made. So off went a delegation to London to petition the Government. The delegation was received and the duty subsequently removed. All was well. The East India Company made their huge profits, the Cornish gentry retired to their mansions with their necks intact, the Government had done a little more to stem the revolutionary tide and the Cornish miners were left with little more than a nose for tin.

ENTER ACTOR 3 AS MINERAL LORD.

EXIT ACTOR 1.

SCENE: I'M A LORD OF THE MINERALS AND I'M OK

SONG 'MINERAL LORD SONG' (M. Kilburn). GUITAR ACCOMPANIIENT.

MINERAL LORD: [SINGS] I'm a Lord of the Minerals and I'm OK
I sleep all night and I hunt all day
People come to see me from miles around

I sign them up and send them underground

They work all day in the grime and dust
And if they behave I'll throw them a crust
I very rarely see them 'cause I don't like walking
I'd rather sit at home and let my money do the talking

REPEAT VERSE 1.

ENTER ACTOR 1 AS WOMAN PEASANT. SHE IS CARRYING A CHILD WRAPPED IN A BLANKET. DIALOGUE SPOKEN OVER CONTINUING GUITAR ACCOMPANIMENT.

WOMAN PEASANT: Ere, my good Lord. Would you kindly bless my baby? He's only two weeks old.

MINERAL LORD: Certainly, madam. I hope he'll be going down Dolcoath mine when he's older?

WOMAN PEASANT: Oh, yes sir.

MINERAL LORD KISSES THE CHILD'S FOREHEAD. SMILES. THROWS THE CHILD OVER HIS SHOULDER.

MINERAL LORD: (SINGS) But if you want more money or some form of compensation
And you're thinking of complaining, or taking strike action
Well I'll stop that, so don't you worry
'Cause I'll send you to the workhouse with an empty tummy

REPEAT VERSE 1. (ALL). END OF SONG.

MINERAL LORD: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name's Lord Knacker and I own large tracts of land in Cornwall which I lease to mining companies for huge sums of money. Of course, I don't actually live in Cornwall—in fact, I've only ever been there once, grouse shooting—or was that Scotland? I never can remember. Anyway, I live in London and rule the country—but I know these little bits of Cornwall are mine because daddy gave them to me, and he won them in a game of skittles at Balmoral one afternoon. But never mind all that. I'm here to tell you all about those tin mining chappies.

ACTORS 1 & 2 SIT THE MINERAL LORD ON A CHAIR. THROUGHOUT HIS SPEECH THEY CLEAN HIS SHOES, BRUSH HIS JACKET ETC.

MINERAL LORD (cont'd): Throughout history they've been portrayed as healthy, self-reliant, contented individuals living in quaint little cottages. But, quite frankly, that couldn't have been further from the truth. They went about their labour in appalling conditions. There were no safety regulations or anything, poor devils. And many were children, sometimes as young as eight years old. The children had to work, along with their mothers—known as Bal Maidens—because the men's wages were so poor. The men could be paid in one of two ways: tutting, whereby they would be paid hourly; or as tribute workers, whereby they would bid at public auction for tracts of land and, acting as self-employed sub-contractors, be paid in accordance with production. Of course, if they found a particularly large seam of tin the management would simply re-assess the value. In other words–pay them less.

ACTORS 1 AND 2, HAVING FINISHED TENDING THE MINERAL LORD, ARE PAID. NOT ENOUGH.

ACTOR 2: With the price of tin creeping lower and lower so the mines began to close—seven major mines closing in 1842 alone, including Polgooth, Wheal Kitty, Rosewall Hill and Polbreen.

ACTOR 1: Sick of poor wages and appalling working conditions miners began taking action. At Consols, in Gwennap, a major strike broke out. Two hundred men marched to Carn Brea to get the men there to join them and form a miners' union.

MINERAL LORD: (READS) 'An address from the Mayor and Magistrates of Helston and the Magistrates of the West Division of Kirrier, to the Miners and Labouring Classes.

'The Mayor and Magistrates express their sincere regret and concern at the present high price of the necessaries of life. They have already endeavoured to lessen this distress by raising money in several parishes. But nothing they can do can altogether remove the evil, till it shall please Providence to give a cheaper supply of food.

'However, they must at the same time exhort the people to bear their distress with patience, for the Magistrates have sufficient means placed at their disposal to repress acts of violence and punish the wrongdoers'.

EXIT MINERAL LORD

ACTOR 2: In June, 1847, tin and copper miners gathered in Penzance. Over three thousand began marching through the streets.

ACTOR 1: Troops were sent from Pendennis Castle to stop the march and two hundred special constables sworn in.

ACTOR 2: Even a gradual upturn in the industry did nothing to improve the mineworkers' conditions. In 1853 a strike broke out in Penwith, the men there demanding....

ENTER ACTOR 3 WITH BANNER.

ACTOR 3: '...That the price of the pennyweight of tin paid to miners be raised from sixteen pence to twenty pence on account of the high price of tin and the huge profits being made by the mine company'. (BEGINS TO UNFOLD BANNER).

ACTOR 1: The strike spread rapidly and many mine companies acknowledged the workers' grievances.

ACTOR 2: But some refused and the leaders of the strike at Penwith were victimised....

ACTOR 3: ...resulting in over two thousand men marching through St. Just with a banner, upon which was inscribed the word—'Union'!

UNION BANNER HELD ALOFT.

SONG–'MY MASTER AND I' (Trad.), GUITAR ACCOMPANIMENT.

ACTOR 1: (SINGS) Says my master to me, 'Is it true what I'm told,
Your name in the book of the union's enrolled?
I shall never allow that a worker of mine
With wicked disturbers of the peace shall combine.

'I give you fair warning, mind what you're about—
I shall put my foot on it and trample it out.
Which side your bread's buttered I'm sure you will see,
So decide now at once for the union or me.'

Says I to my master, 'It's perfectly true
That I'm in the union, and I'll stick to it too.
And if between union and you I must choose
I've plenty to gain and I've little to lose.'

I give you fair warning, mind what you're about—
I shall put my foot on it and trample it out.
Which side your bread's buttered I'm sure you will see,
So decide now at once for the union or me.

EXIT ACTOR 2.

SCENE: METHODISM

ACTOR 1: John Wesley had brought Methodism to Cornwall in 1743 and reinforced it with between thirty and forty further visits before his death in the late 1780s.

SONG—'JOHN WESLEY' (Trad.) SUNG BY ACTOR 3. GUITAR ACCOMPANIMENT. VERSES BETWEEN NARRATION.

ACTOR 3: (SINGS) John Wesley was a minister who lived in days of yore
He often wore an old brown coat as buttoned up before.

ACTOR 1: After initial hostility on the part of the mining communities, Methodism was adopted as the dominant creed, partly as a reaction against the corrupt tithing practices of the Church of England.

ACTOR 3: (SINGS) John Wesley had another coat of quite a different kind
Instead of buttoning up before, it buttoned up behind.

ACTOR 1: Part of this corruption manifested itself in the form of absenteeism on the part of many vicars who would accept

responsibility for several parishes in order to gain the income from the tithes—or church taxes—demanded of the parishioners. Because the vicars were unable to fulfil their duties over so many different parishes, people complained that children were dying unbaptised and corpses were remaining unburied until becoming noisome....

ACTOR 3: ... or smelly.
(SINGS) John Wesley had three daughters fair and they was tall and thin
He took them to the river's bank and pushed the buggers in.

ACTOR 1: The regularity of the Methodist way of life, with its emphasis on work, thrift and temperance, suited the employers very well. The discipline of Methodism reflected the new industrial discipline which prevailed after the Industrial Revolution.

ACTOR 3: (SINGS) John Wesley had an old straw hat without nor crown nor brim
It wouldn't have been much use to thee and t'was no use to him.

ENTER ACTOR 2 AS THE REV. ISAIAH PRIOR.

ACTORS 1 AND 3 QUICKLY TAKE UP A KNEELING POSITION.

REV. PRIOR: Brethren! There is a dreadful Hell, and everlasting pains, where sinners must with Devils dwell in darkness, fire and chains.

TINNER 1 (ACTOR 1): Blessed be his name.

TINNER 3 (ACTOR 3): God grant It.

TINNER 1: Praise the Lord, that's so.

REV. PRIOR: Let us raise our voices in jubilation to the Lord. I give you hymn number twenty-seven: The Good Old Way.

TINNERS 1 AND 3 TAKE DEEP BREATH.

REV. PRIOR: Not so fast! Not so fast! It has been drawn to my attention that you have withdrawn your labour up at the mine; have demanded better wages and conditions and profaned your throats with the Devil's music. Is this true?

TINNER 1: Well, yes.... But we're only on strike a bit.

REV. PRIOR: How dare you! How dare you come here in this unholy state of mind? Forsake the way of the banner, the way of the 'strike'! In the sight of God virtue is demonstrated only through work! Nothing but damnation and cold, deep, dark despair can result from this defiance of the Adventurers and Mineral Lords who give you the chance to redeem yourselves in the cleansing fire of toil. The Good Old Way!

ALL: (SING) 'THE GOOD OLD WAY' (Trad.) ACAPELLA. Lift up your hearts, Emanuel's friends
And taste the pleasure Jesus sends
Let nothing cause you to delay
But hasten in the good old way
For I have a sweet hope of glory in my soul
I have a sweet hope of glory in my soul
For I know I have and I feel I have
A sweet hope of glory in my soul

TINNERS 1 AND 3 'LA' HYMN THROUGHOUT SERMON (WHICH IS BASED ON A SERMON BY BILLY BRAY OF TWELVEHEADS)

REV. PRIOR: Now, brethren, this evening I am going to talk to you about heaven. 'Heaven?', you say, 'What do us, a parcel of people from [Truro] know about heaven?' I know, I know, let's ask Abraham about it. He's been up there a good while. (USING HANDS AS SPEAKING TRUMPET) Abraham! What sort of a place is heaven? Tell us something about it, will you? And here is our reply: 'Glory upon glories, my son'. Glory upon glories! So says Abraham. And now let us ask Elijah, that great prophet Elijah. 'What have you got to tell us? What have you got to say to us Elijah?'

ACTORS 1 & 3 STOP SINGING

REV. PRIOR: (GREAT POWER) 'Come down, thou great Jehovah! Come down and bring your stone hammer along with thee! Smash the hard hearts of this wicked and perverse people!'

ALL: (SING) For I have a sweet hope of glory in my soul
I have a sweet hope of glory in my soul
For I know I have and I feel I have
A sweet hope of glory in my soul

EXIT REV. PRIOR AND ACTOR 1.

SCENE: SLUMP & EMIGRATION

ACTOR 3: By 1867 poverty in Cornwall was so severe the Mining Journal wrote: 'Distress In the county from starvation is too appalling even for publication.' For many the only escape from the Parish Workhouse was emigration. Between February 1836 and February 1838 ten thousand people left Cornwall on ships bound for Southern Australia. Sponsored by the Government these vessels sailed from Fowey, Hayle, Padstow and Penzance and, for the lucky few with money, the Government sold land at £1 per acre.

EXIT ACTOR 3.

ENTER ACTOR 2 WHO INTRODUCES THE WELL-KNOWN SINGING DUO 'THE COUSIN JACKS', ABOUT TO GIVE THEIR LAST PERFORMANCE ON CORNISH SOIL BEFORE DISAPPEARING OVERSEAS FOREVER.

ENTER ACTORS 1 AND 3 AS 'THE COUSIN JACKS'.

SONG—'THE TINNERS' JIG' (P. Farmer). GUITAR ACCOMPANIMENT.

INTRO.

This is called the Tinners' Jig, we do it by the sea
And then we climb on board a ship, and wave goodbye to all we know
We've all heard about this thing they call prosperity
It seems to have run out round here, and so we have to go
And we sing–

CHORUS:

Never been to Truro, but I've been to Wallaroo
Cousin Jacks are digging all the way to Timbuctoo
There's no life for us in Kernow, they won't give a dog a bone
And if we're very lucky one day we'll come back home.

2. Goodbye wives and mothers and goodbye to all the kids
And when the Captain comes on board we'll ask him where this ship is bound
What good is wealth in foreign climes? Our hearts are Cornish tin
The industry we help create will one day crush our own.
(And we'll sing...)

CHORUS..

MIDDLE 8:

All along the shorelines you can see the families waving goodbye
They say, 'Good luck, good fortune, learn to write soon.'
But the departing tinners are so sad, you can see they feel their lives are ending
Haggard faces, dark-rimmed eyes, it certainly seems that they must die soon
But maybe they can live a little longer and some money to their families be sen-ding

3. This called the Tinners' Jig, it means we're sad to go
Don't want to travel overseas, this land is ours we have to leave
How much is a man worth, is that only gauged in gold
And souvenirs we bring home, some exotic mine disease?
(And we'll sing...)

CHORUS

REPEAT CHORUS:

Never been to Truro, but I've been to Wallaroo
Cousin Jacks are digging all the way to Timbuctoo
There's no life for us in Kernow, they won't give a dog a bone

And If we're very lucky one day we'll come back ho, ho ho home, ho, ho ho home,
Home.

EXIT ACTOR 2.

'THE COUSIN JACKS' CRY, WRING OUT THEIR HANDKERCHIEVES ETC.

SCENE: THE TRUE STORY OF ROSEVEAR

ACTOR 3: And now, ladies and gentlemen, pray lend us an ear
And we'll tell you a true story about one Rosevear.

ACTOR 1: Rosevear was a policeman, so stout and so bold
Each night through the streets of St. Austell he strolled.

ACTOR 3: First he'd walk up them, and then he'd walk down
And no-one caused trouble in that quiet little town.

ENTER ACTOR 2 AS <u>CONSTABLE ROSEVEAR</u>.

CON. ROSEVEAR: One night whilst patrolling my orderly beat
A party of tinners I did happen to meet
They looked very angry, they looked very grim
I could see by their faces they was not after tin
I approached them on Fore Street in an orderly manner
'What brings you,' I asked them, 'from Gwennap and Lanner?'

TINNER 1 (ACTOR 1): Our children are hungry, we cannot buy corn
We are marching to Charlestown the merchants to warn
To sell us grain at prices that we can afford
And no profiteering from selling abroad.

CON. ROSEVEAR: So that is what brings you out marching at night!
I'm afraid I must tell you it just is not right.
In the eyes of the law this is an illegal picket
And if you don't disperse quickly you'll be on a very sticky wicket.

TINNER 3 (ACTOR 3): Well come along with us and make sure of fair play

For we have brought money, a fair price we'll pay.

CON. ROSEVEAR: So off we went to Charlestown, a-singing of songs
I knew that those merchants would not do us wrong

ALL (SING): Oh I do like to be beside the seaside
Oh I do like to be beside the sea
Oh I do like to stroll along the prom, prom, prom
Where the brass bands play, diddly-um-pom-pom

TINNER 1: We came to the warehouse where they stored the grain
Bought from Cornish farmers for the merchants' gain.

TINNER 3 (ACTOR 3): We called on the merchants to open up the door
And sell us grain at prices that we paid before.

CON. ROSEVEAR: I knew they'd play fair, some mistake it must be
These are men of honour, these are the gentry.

TINNER 1: But there was no answer, so we called out again:
'Don't force us to violence, we are honest men!'

CON.ROSEVEAR: But still came no answer, so I shouted too:
'Please sell these men grain, they have money for you'.
But they looked down in silence and the door it stayed firm:
'These people are hungry and a deaf ear you turn!
Their children are starving and you have the grain
Oh, we must take action, though it causes me pain!'

ALL: So we smashed down the doors and laid hands on the grain
And with no further trouble went home again

CON. ROSEVEAR: We are talking of justice and this lesson is taught:
There are laws more important than those made in court.

ACTOR 3: But the end of this story, we are sorry to say
Is that Rosevear was arrested the very next day.

ACTOR 1: For his bad example he was hanged in the town,
Then strung up in chains on St. Austell down.

PAUSE. CON. ROSEVEAR HANGING.

ACTOR 3: 'To all the labouring men and tradesmen that are willing to save their wives and children from the dreadful condition of being starved to death by the unfeeling and griping farmer and merchant. This is to give notice to all persons of this parish to attend at Churchtown, Saturday 14th Instant...'

ACTOR 1: 'And all that have got firelocks are to bring them for there we do intend to muster and be independent ourselves; and them that have not any firelocks are to provide themselves with staffs, nine feet long, fix spears in the end of the same and them that refuse to their peril be it. So One and All!'

ALL: So One and All!

EXIT ACTOR 1 AND CONSTABLE ROSEVEAR.

SCENE: THE GREAT TIN BOOM

ACTOR 3: The reputation of the Cornish miners had, by this time, spread far and wide. Starting life in the industry early—at perhaps nine or ten years of age–the Cornish miner gained a practical, working knowledge of the industry unrivalled elsewhere. The harsh working conditions moulded workers who were fearless, courageous and cunning. Tales of the Cornish miner's strange, almost instinctive methods of working abounded.

One such story was told by a government surveyor engaged by a Cornish mine during the 1860s. Having taken a long time to find the solution of a difficult calculation, eventually worked out with the aid of trigonometry, the surveyor was astonished to find that a Cornish miner had reached the same solution in almost half the time. 'How did you do it?' he asked. The miner, nudging his companion, replied: 'I tell 'ee. I mizured 'im up braave an' careful, an' I found the lunth o' him was two shovel hilts, three picks, a mallet, four li'l stones an' as far as I could spit jus' zackly.'

Little wonder, then, that people used to say: 'Wherever there's a hole in the ground you can be sure to find a Cornishman at the bottom of it'.

EXIT ACTOR 3. ENTER ACTORS 1 AND 2 (WITH MANDOLIN).

ACTOR 2: And then, in 1870, came–The Great Tin Boom!

TRIUMPHANT CHORD.

ACTOR 1: Civil war in Malaya meant no more cheap imported tin!

TRIUMPHANT CHORD.

ACTOR 2: The good ol' US of A, investing heavily in the new canning industries, began buying vast quantities of Cornish tin!

TRIUMPHANT CHORD.

ACTOR 1: 'Cornwall will be the new El Dorado'....

ACTOR 2: ...said the Mining Journal in 1872.

BOTH: 'There will be prosperity for everyone!'

ACTOR 2 MUSIC–BOSCASTLE BREAKDOWN.

ACTOR 1–CLOG DANCE.

ACTORS 1 & 2 FREEZE AS MUSIC ENDS.

ENTER ACTOR 3 AS <u>MINERAL LORD</u>, SMOKING A CIGAR.

DURING FOLLOWING SPEECH ACTORS 1 & 2 EXIT. THEY RE-ENTER AS <u>ADVENTURERS</u>, ALSO SMOKING CIGARS. THEY REPOSITION THE CHAIRS AS IF ROUND A BANQUETING TABLE. THIS IS DONE NOISILY AND DRUNKENLY. THEY SIT, PATTING THEIR STOMACHS.

MINERAL LORD: (TO AUDIENCE) The Great Tin Boom of 1870 to 1875 brought huge profits for the London speculators and Cornish adventurers. At the quarterly Count House dinners—a legitimate item of mine expenditure, to which the miners were not invited—Adventurers would enjoy the news of the mines' splendid dividends while supping a sparkling 'Chateau Knackeur' and gorging themselves with extravagant foods from the mine's own pewter dinner service. And in 1872 there was plenty to cheer about.

ADVENTURERS: Ra ra ra! (ETC.)

MINERAL LORD GOES TO THE HEAD OF THE BANQUETING TABLE AND ACKNOWLEDGES THE APPLAUSE OF THE ADVENTURERS, WHO LOUDLY PUNCTUATE HIS SPEECH WITH CRIES OF DELIGHT.

MINERAL LORD: My Lords, ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the quarterly account-house dinner of the Wheal Do 'Em Mine here in (Redruth). This year, Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, has been an exceptional year for the mine, and indeed for the Cornish tin industry generally. At the risk of boring you all (CRIES OF 'NO! NO!' FROM THE ADVENTURERS) I would like to read out a few figures. (PRODUCES PIECE OF PAPER). Here are some of the profits paid out to Adventurers in other mines: Wheal Kitty, of St Agnes, paid £8590; Cook's Kitchen paid £9187; Carn Brea paid £15,500; Dolcoath paid £45,645 and Tincroft paid £48,000. But tonight I am pleased to announce that Wheal Do 'Em Mine here in (Redruth) will exceed even these payments. I am proud to announce that we will be paying £60,000 in the form of a 25% profit!

UPROAR. ADVENTURERS SING 'FOR HE'S A JOLLY GOOD KNACKER', CHEER, STAMP, WHISTLE.

MINERAL LORD MODESTLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE APPLAUSE.

ADVENTURER 2 (ACTOR 2): I say, Lord Knacker, hope you don't mind me asking....

MINERAL LORD: Not at all, old boy. What is it?

ADVENTURER 2: Weil, I was just wondering.... What have we given to these tin mining chappies? (INDICATES AUDIENCE).

MINERAL LORD: What have we given them? Why, buggar all!

ALL: (LAUGH UPROARIOUSLY.)

ADVENTURER 1 (ACTOR 1): Well, that's not strictly true. We have given them a few things—hookworm, for example; a disgusting disease, the result of poor sanitary conditions underground.

ADVENTURER 2: And we gave them the five-week month, whereby they worked a whole month every year for—nothing at all!

ADVENTURER 1: We gave them the Poor Law!

ADVENTURER 2: We gave them the Workhouse!

ADVENTURER 1: We gave them faulty gunpowder that ruined their health.

ADVENTURER 2: Ah, but we gave them a life expectancy of 25 whole years.

ADVENTURER 1: We gave them money to spend... .

ADVENTURER 2: Where?

ADVENTURER 1: At the company store!

ALL LAUGH UNCONTROLLABLY

MINERAL LORD: (TO AUDIENCE) But remember —

ALL ADVANCE TO AUDIENCE, FIXED SMILE ON THEIR FACES.

ALL: What's good for us (POINT TO THEMSELVES) is good for —

MINERAL LORD & ADVENTURER 2: Youuuuuuuuuuuuu....

MINERAL LORD & ADVENTURER 2 POINT AT AUDIENCE AND HOLD 'YOU', THE NOTE FALLING SLOWLY IN PITCH AS THE LIGHTS FADE TO BLACKOUT.

ADVENTURER 1 BECOMES GRANDMA, ARRANGES CHAIRS BACK TO BACK, SITS IN ONE FACING THE AUDIENCE.

EXIT BACKWARDS MINERAL LORD AND ADVENTURER 2.

SCENE: DEATH & WAR

LIGHTS UP BUT NOT MUCH.

GRANDMA: (TO AUDIENCE) Well. you're all growing up now and it's time one or two things were explained to you. So your mother has asked me to have a word with you all. After all, that's what your old granny's here for, isn't it?

Weil, as you know, back in the old days—this is about, oh, 40 years and more ago, around 1870— we all earned our money at the Bal, the tin mine. You would all have been working there by now, if it was worth digging the stuff up. Everywhere you looked round here in those days you'd see a working mine—all down the Tuckingmill Valley, all over Carn Brea, all around Carn Marth. There was Wheal Providence, there was Great Wheal Vor, Grenville United, the Bassets, besides Dolcoath and Crofty and so on. Anyhow, I'm going to talk about your Grandfather now.

MUSIC STARTS–ACTOR 2, GUITAR.

You see, he couldn't find work in any of those mines I just mentioned. The Captains didn't like him. He was once seen reading a book, so they said he was a troublemaker—anyhow, he couldn't find work this side of Penwith, and he ended up in a four-man pair in St Just. One day, they were down in the very lowest level of the mine; it hadn't long been opened up; and the big steam pumps they had to keep the mine free of water—well, they just weren't big enough. The water come in and it trapped them. They all drowned. Twenty men down there, there were. Like poor lost sailors under the sea. And dark... very, very dark. I often picture him down there, his hair floating in the dark. Of course, you never knew him.

Anyway, they come and told me. I was a Bal-maiden up to the mine. The captain came. He gave me the rest of the day off to mourn your grandfather. It was late afternoon, nearly an hour and a half, they gave me.

But I consoled myself: I thought I'd give him a proper miner's funeral, with a double row of singers walking slowly before the coffin, all led by the elders of the chapel.

MUSIC STOPS.

GRANDMA: (SINGS *A Funeral Hymn for a Believer* (Charles Wesley))
Ah, lovely appearance of death!
What sight upon Earth is so fair?
Not all the gay pageants that breathe,
Can with a dead body compare.

MUSIC RESTARTS.

GRANDMA: Oh yes, us miners know all about funerals. We've had a lot of practice, you see. But your grandfather never got his funeral. The adventurers of that mine, they wouldn't put themselves out to rescue him even after he was dead. They abandoned that level, and him, and them.... They're still down there to this day, all twenty of them.

MUSIC STOPS.

Well, perhaps he was lucky dying when he did so he couldn't see what happened next: the Great Slump, when the price of tin collapsed on the 'International Markets', whatever that means. And now there's a great war to start soon, they do say; the war to end wars. I suppose some of you will be off soon across the Tamar, off to fight the Russians or the Germans or the French or the Americans, whoever it is this time.

BLACKOUT. LOUD MARCHING RHYTHM ON SIDE DRUM (ACTOR 3, DRESSED AS <u>MINERAL LORD</u>).

<u>GRANDMA</u> ARRANGES CHAIRS SIDE BY SIDE, BACKS TO AUDIENCE. EXIT <u>GRANDMA</u>.

ENTER <u>MINERAL LORD</u> PLAYING DRUM. LIGHTS UP. DURING THE FIRST PART OF THIS THE LIGHTS ARE FLASHED TO SIMULATE EXPLOSIONS.

ENTER ACTORS 1 & 2 DRESSED AS MINERS, MARCHING IN FILE. THEY LOOK AROUND IN CONFUSION AS THEY MARCH.

MINERAL LORD WATCHES THE MINERS SMUGLY AS THEY MARCH UP THE AISLE AND BACK AGAIN, BAFFLED AND TERRIFIED. THEY MARCH BEHIND THE CHAIRS AND KNEEL DOWN. IN TIME TO THE DRUM, IN TURN THEY RISE AND SHOOT IMAGINARY RIFLES OVER THE PARAPET FORMED BY THE CHAIRS. THEY EACH DO THIS THREE TIMES, THE RECOIL KNOCKING THEM BACKWARDS.

WATCHED FROM THE SIDE OF THE STAGE BY THE MINERAL LORD, STILL IN TIME TO THE DRUM, THEY CRAWL OUT FROM BEHIND THE CHAIRS AND ADVANCE BENT DOUBLE TO THE FRONT OF THE STAGE. AS THEY INSPECT THEIR SURROUNDINGS, THEY WALK BACKWARDS INTO EACH OTHER AND STRAIGHTEN UP IN SURPRISE.

THE DRUMBEAT BECOMES STACCATO MACHINE GUN FIRE. BOTH ARE SHOT. THEIR BODIES CONTORT AS THE BULLETS HIT THEM.

AT THE END OF A SHORT BURST, THE DRUM STOPS, THE MINERS FREEZE. THE MINERAL LORD PLAYS MORE BURSTS UNTIL BOTH HAVE COLLAPSED ON TO GROUND. SLIGHTLY LONGER PAUSE.

THE MARCHING RHYTHM BEGINS AGAIN. THE MINERS HELP EACH OTHER UP, SEVERELY INJURED, STAGGER BACK TO CHAIRS. THEY STAND IN FRONT OF THE CHAIRS, FACING THE AUDIENCE, THEIR LIMBS AT ODD ANGLES.

THE MINERAL LORD PLAYS A FINAL ROLL ON THE DRUM AND PUTS IT DOWN. HE STANDS ON THE CHAIRS, WHICH NOW FORM A SPEAKING PLATFORM. HE GIVES THE MINERS EACH A UNION JACK ON A STICK AND A PARTY BLOWER.

MINERAL LORD: Rejoice! Rejoice!

MINERS BLOW BLOWERS AND WAVE FLAGS MISERABLY.

MINERAL LORD: Ladies and Gentlemen, we are gathered here today to pay tribute to the brave men and women of our mining communities who left their homes to fight in an unknown country for Freedom and Democracy. Of course, ladies and gentlemen, it was one of the saddest moments of my life when I realised that I was unable to join these brave men and women on the field of battle and partake of their glory, having instead to discharge a deeper duty here at home....

TELEPHONE RINGS.

MINERAL LORD: Ah, do excuse me. (HE LIFTS HIS TOP HAT. UNDERNEATH, STRAPPED TO HIS HEAD, IS A SMALL TELEPHONE. MINERAL LORD LIFTS THE RECEIVER.) Hello, Knacker here. Stock Exchange? (It's the Stock Exchange, ladies and gentlemen). What's that you say? Shares plummeting? Sell the armaments factory. Invest in pharmaceuticals… BUPA and bandages, that sort of thing. (REPLACES RECEIVER AND HAT.) Ladies and gentlemen, I do apologise… Rejoice, rejoice!

MINERS, BAFFLED BY THE TELEPHONE INTERLUDE, WAVE FLAGS, BLOW BLOWERS AND FORGET ABOUT IT.

MINERAL LORD: As I was saying... we are gathered here today in recognition of these brave fellows who have fought in this, the War to End All Wars, so that we may be free and that our heritage and traditions—our nation's greatest treasures—may remain intact in the face of —

TELEPHONE RINGS.

MINERAL LORD: Excuse me… (TAKES RECEIVER) Hallo, Lord Knacker... Who? Oh, Wall Street. How are you? (Ladies and gentlemen, it's my old friend Wall Street). What? Tin prices tumbling? Close down the mine, lock stock and barrel! Invest in.... (LOOKS AT MINERS) Invest in rubber dollies and lead soldiers.

HANGS UP, REPLACES HAT.

I must apologise, ladies and gentlemen.... Rejoice, rejoice!

MINERS WAVE FLAGS, BLOW BLOWERS.

MINERAL LORD: And so we come to the end of our small show of recognition. I would like to welcome you, my little heroes, home to a land fit for heroes!

MINERS CHEER UP.

MINERAL LORD: A land of full employment, a land in which you can hold your head up and say: 'This is what we fought for!'

MINERS REJOICE.

MINERAL LORD: 'This is what we lived for!'

MINERS REJOICE.

MINERAL LORD: 'This is what we died for!'

MINERS REJOICE.

MINERAL LORD: I would like to tell you that, my little heroes, but unfortunately it would be a great big fib. Instead we consign you to another twenty years of depression, mass unemployment, soup kitchens and forced emigration.

Finally, let us all join together and sing... the Tin National Anthem.

ALL STAND TO ATTENTION.

ALL: (SING) God save our gracious Tin,
Long live our noble Tin,
God save our Tin (na na na na na na)
Send it victorious, happy and glorious,
Long to reign under us,
God save our tinnnnnn....

THEIR VOICES FALL AWAY LIKE A MACHINE RUNNING DOWN. THEY HANG THEIR HEADS AND FREEZE.

SCENE: 'CAMBORNE TRAM'.

A MINER'S GARDEN, POOL.

MINER 2 PRODUCES A COPY OF THE CAMBORNE & REDRUTH PACKET. HE WALKS FORWARD, SURVEYING HIS GARDEN, SHAKING OUT THE PAPER.

MINERAL LORD AND MINER 1 EXIT. THEY BLOW BIRDWHISTLES BACKSTAGE.

MINER 2 BREATHES DEEPLY AND COUGHS. HE LOOKS ROUND.

MINER 2: (CALLS OSL) Morning George! Lovely morning, eh? (CALLS OSR) Morning Bert? Bert? Oh dear. (CALLS OSL) Bert is bad again George.

COUGHING, HE ARRANGES THE CHAIRS BACK-TO-BACK AND SITS IN THE FORWARD ONE. HE READS THE NEWSPAPER, BUT THE COUGHING BECOMES WORSE UNTIL HE CHOKES. HE LEANS BACK IN HIS CHAIR, FIGHTING TO BREATHE, SILENT, A LOOK OF PANIC ON HIS FACE.

ENTER DOCTOR KNACKER (ACTOR 1) AND DOCTOR BENEFACTOR (ACTOR 3). BOTH WEAR GLASSES AND WHITE COATS.

DOCTOR KNACKER: Ah yes, here he is. Good morning, Mr Treworthal. No, don't bother to get up.

THROUGHOUT THE SCENE MINER 2 STRUGGLES TO COMMUNICATE TO THEM THE PHRASE 'I CAN'T BREATHE'. HOWEVER HE IS INCAPABLE OF SPEECH AND THEY IGNORE HIS GESTURES.

DR. BENEFACTOR: (PEERING AT MINER 2) I say! how interesting.

DR KNACKER: Oh yes. You will of course note the complexion, all white and pasty?

DR B: Ooh yes. (HE PRODS MINER.)

DR K: Also the hollow cheeks, the black-rimmed eyes. Note the flush.

DR B: He does have a very nice garden though, doesn't he?

DR K: We are not here to study his garden, Doctor Benefactor.

DR B: Sorry, Doctor Knacker.

DR K: Now: from these signs, what would you say this man did for a living?

DR B: Oh, well... pale face, hollow cheeks, black-rimmed eyes, difficulty breathing…. He was a tin miner, obviously. (SHOUTS) Not any more though, eh, old chap?

DOCTORS LAUGH.

DR K: Certainly not. What we are witnessing here is the 'Camborne Tram Syndrome'.

DR B: The 'Camborne Tram Syndrome'? That is a very strange name for a disease. (TO MINER. SHOUTS) I was just saying to Doctor Knacker here that your illness has a very strange name.

DR K: No no no. 'Camborne Tram' is not the name of a disease.

DR B: Oh. What is it then?

DR K: It's the name of a tram. There goes one now.

ALL WATCH TRAM DRIVE OVER HEADS OF AUDIENCE.

DR B: (WAVING TO TRAM) Coo-ee!

DR K: Doctor Benefactor! Please!

DR B: Oh. So you are saying that this man is turning into a tram?

DR K: Of course not.

DR B: No, no. Of course not. What are you saying exactly?

DR K: What I am saying, Dr Benefactor, is that if you travel on the top deck of the tram which runs between Redruth and Camborne, you can see into the gardens of all these new bungalows. In every one you will see a man like this: grey faced and struggling for breath. Look at him. Suffocating, he is.

DR B: Yes. But he does have a very nice new bungalow. (TO MINER, SHOUTS) I'm saying you have a very nice house!

DR K: And so he should have. He probably has more money than you and I put together.

DR B: Really?

DR K: Yes indeed.

DR B: (SHAKING MINER'S HAND) Very pleased to meet you!

DR K: Quite. These bungalows were all built by miners who emigrated to South Africa, made a bit of money, and have returned to spend their twilight years in the old country.

DR B: Twilight years? I thought you said he was only 42.

DR K: Nevertheless, I think he is about ready to kick the old bucket.

DR BENEFACTOR DRAWS DR KNACKER AWAY, TO THE FRONT OF THE STAGE.

DR B: Dr Knacker, what exactly has he got?

DR K: What has he got?

DR B: Yes. What has he got?

DR K: (CONSPIRATORIALLY) About ten thousand pounds.

DR B: Really?

DR K: Yes. A very Interesting case.

DR B DRAWS DR K EVEN FURTHER ASIDE.

DR B: What illness does he have?

DR K: Illness? Oh, illness! Weil, he was a tin miner, remember. They usually die of some pulmonary or lung disease. I mean, it could be pleurisy or bronchitis or bronchial pneumonia.

DR B: Oh dear.

DR K: But I don't think it is any of these.

DR B: That's good. (GOES BACK TO MINER.) Good news, old chap. Dr Knacker thinks you do not have pleurisy or bronchitis or bronchial pneumonia. You're very lucky, for a miner.

DR K: And I don't think it is silicosis.

DR B: Well, what is it, then?

DR K: Let us examine him. You can draw your own conclusions.

THEY GRASP THE MINER FIRMLY AND TAKE HIS PULSE, ONE ON EACH ARM. THEY PULL OUT HIS TONGUE AND GENERALLY EXAMINE HIM AS IF HE WERE A DUMMY, HURTING HIM AND NEARLY THROWING HIM FROM HIS CHAIR.

DR K: Say 'Ninety-nine'.

MINER 2: (MURMURS INAUDIBLY.)

DOCTORS ARE PUZZLED. DR BENEFACTOR PUTS HIS EAR TO THE MINER'S LIPS.

DR B: Ah. He says 'ninety-nine'.

DR K: That's all right, then. Now for the chest.

THEY PUT THEIR EARS TO MINER'S CHEST.

DR B: Good heavens! It sounds like a ton and a half of Nutty Slack being tipped into a cellar.

DR K: Quite.

THEY LISTEN AGAIN.

DR B: Now it sounds like a traction engine crashing into a pile of scrap metal.

DR K: An excellent diagnosis! He has 'Rocks on the Chest'.

DR B: Really? (HE PEERS DOWN THE FRONT OF THE MINER'S SHIRT).

DR K: Dr Benefactor, it is no use looking down his shirt. The 'rocks' are inside his lungs.

Dr B: Eurrr!

DR K: Little quartz crystals from the Rand gold mines.

DR B: Little quartz crystals all clogging him up.

DR K: This disease is also known as 'The Miners' Con'.

DR B: Oh yes: The Miners' Con. Wasn't that what most of them got from breathing in the fumes of cheap candles and their own gunpowder?

DR K: The very same. And you can see them like this all along this road and every other road where tin miners are to be found.

THE MINER IS APPROACHING A CRISIS

DR B: Still, at least it gives him something to look forward to.

DR K: What can that be?

DR B: Dying.

MINER DIES.

DOCTORS COVER HIS FACE WITH HIS NEWSPAPER.

DR B: Tell me, Dr Knacker: is there ever any chance of recovery?

DR K: There will be no recovery for the tinners.

FREEZE.

SCENE: NO RECOVERY FOR THE TINNERS

ACTOR 2 EMERGES FROM THE NEWSPAPER AND ADDRESSES AUDIENCE. DOCTORS ARRANGE CHAIRS AS A SPEAKING PLATFORM AND EXIT.

ACTOR 3 ENTERS DURING THE FOLLOWING SPEECH.

ACTOR 2: Far from a recovery, there was a continuation of the decline which had begun in the 1870s. Between 1873 and 1878 one hundred and fifty tin mines closed, and by the end of the first decade of the new century there were nine left. It is estimated that in the second half of the nineteenth century 170,000 people emigrated from Cornwall, the equivalent of nearly half the current population.

ACTOR 3: 1920 saw the stoppage of the pumps at Dolcoath, the mine which had dominated the Cornish tin industry for more than half a century. It was seen as the end of an era.

ACTOR 2: At this time, in an act of desperation reminiscent of the China Contract—and now—a delegation was sent to London to ask for Government assistance. None was forthcoming.

ACTOR 3: By March 1921 there was only one working mine in the whole of Cornwall: Giew. In Camborne and Redruth alone over 2400 miners were unemployed. Funds were allocated for emigration, a small number of public works initiated, but for many the Soup Kitchen was the only relief.

ACTOR 2: (SINGS) Ah, lovely appearance of death!
What sight upon earth is so fair?
Not all the gay pageants that breathe
Can with a dead body compare.

ACTOR 3: 1925 saw the reopening of a few mines, including South Crofty and East Pool & Agar, but no real recovery.

ACTOR 2: Frustration at management methods, which are acknowledged to have contributed to the downfall of the industry, plus resentment of declining standards of living for the tin miners still in work, led to

much industrial action at this time—right up until the outbreak of World War Two....

SCENE: THE 1939 SOUTH CROFTY STRIKE

ENTER TELEVISION REPORTER (ACTOR 1) WITH MICROPHONE.

EXIT ACTORS 2 & 3

TELEVISION REPORTER: Good evening. I am standing outside South Crofty mine works where today the month-old dispute took a most unpleasant turn, with police dispersing a body of strikers with a baton charge. The dispute started when men downed tools after management refused to recognise the Union's demand for a guaranteed minimum wage. I have here with me the manager of the mine....

ENTER MANAGER (ACTOR 2). HE WEARS A GREEN PLASTIC BAG OVER HIS HEAD.

REPORTER REMOVES BAG. MANAGER LOOKS ROUND GRIMLY, SEES TV CAMERAS AND SMILES FALSELY.

TELEVISION REPORTER: Can I ask you, sir, for your comments on this morning's incident?

MANAGER: Oh, absolutely disgraceful, and can I just say that I think the police are doing a marvellous job in the face of this unwarranted intimidation by a few mindless thugs. We cannot afford to pay higher wages; it is as simple as that.

But let me just say this: we will stand behind any miner who wishes to work—in fact we are offering a cash incentive to those who ignore the strike call. Those who do not report for work by Friday will lose their jobs.

MANAGER STEPS BACK.

ENTER UNION OFFICIAL (ACTOR 3) CARRYING PAMPHLET.

REPORTER: Thank you very much. I also have with me the local representative of the Transport and General Workers' Union. The national newspapers this morning claimed that you had a hair transplant as recently as 1935 and that you use a well-known brand of aftershave in order to bolster your macho image. Can you cast any light on these allegations?

UNION OFFICIAL: Eh? Look, I'm not here to talk about what –

TELEVISION REPORTER: Can you answer the question please?

UNION OFFICIAL: I'd much rather talk about the current dispute here…

TELEVISION REPORTER: Well quite frankly I am not prepared to go on like this for the next hour. I have asked you a simple question and would like a simple answer.

UNION OFFICIAL: I'm not prepared to discuss my private life on television.

TELEVISION REPORTER: Very well. Can I ask you why you called this strike?

UNION OFFICIAL: I didn't call this strike. I carry out the wishes of the members of this union. If I may, I'd like to read out part of a pamphlet circulated by the union entitled 'Tyranny of Cornish Tin Employers'. 'For years miners in the Camborne/Redruth area –'

TELEVISION REPORTER: And now I'll hand you back to the studio in London.

MANAGER STANDS ON THE CHAIRS.

UNION OFFICIAL AND TELEVISION REPORTER STAND BEFORE THE CHAIRS FACING THE AUDIENCE.

MANAGER: (TO AUDIENCE) As manager of this mine I would like to thank you men who have continued to work throughout the past few difficult months. Thank you very much. When the trouble is over we will not forget you. In fact, in addition to the usual bonus paid to you for working there will be another dip in the Lucky Bag soon!

APPLAUSE.

MANAGER: Now it has been pointed out, by a few malcontents and subversives, that were the mine to close down—temporarily!—through shortage of labour, you men would not be able to draw Dole!

TELEVISION REPORTER AND UNION OFFICIAL LAUGH AND ENCOURAGE AUDIENCE TO DO SO.

MANAGER: (SUDDENLY SERIOUS) Well, that is true, yes. But I can assure you that we have plenty of money—in London. And we shall see you through!

UNION OFFICIAL KNEELS. TELEVISION REPORTER STANDS BEHIND HIM, MANAGER ON CHAIRS BEHIND HER. DURING THE FOLLOWING SPEECH THE TELEVISION REPORTER SLOWLY SHAKES HER HEAD, THE MANAGER SLOWLY NODS.

UNION OFFICIAL: (RECITES THE PAMPHLET) 'Tyranny of Cornish Tin Employers: for years, miners in the Camborne/Redruth area have been forced to work under abominable conditions. Huge fortunes have been made in the industry and the money has been taken out of the country and invested in other parts of the world where native labour has been exploited. Employers in Cornwall who are continually pleading poverty have been the recipients of huge profits from abroad. South Crofty profits have been between 16 and 25% in the last 5 years but many a time men have found their wages lower than in any other British industry.'

EXIT TELEVISION REPORTER AND MANAGER. UNION OFFICIAL (ACTOR 3) RISES.

ACTOR 3: (TO AUDIENCE) The South Crofty mine strike of 1939 lasted from January right up until the outbreak of the Second World War in September, making it one of the longest disputes in the industry's history. Ironically, the war put an end to the problem of low wages, for the time being at least. By 1943 the average wage for underground workers at South Crofty was 66 shillings a week, almost 50% higher than the Union's original claim.

And now—we have a little music for you.

SCENE: NEARLY UP TO DATE

ENTER ACTOR 1, AND ACTOR 2 WITH MANDOLIN

ACTOR 1: (SINGS 'TRE BOSVENEGH' (TRAD.)) Y tryga mowes yn Bosvenegh,
Ow holon glan re wrussa tulla,
Ny vuf-vy brewys nefra an keth
Mes moy ha moy y's cavath whath.

Yn Bosvenegh pan dremenys-vy,
Y'n gweder, ow hares welys-vy;
Oll yn snodys lowen gwyskys,
Moy tek es blejen yn me hevellys.

EXIT ACTOR 1. MUSIC CONTINUES.

ACTOR 3: This song is called 'Tre Bosvenegh', which is Cornish for Bodmin Town. The Cornish language has been out of everyday use now for 200 years. The blame for its death has been laid at the door of the Commissioners of the Church of England who refused to allow the Book of Common Prayer to be translated into the language in retaliation to one of the periodic—and highly successful—Cornish military excursions into England.

But of course neither Cornish culture nor Cornish music is dead. For tonight we have a special guest for you. Taking time off from recording her show for Radio Cornwall, all the way from Penzance—ladies and gentlemen, allow me to introduce—Miss Brenda Woodburner. (APPLAUDS)

ENTER BRENDA WOODBURNER (ACTOR 1). SHE ACKOWLEDGES THE APPLAUSE.

ACTOR 3 PICKS UP GUITAR.

BRENDA: Hallo! Thank you, thank you, my dear friends. Well, it's lovely to be here. Hope you like my new frock. Tonight I've brought along my two boys to play for us. Say hallo, boys.

ACTORS 2 & 3: Hallo boys.

BRENDA: Ooh, they're sharp, aren't they? Well now, we're all going to sing that old favourite of us all, and we want you to all join in with 'Lamorna'.

SINGS 'LAMORNA' (TRAD.)

So now I'll sing to you,
It's about a maiden fair,
I met the other evening at the corner of the square.
She'd a dark and roving eye,
And her hair was covered over;
We rowed all night in the pale moonlight,
Away down to Lamorna.

ALL: (SING) T'was down in Albert Square,
I never shall forget,
Her eyes, they shone like diamonds,
And the evening it was wet, wet, wet.
Her hair hung down in curls,
Her face was covered over,
We rowed all night in the pale moonlight,
Away down to Lamorna.

EXIT ACTORS 2 & 3.

ACTOR 1 REMOVES BRENDA COSTUME.

ACTOR 1: There are now several tin mines in operation in Cornwall. There is Geevor, near St Just; Wheal Concord; South Crofty; Wheal Pendarves; Wheal Maid and Wheal Jane, which incorporates Mount Wellington. All except the first two are owned by the multinational company Rio Tinto Zinc. Wheal Jane is the biggest producer of ore and when opened in 1971 was the first major new mine in Europe for over fifty years.

And now here for your entertainment—a Cornish Bard of the Gorsedh.

EXIT ACTOR 1.

SCENE: ODE TO WHEAL JANE

ENTER CORNISH BARD (ACTOR 3). HE WEARS A DUSTBIN LINER BEARING THE CROSS OF ST PIRAN, ENORMOUS SUNGLASSES AND A LARGE BONNET TOPPED OFF WITH A CORNISH CHOUGH.

BARD: (TO AUDIENCE) Fellow Bards of the Gorsedh, it is a great honour to me to be invited here tonight to recite my latest poetical work on an aspect of Cornish life which we all feel it our duty to defend. I hope you like our new line, the 'Cornish Chough Bonnet'. You will find them on sale at the interval and I'm sure they're going to be a big hit with the visitors.

And now: my new ode.

CLEARS THROAT. DECLAIMS:

Where the raped Carnon River flows onward,
Through those banks that are scraped and are bare;
On the great rolling hills above Bissoe,
My own true love will be found there.
Take it away, Bard!

ENTER ACTORS 1 & 2 WITH INSTRUMENTS. THEY PLAY A TWELVE-BAR ROCK'N'ROLL VERSE, WHILE ALL THREE JIVE AND DUCKWALK.

THE VERSE FINISHES WITH AN ARPEGGIO AND THE POEM BECOMES A MUSIC-HALL MONOLOGUE ACCOMPANIED BY ACTORS 1 & 2 WITH LOTS OF GAGS.

BARD: (RECITES) Oh, there is a girl that I long for,
I long for with might and with main.

Her mouth, it is just like a chasm,
And her breath, it smells just like a drain.
But I love, how I love all her fixtures,
Her pitheads, they drive me insane.
They don't call her 'Deep Throat' for nothing, I know,
For the name of my love is–Wheal Jane!

Oh, she is the flower of Cornwall,
And she is Kernow's bright young thing.
She'll save the whole Cornish economy,
If they don't close her down in the Spring.
Oh the cream of the youth come to woo her,
Round the main shaft they make their devotions
And in her intestines two hundred each shift,
Give her heartburn with all their explosions.

Corrugated blue sheds on the skyline,
Like some great Shakespearean actor,
A rattling, roaring soliloquy,
Beautiful like a nuclear reactor.
'To be or not?' is the question,
From the mines that are old, knacked and buried
But she's not concerned with historical stuff,
If she was, she might be very worried.

Rio, Tinto and Zinc are the owners,
Of this lovely young Cornish maiden;
But RTZ are multi-national,
More powerful than Ronnie Raygun.
They own all the zinc and the copper,
They own the gold of Cape Town,
And when any poor country stands in their way,
It finds itself having a breakdown.

Yes, they own tin mines in Malaya,
Burro Burra, even Wallaroo.
And now things are just like the old days,
Emigration and depression too.
The Adventurers are Rio Tinto,

Prince Charles is the mineral lord,
And when there's a cut in tin prices, I know,

(*MUSIC STOPS*)

My love will be put to the sword!

DISCHORD. ALL FREEZE.

SCENE: THE TIN CRISIS

EXIT BARD. ACTOR 2 PLAYS GUITAR.

ACTOR 1: March 1985: A39 Theatre Group gives the first performance of 'One and All!'; the price of tin stands at an all-time high of ten thousand pounds per tonne.

MUSIC STARTS

ENTER ACTOR 3

ACTOR 2: (SINGS) Cornishman in Pendeen bus queue,
Reads the Western Morning News:
'The Market's closed, no time for tin';
But he's at the mine and digging, digging,
He's at the mine and digging, digging....

MUSIC CONTINUES.

A CAPTION IS DISPLAYED:

'LME–WORLD TRADING PLACE FOR TIN'.

ACTOR 1: On Thursday, October 24th came the news that the London Metal Exchange had suspended all dealings in tin after the price fell by three hundred pounds a tonne in the course of the morning. At the time of the suspension the price stood at £8140.

ACTOR 2: (SINGS) Meanwhile, a man in chalk-striped suit,
Ignoring the telephone,
Hands together, miles away

Telex machine is ticking, ticking;
Telex machine is ticking, ticking.

CAPTION: 'EEC = CONSUMER. IT GAINS FROM LOW PRICE'.

ACTOR 3: The International Tin Council (ITC) comprises sixteen tin consuming nations and six producers. For many years it has borne the responsibility for protecting tin from a severe drop in price by export controls, and by buying on the International Markets to keep tin scarce and so of high value.

ACTOR 2: (SINGS) Young executives all round,
Watching him just sitting dreaming,
Hang on the word to 'buy' or 'sell':
But will the Government intervene?
Will the Government Intervene?

CAPTION: 'BUFFER STOCK MANAGER BUYS TIN TO KEEP PRICE HIGH'.

ACTOR 1: On that morning of October 24th, the Buffer Stock Manager of the ITC suddenly announced that he had no more money to buy—or to pay for tin that LME brokers had already bought on his behalf. The result was panic and uproar; and the scene was set for the slump which could ruin the Cornish mining industry yet again. The Western Morning News said: 'This is the equivalent of a natural disaster'.

ACTOR 2: (SINGS) The mercenary for adventure,
Running tin to Singapore,
Makes his living breaking treaties....
While the price is falling, falling;
The price of tin is falling, falling.

CAPTION: 'ITC OWES: £550m TO LME BROKERS; £350m TO MERCHANT BANKS'.

ACTOR 3: Since trading in tin was suspended there have been many 'Emergency' sessions of the International Tin Council, none of which have produced any result, members often being unable to agree on a joint statement. But still the Buffer Stock Manager owes £900 million.

ACTOR 2: (SINGS) All the banks were lending money,
Secured on the stockpiled tin,
Brought to make demand and high price,
With the stockpiles growing, growing;
With the stockpiles growing, growing....

CAPTION: 'ITC FOLDS–LME FOLDS–CITY OF LONDON...?'

ACTOR 1: Because of this, it is feared that many LME brokers will be ruined by the default of the ITC and there is a reluctance to trade on the London Metal Exchange which is described as 'dying on its feet'. So the British government is the only ITC member to have stated a willingness to underwrite a rescue mission and guarantee the existing liabilities—in other words to save the credibility of the LME and the City of London.

ACTOR 2: (SINGS) Miners in Brazil and China,
Digging tin outside the scheme,
Undermine the stockpile's value...
Now will the Government intervene?
Will the Government intervene?

MUSIC STOPS.

CAPTION: 'THE GREAT DEBATE'.

ACTOR 1: So what is the great problem that has caused tin trading to be suspended for so long?

ACTOR 3: The governments that are members of the ITC are the guarantors for its debts and are looked to for repayment now the ITC is in default.

ACTOR 1: But they say they cannot confirm that they will pay until they know the exact amount of money in question.

ACTOR 3: But there will be no set value for their debts until tin trading begins again and it becomes clear how far the price of tin has fallen.

ACTOR 1: But trading will not begin again until the ITC governments have told the world what they intend to do about their debts.

ACTOR 3: And the governments say that they cannot confirm that until they know the exact amount of money in question.

ACTOR 1: Etcetera....

ACTOR 3: Etcetera.

MUSIC STARTS.

CAPTION: 'CORNISH MINES NEED £7500 PER TONNE TO KEEP GOING'.

ACTOR 2: (SINGS) Malaysian just wants a living,
The Thai just wants to feed his kids;
Cornishman knows throughout history,
Cousin Jack was digging, digging;
Cousin Jack was digging, digging....

ACTOR 3: Meanwhile in Cornwall experts are predicting a five-year slump with prices as low as £3500 per tonne.

CAPTION: '"OFFICIAL" UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURE 27,209'.

ACTOR 1: Camborne Town Council has estimated unemployment at 30% if all the mines close.

ACTOR 2: (SINGS) If the ITC collapses,
The banks will get their stockpiled tin,
Rush to sell at any value —
With the mines not worth exploiting,
With the mines all closing... closing....

CAPTION: YELLOW DISC BEARING THE WORDS 'TIN NOT DOLE'.

ACTOR 3: Will the Government subsidise the Cornish mines during the coming slump? Perhaps this is best answered by its stand against 'uneconomic' pits during the 1984—85 Miners' Strike. On the economic criteria so dear to its heart, it will save the LME and the City and leave the Cornish miners to their free market fate.

ALL: (SING) Who will save the Cornish miner?

Men in London, still serene,
They don't answer easy questions....
But will the Government intervene?
Will the Government intervene?
Will the Government intervene?

MUSIC–FULL STOP

SCENE: EPITAPH?

ACTOR 1: Come all good Cornish boys, walk in.
Here's brandy, rum and shrub and gin,
You can't do less than drink success,
To Copper, Fish and Tin.

ACTOR 2: 'Copper, Fish and Tin': almost within living memory, nearly everyone in Cornwall was concerned for their livelihood with at least one of these. Now all three have declined grievously to be replaced, to an extent, by China clay and tourism.

ACTOR 1: But unemployment in Cornwall is over 20%, making it one of the worst hit regions of the British Isles. For those in work, Cornwall has the lowest average wage in Britain. In the summer, it was announced that the government was withdrawing development status from Truro and St Austell; and when Kerrier District Council requested special Urban Aid, Environment Minister George Younger rejected their appeal, saying:

ACTOR 3: (GEORGE YOUNGER) The Situation Is Not Bad Enough.

ACTOR 1: Then Employment minister Peter Morrison, who visited Camborne, Redruth and Penwith in 1985, was asked by a reporter from Radio Cornwall what hope he could offer to the unemployed in Cornwall. He replied:

ACTOR 3: (PETER MORRISON) Look. I believe in your area. Do you believe in your area? Well, do you? Because if you believe in your area then others, too, will... believe... in your area....

ACTOR 2: Whatever that means. But in spite of this, Mrs Thatcher recently pointed to Cornwall as the most shining example of the Government's employment policies. At the Conservative Trade Unionists' conference she spoke of the thousands of people in Cornwall working on the Community Programme for three months or six months, cleaning riverbanks and clearing footpaths.

ACTOR 1: (MARGARET THATCHER) People ask, 'Why can't we give the unemployed something useful to do?' Well, the Community Programme is doing just that. It means new hope for the unemployed.

ACTOR 2: Cornwall now has the tidiest graveyards in Western Europe.

ACTOR 1: Although unemployment is very high and wages are very low, houses in Cornwall are very expensive, because local buyers are competing with those who buy holiday cottages, retirement homes and weekend retreats to escape the hurly-burly of business life up-country. The policy of selling Council homes means that the stock of rented accommodation for those who cannot compete in the property market is continually diminishing.

ACTOR 2: What remedies are available for these ills? Well the Western Morning News recently reported great surprise on the part of the Department of Employment in Camborne and Redruth that the five hundred people made redundant from the Compair-Holman's factory were reluctant to take jobs paying over £200 a week in the South East of England. But the manager of the Jobcentre pointed out that this was usually the way with redundant Cornish people–at first….

ACTOR 3: So, for the young people of Cornwall who have to face these problems there is the simple, traditional alternative. They can always get on their bikes—and emigrate.

ACTOR 2 PLAYS GUITAR TO ACCOMPANY 'CRAIGIE HILL' (*TRAD.*)

ACTOR 1: (SINGS) The tin lords and their agents, their bailiffs and their beagles,
The land of our forefathers we are forced for to give o'er;

And we're sailing on the ocean for honour and promotion,
And we're parting from our sweethearts, it's them we do adore.

So fare thee well sweet Carnkie Hill, where oft-times I have wandered.
I never thought in my childhood days to part you anymore.
But we're sailing on the ocean for honour and promotion,
And the bonny boat is sailing down by Meneage shore.

BLACKOUT. THE END.

THE TALE OF TREVITHICK'S TOWER

by Paul Farmer and Mark Kilburn

OUR PANEL FOR THE EVENING:

Lady Julia Doddle.....Sue Farmer

Sir John Doddle (her husband).....Mark Kilburn

The Rev. Gerald P. Green.....Paul Farmer

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SCENE: INTRODUCTION

THE SET CONSISTS OF A TABLE AND THREE CHAIRS. BEHIND THE TABLE AND CHAIRS STANDS A CLOTHES RAIL. ALL COSTUMES ARE HANGING ON THE RAIL AND CHANGES ARE MADE BEHIND IT.

THE CHARACTERS WELCOME THE AUDIENCE AS THEY ENTER: CHATTING, SHOWING PEOPLE TO THEIR SEATS ETC.

EVENTUALLY THEY TAKE THEIR PLACES ON THE STAGE.

LADY J: Well good evening ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to this public meeting—kindly sponsored by the County's Cultural & Social Amenities Department—called to raise funds for the projected building of Richard Trevithick's thousand-foot-high tower. Now before I explain the nature of the meeting a little more fully I would, first of all, like to introduce the other two distinguished guests on the panel.

On my left I have a man known throughout Cornwall first and foremost as a member of the clergy, but also as a keen beekeeper, taxidermist, authority on the Cornish Beam Engine and its place in Cornish social history—you may have witnessed his annual re-enactment of the crucifixion on Bodmin Moor; ladies and gentlemen, the Rev. Gerald P. Green.

LADY J. LEADS THE APPLAUSE.

And now to the next member of the panel. On my right–and on just about everyone else's (LAUGHS)–a well-known face from the world of Cornish business and commerce; a former Conservative MP and Minister, until he was forced to resign in 1982 as a result of the 'Redhead-in-the-bed' sex scandal; a self-made millionaire, he has a string of highly profitable abattoirs throughout Europe and South America and lists his hobbies as foxhunting, judging beauty-contests and collecting Nazi memorabilia–my dear husband, Sir John Doddle.

APPLAUSE FOR SIR J. SIR J. REMAINS GRUMPY.

And so to the final member of tonight's distinguished panel. A woman well-known to afternoon television audiences throughout the region through her chat-show 'Doddle At One'; a woman concerned with social and moral questions of the highest order; a woman who has applied to all the major Aid agencies in the hope of being able to work among the starving in darkest Africa; a woman who....

SIR J: Get on with it!

LADY J: (REGAINS HER COMPOSURE) My very self, Lady Julia Doddle.

APPLAUSE FOR LADY J.

LADY J: And so we come to this evening's meeting. Now over the past two or three years there has emerged in Cornwall a strong body of opinion that the authorities should honour Cornwall's most famous son, the engineer Richard Trevithick. And so, to coincide with Industry Year, the County Council's Cultural & Social Amenities Department have kindly sponsored a series of public meetings throughout the county to test the grass-roots opinion and raise funds for the projected building of Trevithick's tower, originally designed to commemorate the passing of the Reform Bill. Now the tower is due to be built—entirely with the funds raised at these meetings—in Truro later this year. But you, the great British public, will have the final say as to whether or not this project goes ahead. As you will have noticed, a voting slip was handed to you as you entered this evening. Now if at the end of this series of public meetings, the majority of voters wish the project to go ahead, Truro will be the site of this magnificent tower. If, however, the majority vote against the project, then one of Cornwall's most famous sons will be left consigned to the oblivion where he now resides. So–every vote counts! Voting will take place at the end of the evening. Now, without any further ado, I shall hand over to Rev. Green to outline the evening's proceedings.

LADY J. SITS. THE REV. GREEN STANDS.

VICAR: Thank you, Lady Doddle. This evening's meeting has been designed in such a way as to illuminate the public's awareness of

Richard Trevithick and his monumental contribution to mankind through the audio-visual mediums of song and dramatised scenes.

SIR J: What the bloody hell is he on about?

VICAR: All manner of viewpoints will be expressed (LOOKS AT SIR J.), regardless of the extreme nature of those views, and the public can be assured a high standard of dramatic expertise from the panel members as we are all members of the (PRAZE-AN-BEEBLE) Amateur Dramatic Society.

SIR J: Get on with it, man!

VICAR: One can only recall with delight Sir John's masterly performance as Pinocchio in the 1982 pantomime. Now: to show you what we mean, we're going to give you a little example; a little dramatised scene. I'll introduce this one so that you get the picture and then later on when you're used to them we'll just whizz straight into them, shall we? Places please, Sir John and Lady Julia.

SCENE: JAMES WATT'S PATENT

SIR J., LADY J. TAKE THEIR PLACES FOR THE SCENE, AS THOUGH IN THE PARLOUR OF A CORNISH COTTAGE. LADY J. KNITS, SIR J SCOWLS.

VICAR: Now, here we are: the kind lady you can see sitting there knitting is Mrs Trevithick, young Dick's mother.

LADY J: (VERY BAD CORNISH ACCENT) Even' to 'ee, Sirs 'n' Mums!

VICAR: Oh yes, very nice, lady Julia; really getting into the spirit of it there—and the stern gentleman reading the newspaper—Ah! I think we agreed you would be reading a newspaper, Sir John....

SIR J: Did we?

LADY J: Here you are, dear.

SHE GIVES SIR J A NEWSPAPER.

SIR J: 'The Camborne Packet'? Really? Isn't there a Telegraph, or something?

VICAR: ...And the rather stern, bad-tempered chap with the newspaper–

SIR J IS OFFENDED

–is Richard Trevithick Senior, Dick's father. As we are rather short of personnel, let me see, this (LADY J'S HANDBAG) shall perforce for the moment represent our hero himself, as a child. Now, to set the scene: it is supper time at the Trevithicks' cottage at Penponds, near Camborne. The year is 1780.

VICAR TAKES A SEAT AND WATCHES.

MRS T: Come along, Dick. Eat up your greens like a good boy.

MR T: Eh?

MRS T: Not you, Dick. Young Dick here. Look at him; he will not eat that cabbage. Don't you make that face at me, young man! And stop shovelling those greens round and round your plate. You tell him, father. I cant do anything with him.

MR T: Eat your greens, Dick. there's a good boy.

MRS T: Well, that's no good, is it? He isn't going to take any notice of that.

MR T: He's eating them, isn't he?

MRS T: No he isn't. Oh Dick!

MR T: Now stop that, Dick!

MRS T: Look, he's thrown it all over the floor. For goodness sake, say something to him.

MR T: All right, all right. (STANDS) Dick! Eat your greens or.... or I won't let you play with the coal.

SATISFIED, HE SITS AND OPENS HIS PAPER.

MRS T IS FLABBERGASTED

MRS T: Is that it? He won't let him play with the coal! (MIMICS) 'I won't let you play with the coal'. What kind of creature did I marry? Are you man or maid? He would probably prefer not to play with the coal. What have you been doing making him play with coal?

MR T: Look, I am trying to read my paper.

MRS T: Hide behind it, more like. In case your little nine-year-old son leaps up and punches you on the nose. Go on son, go on. Hit him with your teddy; put him in hospital.

MR T: All right, all right! You want threats, I'll give you threats. (GETS UP. POINTS AT YOUNG T.) Right. You eat your blasted greens, or I'll take you up to the mine and bounce you 90 fathoms up and down the shaft. Then I'll roll you up into a ball and throw you over the roof of Dolcoath engine house. Then if you still won't eat your nice greens, I'll give you to the Bal maidens for their dinner, and they'll eat you up with their big green teeth. Grrrr! (ROARS, PULLS HORRIBLE FACE AT YOUNG T AND THEN MRS T. THEN HE SITS, WITH NEWSPAPER.) Anyway... think of those poor starving children in Ireland.

HE READS. LONG PAUSE.

MRS T: You beast!

MR T: Eh?

MRS T: You big bad granite headed beast!

MR T: What have I done now?

MRS T: What have you done? look! How dare you speak to my poor little man like that? Oh look at him, he's shivering in his little trousers.

MR T: But... but… you told me to threaten him.

MRS T: No I did not!

MR T: Yes you did!

MRS T: Didn't!

MR T: Did!

MRS T: (SHOUTS) Didn't!

MR T: Oh well, have it your own way. I'm going to sleep.

HE COVERS HIS FACE WITH NEWSPAPER AND SNORES.

MRS T: (TO YOUNG T) There there. Don't you worry about that nasty man. Just eat up your nice greens for mummy, because if you don't eat up your vegetables you'll never grow up to become a big strong clever engineer like (POINTED) Mr James Watt.

SHE WATCHES MR T EXPECTANTLY.

HIS FEET MOVE AGITATEDLY. HIS WHOLE BODY VIBRATES.
HE JUMPS UP.

MR T: What?

MRS T: (INNOCENT) 'What' what, dear?

MR T: What do you mean, what what? You know very well what what. James Watt, that's what. Ha!

MRS T: Oh yes. That's right. Mr James Watt. You tell young Dick here, if he doesn't eat up his greens, he'll never be as clever and rich as Mr Watt.

MR T: Haven't I told you? Never mention that man's name in this house. Do you know what he called me? Do you know? (PREPARES TO TELL US.)

MRS T: Impudent, ignorant and overbearing.

MR T: Im–.... (LOOKS AT HIS WIFE.) Yes. Impudent, ignorant and overbearing. I mean, I'd like to know who he thinks he is. I'm every bit as good an engineer as he is. Well, aren't I?

MRS T: Yes, dear.

MR T: There wouldn't be a ha'porth of difference between us two if it wasn't for the patent!

MRS T: Oh good. Daddy's going to tell us all about the patent again.

MR T: That patent of his is an insult to scientific progress. How can you take out a patent on a bucket? Eh? That's all a condenser is. You show me the difference between Watt's condenser and a bucket. There isn't any. Yet because of that patent, we Captains of the Western Mines can't make any improvement in the steam engine without giving him royalties. Times are hard, we've got to go down! A hundred fathoms, two hundred fathoms. The tin price is low, we need more of it. Sometimes, in those engine houses, you can feel history rushing past you; you can see the improvements you could make–improvements that might make your name for ever. But no! History has to stop so that Mr Boulton and Mr Watt can make their fortunes out of the invention of the bucket! When will it end? I'll tell you what I'd like to do: I'd like to take hold of James Watt by the throat, get hold of his parallel motion and thrust it–

VICAR: (INTERVENES HASTILY) Ah yes, suffice it to say that relations were uneasy between James Watt and Mr Trevithick senior. Thank you, Sir John, that really was rather good.

SIR J AND LADY J COME OUT OF CHARACTER.

SIR J: Rather enjoyed it, actually.

VICAR: And you, Lady Julia. What a little firebrand, eh?

LADY J: One does one's best, Vicar!

SCENE: PRIMITIVE STEAM ENGINES

VICAR: And now the panel would like to demonstrate Mr. Newcomen's engine and the nature of Watt's innovatory condenser.

THE PANEL DEMONSTRATE THESE ENGINES USING THEIR BODIES.

SCENE: TREVITHICK AT SCHOOL

VICAR: Now Sir John will tell us all about Richard Trevithick the Camborne schoolboy.

SIR J. STANDS, CLEARS THROAT, RUMMAGES THROUGH PAPERS ETC, TO THE EMBARASSMENT OF LADY J. AND THE VICAR.

SIR J: Richard Trevithick went to school in a time when men were men and little girls didn't exist. There were no teachers' unions causing untold disruption, naughty people were given a good thrashing across the bottom and, when you left school, you either went into the army and starved or else worked for the landed gentry and starved. There were plenty of opportunities. Britain was a great nation, and the greatest years were still to come. There were wars–lots of them– which meant jobs, creation of wealth, Britain a great world power. The Spanish were threatening us with the Armada, and the Battle of Hastings was a year or two away. Churchill was Prime Minister, Henry VIII was King, and....

VICAR: Sir John. I think you're beginning to drift from the subject.

SIR J: Eh? Oh yes. Trevithick. Well, from the evidence accumulated it seems that Trevithick was a bit of a waster, to say the least. His schoolmaster reckons he was a 'disobedient, slow, obstinate, spoiled boy, frequently absent and very inattentive'. Now, how an idiot like this came to be Cornwall's greatest inventor is beyond me! Personally, I think he was the illegitimate son of the Earl of Northumberland, discarded at birth when it was obvious he lacked the essential business acumen necessary to thrive in the world.

THE VICAR COUGHS LOUDLY.

But enough of my suppositions. The sad fact is Trevithick left school and went straight on the dole–typical of a vast majority of British youth who haven't the initiative to get up off their backsides and make a go of something. I mean the lad was growing into a giant!

Why on earth didn't he get a job as Samantha Fox's bodyguard or something?

LADY J: Samantha Fox wasn't alive then, dear.

SIR J: Eh? Well, I'm sure there were plenty of other upwardly mobile young ladies about! Now he grew into such a giant that his physical prowess became almost legendary in Cornwall, and it is with this in mind, and his current period of unemployment, that our next dramatised instalment concerns itself, in the form of a song. So, if the Vicar would kindly take up his instrument....

THEY TAKE UP THEIR POSITIONS IN FRONT OF THE TABLE, REV. GREEN WITH GUITAR.

SONG–'BIG MAN RICHARD'.

ALL: (SING) He was a very big man, a very big man
He could lift a mandril with just one hand
He could write his name on a beam so high
With a weight suspended from his thumb
He was a very big man, a very big man
He could crush a stone in the palm of his hand
He could fight like a bear, under his command
And the surgeons admired his frame

VICAR (INTER): But as he walked alone all day
Through the Cornish mines
His mother's words kept ringing
Like alarm bells in his mind

LADY J (as MRS. TREVITHICK): Ere, Richard my handsome–where do you think you're goin' today?
Ere, Richard my lover–it's time you got yourself a job with decent pay

VICAR & SIR J: But Richard played in the engine-house
All day

ALL: REPEAT VERSES 1 & 2

VICAR: REPEAT INTER

SIR J (as MR TREVITHICK): Ere, Richard my handsome, where do you think you're goin' today?
Ere, Richard my lover–it's time you got yourself a job with decent pay

VICAR & LADY J: But Richard played in the engine-house
All day

VICAR: And by the time he was nineteen he was engineer to no less than seven Cornish mines!

CHORD

SIR J (as MR TREVITHICK): There must be some mistake!

LADY J: Said his father….

SIR J (as MR. TREVITHICK): He's not qualified to be a mine engineer!

CHORD

VICAR: 'Shows how much you know!'

LADY J: Said the Mine Captains...

VICAR & LADY J: He's Number One!

SIR J (as MR. TREVITHICK): Is he? Well he can pay a bit more housekeeping then!

SONG ENDS. THEY RETURN TO THEIR SEATS.

LADY J: Well, what jolly fun that was!

VICAR: May I just say, Lady Julia, what a lovely voice the good Lord bestowed on you–a most delightful experience for one's ears, if I may.

LADY J: Why, thank you Vicar!

THE VICAR KISSES LADY J's HAND. SIR J. LOOKS ON.

SIR J: Yuk!

LADY J: The year 1797 saw one or two major changes in the life of Richard Trevithick. Firstly, his dear father, Richard Trevithick Senior, passed from this world into another. But, on a happier note, Richard

married a very nice young girl named Jane Harvey–the daughter of Harvey from Hayle Foundry. The young couple started married life in Camborne with Richard earning his living as engineer to many mines throughout Cornwall.

VICAR: It was about this time that Trevithick himself came into conflict with Mr James Watt. The Cornish miners were determined to make a nonsense of the Watt patent and began installing engines here, there and everywhere. James Hornblower patented a double-cylinder engine, but straightaway Watt claimed an infringement. Young Trevithick was employed to report on the performance of this engine in comparison with the Watt engine–proof of the high esteem in which the young engineer was held by the Mine Captains.

SIR J: It was at this time that Trevithick met Edward Bull, who was employed by Boulton and Watt as an erector. The two fell in together and, with the encouragement of the Cornish miners, began erecting Bull's engines. Mr. Watt soon pounced on this infringement and an injunction was granted. Quite right too, I must say.

VICAR: With the young, hot-tempered James Watt Jnr. now at the helm, injunctions were served on Trevithick and Bull and, as if to make an example for all of Cornwall to take note of, a lawsuit was brought against Hornblower, which was awarded in favour of Boulton and Watt.

SIR J: 'Send forth your trumpeters and let it be proclaimed in Judah that the Great Nineveh has fallen; let the land be clothed in sackcloth and in Ashes! Tell it in Gath, and speak it in the streets of Ascalon. Hornblower and all his hosts are put to flight!'

LADY J: No, no, no! Don't tell me! It's...John Keats!

VICAR: Wrong, I'm afraid, Lady Julia. It was James Watt Junior on hearing the court's decision.

LADY J: Goodness gracious, was it really? (TO SIR J) Was he on opium, dear?

SIR J: Perish the thought!

VICAR: And so in 1800 the Watt patent expired, to the relief of the Cornish mining communities. Trevithick was a free spirit, able to work without the threat of injunction hanging over his head, and he plunged into a world of ideas and exploration characteristic of this giant, whirlwind of a man. Trevithick's first contribution of note was the Plunger-pole pump–hence the pun 'plunged into a world of ideas'. (THE VICAR LAUGHS. NO ONE ELSE DOES). The plunger-pole pump was an old invention patented by Sir Samuel Morland in 1675 and Trevithick's adaptation became the central feature out of which the Cornish engine developed. So, with the help of the panel, we will now demonstrate the Trevithick Plunger-pole pump.

THE PANEL MAKE THEIR WAY IN FRONT OF THE TABLE. THE VICAR MOVES SIR AND LADY J AROUND ACCORDINGLY. SIR J. IS SMOKING A CIGAR.

Now, Sir Samuel Morland's pump was old, outdated and bulky–rather like Sir John here. Trevithick's new version meant that the engine here (TAKES HOLD OF SIR J) pumped the rods and the rods (TAKES HOLD OF LADY J) pumped the water, reversing existing practice.

SIR J AND LADY J MOVE MECHANICALLY, SIR J ACTIVATING LADY J (THE RODS) INTO A PUMPING ACTION.

VICAR: Trevithick's dream at this time was to design a truly portable steam engine for use as a 'whim'–a device, up until then horse driven, which was used to raise ore from a mine. Watt had tried to do this and failed.

SIR J: Trevithick increased the power of small Watt engines by feeding them steam at 25 pounds per square inch instead of atmospheric pressure. Fifty of these were installed and they were a great success—but Richard Trevithick was not yet satisfied.

LADY J: So he did away with James Watt's pride and joy, the separate condenser, relying on the expansion of the 'high pressure steam' to drive the piston. He did away with the crossbeam–and to make it even more portable he mounted his new little engine... on wheels!

VICAR: The steam exhausting straight from the cylinder without first being condensed made a strange new noise never heard before. It went: Puff puff puff puff, puff puff puff puff!

VICAR CARRIES ON DOING THIS. SIR J JOINS IN. THEY SLOWLY COME FORWARD.

VICAR: Wooo wooo! Choo choo choo choo!

LADY J: (OVER ABOVE) In the Camborne home of Mr and Mrs Trevithick, strange things could be seen running round in circles on the kitchen table. From Camborne in Cornwall came self-propulsion and the modern world!

THEY MOVE AROUND THE STAGE LIKE TRAINS.

SCENE: CAMBORNE ROAD CARRIAGE & LOCOS

THEY FORM A LINE WITH BACKS TO AUDIENCE, STILL MOVING LIKE TRAINS.

THE VICAR PICKS UP HIS GUITAR, LADY J. A DRUM. THEY PUT ON SUNGLASSES.

INTO SONG 'CAMBORNE LOCO–KING OF THE ROAD'. VICAR IS BUCK, LADY J. IS MARY-LOU AND SIR J. IS JOHNNY.

JOHNNY SITS ON CHAIR WITH STEERING-WHEEL, BUCK AND MARY-LOU STAND BEHIND. JOHNNY DRIVES THROUGHOUT. THEY SING:

JOHNNY (SINGS): One cold and windy Christmas Eve in 1801
A light was shining, even though the working day was done

MARY-LOU (SINGS): A tall man stood there stoking up a boiler in the yard
And the 'Puffing Devil' caught the locals off their guard

JOHNNY (SINGS): Men began to gather round the fire in the hold

It was Richard Trevithick–King of the Road!

BUCK (SINGS): Well the smoke began to bellow and the steam began to hiss
Andrew Vivian said:

JOHNNY: 'This is a sight not to be missed!'

MARY-LOU (SINGS): They jumped onto the carriage and Trevithick gave the word
Then off they went up Beacon Hill...

BUCK (SINGS): 'Just like a little bird'

JOHNNY (SINGS): She went along just fine with that heavy human load
And Richard Trevithick was King of the Road.

MARY—LOU (SINGS): Well three days later they started off again
And Davies Giddy waited to see the little gem

BUCK (SINGS): But after several hours somebody brought the news–

JOHNNY (SINGS): 'That the carriage has broke down and everyone has got the blues'

MARY-LOU (SINGS): The next day Giddy learned of the damage that was done
It seemed the carriage started off from Camborne on its run

JOHNNY (SINGS): But then they hit a boulder and the carriage ran aground
They said:

MARY-LOU (SINGS): 'We'll fix it later when Trevithick's bought a round!'

BUCK (SINGS): But they left the engine running and it burned-out to a shell

JOHNNY (SINGS): And Richard Trevithick was as mad as hell (x 2)

END OF SONG. THEY CONTINUE AS IF DRIVING ALONG A HIGHWAY.

MARY-LOU: Hey, Johnny! I sure am impressed with your 1958 twin-cylinder, fuel-injected Lincoln automatic. It's the hottest thing on the streets!

BUCK: Yeah, Johnny. I sure am envious. All the guys in High School would give their right arms to get behind the wheel of this baby!

JOHNNY: Gee, thanks you guys. My dad bought it for my seventeenth birthday. Sure is somethin', huh?

BUCK & M.L: Sure is!

JOHNNY: If I graduate next year my dad says he'll buy me one of those crazy Trevithick road carriages everyone's talkin' about.

BUCK: Jeez...you don't say!

MARY-LOU: (STROKING JOHNNY'S SHOULDER) Wow, Johnny!

JOHNNY: Yup, siree. One cylinder, steam-powered–Trevithick tore down a garden wall when he first tested it back in 1808.

BUCK & M.L.: Mean machine!

MARY-LOU: Didn't Trevithick build all those high-pressure steam locomotives too, Buck?

BUCK: He sure did, Mary-Lou. The Pen-y-daren locomotive, designed in 1804 was the result of a wager between Sam Homfray and Arthur Hill, who said it wasn't possible to haul ten tons of iron along a tramway, but Trevithick done proved him wrong.

JOHNNY: Yeah, and Trevithick tried to interest the coal mine owners in the machine to transport the coal underground, but they wouldn't pay out the money to change the wooden track over to iron!

MARY-LOU: Lousy jerks!

BUCK: That's right, Mary-Lou. But even worse—in 1808 Trevithick laid a track in central London and waged a bet that his locomotive could move faster than any mare, horse or gelding in the country, so as to prove the usefulness of his inventions. It was called

'Catch-Me-Who-Can', but was totally ignored and so Trevithick went back to Cornwall.

JOHNNY: Just goes to show the contradictions inherent in a capitalist society, Buck.

BUCK: Sure does, Johnny.

MARY-LOU: Any of you guys want some coke?

JOHNNY: Not when I'm driving, thanks Mary-Lou.

MARY-LOU: Hey! Isn't that Sammy-Joe and her boyfriend?

ALL: Hey...Sammy-Joe!!!

MARY-LOU: Sure was a guy ahead of his time, that Trevithick.

JOHNNY: Sure was, Mary-Lou.

MARY-LOU: Hey–whatever happened to the 'Catch-Me-Who-Can'?

SHE NUDGES BUCK WHO FALLS ONTO JOHNNY. THEY SHOUT AND CRASH, ENDING UP IN A HEAP ON THE FLOOR.

BUCK: It went off the rails, Mary–Lou!

MARY-LOU: Aw, shucks!

BLACKOUT. THEY RETURN TO THEIR SEATS BEHIND THE TABLE.

SCENE: HIGH PRESSURE STEAM

SIR J: With the sound of the first puffer, the world had changed forever: but no industrialist wished to exploit the rail and road locomotives at that time because it was cheaper to keep horses.

VICAR: Now, let us examine this phenomenon with which Trevithick's name has become inextricably entwined–that is, where it is remembered at all: high pressure steam. How does it work?

We have seen that Watt's engine created a partial vacuum in the condenser, and thus in the cylinder with which it was linked. Then atmospheric pressure would drive the piston down to fill the vacuum we all know nature to abhor.

SIR J BEGINS TO INFLATE A LARGE BALLOON.

LADY J: Now, observe the balloon. The balloon represents here a Trevithick high pressure steam boiler. The air inside the balloon is the steam under pressure and this room is the cylinder: off you go, John.

SIR J ALLOWS SOME AIR TO ESCAPE FROM THE BALLOON, MAKING A RUDE NOISE.

LADY J: Now, what does this represent? Sorry? When the steam is allowed out through the valve into this big, unpressurised cylinder (INDICATES HALL) what does it do? Yes, that's right: it expands, doesn't it. Trevithick discovered that this expansion of the steam would drive the piston up; the steam was then allowed to leave the room–sorry, cylinder–and the piston would fall. The result was a revolution in steam engine design and an ability to use steam power for new applications.

VICAR: Watt's engines could never have been used in a self-propelling vehicle because of their sheer size; but he had patented a design for a steam carriage some years before, apparently in order to prevent anyone else inventing one. He was extremely irritated by Trevithick's success:

SIR J: (DOGMATIC SCOTSMAN) High pressure steam? Trevithick should be hanged! The boilers will explode... l hope. (LETS AIR NOISILY OUT OF BALLOON.)

LADY J: Anyway, although the Cornish Giant himself felt he was getting nowhere with his locomotives, the story of the efficiency and convenience of his strong-steam engines was spreading throughout Britain.

ALL BEGIN WALKING ON THE SPOT.

VICAR: The engineers of Coalbrookdale, the holy cradle of the Industrial Revolution, were amazed by Trevithick's little masterpieces.

LADY J: Richard Trevithick was now a big business.

VICAR: He was nearer to fame and wealth than he ever had been or would be again; on the very brink....

SIR J: Stop!

THEY STOP.

SIR J: Now, as any inspired man of business will tell you, this is the critical time, my boy. what you want to do is find yourself a couple of wealthy people, butter them up a bit, get them to invest and move into a neat little factory unit in some assisted area somewhere; high unemployment, frightened workforce, you know.... After that, you concentrate on developing a viable consumer interface and blackballing the opposition from the Rotary Club. After all, Old Boy, you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. Have another pink gin, and here's death to the taxman and the union bully boys, eh what? You know, I feel a great nostalgia for my early days–bribery and violence: modern up-to-date management methods. If you've got a good product just sit back on it and get fat.

VICAR AND LADY J LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

LADY J: I'll bet Trevithick didn't do that.

VICAR: No. Because if he had done that, he wouldn't have been Trevithick....

ALL START TO WALK AGAIN.

VICAR: ...He'd have been James Watt. And he would never have dared to use high pressure steam.

THEY WALK FASTER.

UNSEEN BY THE OTHERS, SIR J TAKES A LARGE BALLOON FROM HIS POCKET AND BEGINS TO INFLATE IT.

VICAR: However, he did call on some gentlemen friends of his to help draw up a patent application that would make him as rich and famous as James Watt.

LADY J: Humphry Davy, Davies Giddy and Count Rumford.

FASTER.

VICAR: But they let him down rather badly.

LADY J: All appeared to be going well. Engines to his designs were being used in London, Shropshire, Derbyshire, Cornwall, South Wales.

FASTER.

VICAR: He told Davies Giddy that he could sell fifty engines in a day, at any price.

LADY J: But he didn't have any business sense.

VICAR: More to the point, unlike Watt he didn't have a partner with business sense.

FASTER.

LADY J: Trevithick had to spend all his time travelling around the country from factory to factory settling questions of design or construction.

VICAR (COCKNEY): 'Oi, Guv, where does this bit go?'

LADY J: And because he couldn't be in two or twenty places at once, he began to lose orders.

VICAR: He had to place orders all over the place and didn't have time to give the factories proper instructions.

LADY J: Some of them had no working drawings.

VICAR (COCKNEY): '*Where* did you say this bit went, Guv'nor?'

LADY J: As Trevithick appeared to have forgotten about them, some of the factory owners regarded the inventions as their own.

VICAR: They took liberties.

LADY J: And with the materials being so severely tested by the strong steam, it's surprising that there weren't any accidents.

BY NOW ALL ARE RUNNING.

THE BALLOON IS NOW HUGE.

SIR J PRICKS IT. VICAR AND LADY J ARE KILLED IN THE EXPLOSION

SCENE: THE GREENWICH EXPLOSION

SIR J IS THE YOUNG MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GREENWICH EXPLOSION. HE LOOKS SHEEPISHLY AT THE BODIES.

YOUNG MAN: (RAISES HAND.) I swear that the evidence I shall give to His Majesty's governmental enquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

Yes sir, I was in charge of the boiler in Greenwich which exploded, killing three of me mates and one died later. It was one of Mr Trevithick's engines. You see, what happened was that bloody safety valve on the boiler kept making this horrible '*ssss*' noise, and all this steam kept coming out, see? It was really getting on my wick, and I've never had a boiler blow up on me before so I....er....well, I jammed up the safety valve a bit...with a four-foot spanner.

Yeah, and then...well it went dead quiet, see, so I says to my mate Boris, 'Boris', I says, 'this boiler's nice and quiet now, so how about you looking alter it for a bit while I nip out and catch a couple of eels. I'll bung you a couple for it.' 'Desmond,' he says, 'You are on.'

So I comes hack a bit later and there was this horrible ominous silence, and there's Boris staring at the boiler, not at all happy, is he. And the engine is stopped! I could not believe my eyes, because the heat is still piling into the boiler, which means it's making steam; and if the engine is stopped, the steam has got nowhere to go and just stays in the boiler, building up pressure. 'Boris', I says, quietly.

'You've stopped the engine.' 'You are right, Desmond,' he says. 'And to tell you the truth, I am not entirely sure that I have done the right thing.' 'You haven't, you crazy git,' I shouts, but I don't think he heard me, because at that moment the boiler went up and blew him to Kingdom Come.

LADY J. AND THE VICAR ARE NOW ON THEIR FEET. LADY J. AND SIR J ARE 'THE SUNETTES'.

SUNETTES (SING): In The Sun, Sun, Sun
Everybody's having fun (x 4)

VICAR (AS TV AD MAN): This week in your sizzling, soaraway Sun. The shocking truth behind the Greenwich explosion. We talk exclusively to James Watt about the threat posed to the nation by Richard Trevithick and high-pressure steam. Read how Trevithick and his private army of hired thugs terrorise Camborne shoppers in custom-built steam-carriages. Read about Trevithick's perversion for small-scale locomotives. Read the startling allegations about his affair with eminent scientist Davies Giddy. All this and more–in The Sun.

SUNETTES: In The Sun, Sun, Sun
Everybody's having fun (x 2)

TV AD MAN: Also in The Sun this week: 'I WAS A LABOUR MP'S SECRET PLAYTHING'. The tragic story of call-girl Helen's night of passion with a prominent Labour politician. We lift the lid on the biggest political scandal to rock Britain since the 1974 Jeremy Thorpe trial, when Norman Scott bit off more than he could chew. Only in your super, sizzling, soaraway Sun!

SUNETTES: In The Sun, Sun, Sun
Everybody's having fun (x 1)

TV AD MAN: All this week we've got prizes galore in The Sun. Take part in The Sun's Best of British Humour extravaganza and you could win a bumper prize. Just send in your favourite joke about immigrants, Irishmen or Argies and you could win a pair of plastic breasts. (PRODUCES PLASTIC BREASTS). Yes, we've got 50,000

pairs to give away this week. Wear them at the office party like this (DEMONSTRATES) or use them as a makeshift umbrella. (DEMONSTRATES). All this and more in your sizzling, soaraway, totally impartial Sun!

SUNETTES: In The Sun, Sun, Sun
Everybody's having fun
In The Sun!

BLACKOUT.

SCENE: THAMES ARCHWAY

LIGHTS UP.

LADY J. IS VAZIE; SIR J. IS DIRECTOR AND THE VICAR IS ENGINEER. THEY ARE STANDING.

DIRECTOR: 'One body politic & corporate by the name and style of the Thames Archway Company, created in the year of our Lord one thousand, eight hundred and five to build the first tunnel under a major waterway anywhere in the World; towit, beneath the mighty River Thames 'twixt Rotherhithe and Limehouse. It will be capable of taking horses and cattle, with or without carriages, and foot passengers; an eighth wonder of the world'–and at the moment, an enormous great cock-up.

VAZIE: Yes, Mr Director.

ENGINEER (NORTHERN ACCENT): Very true, Mr Director.

DIRECTOR: Well? Don't just stand there agreeing with me! You, Robert Vazie! This is all your fault!

VAZIE: No it isn't.

DIRECTOR: Engineer?

ENGINEER: (CHECKS REPORT) Well... yes it is, actually.

DIRECTOR: Hah!

VAZIE: What does he know about it? I know I started this job, but everything was fine while I was in charge.

DIRECTOR: Engineer?

ENGINEER: I can only go some of the way with that. Now if you study my report, page 1027 paragraph 3, you will read 'Vazie started the tunnel. Vazie dug a hole'. And it was a very nice hole, I'll grant you.

DIRECTOR: These Cornishmen do dig a fine hole, don't they. Well? Vazie dug a hole, and.....?

ENGINEER: And...? Oh, and nothing. Vazie dug a hole. That was it. Vazie's contribution to the tunnel under the Thames was a hole in Rotherhithe.

ALL: And a very good hole it was too.

VAZIE: We dig a good hole, we Cornish.

DIRECTOR: You see, Vazie, when you dig a tunnel–you are quite right–you do go down, well done. But then you have to go 'along'; along, Vazie, under the river! (STRIKES VAZIE.)

VAZIE: But I had plans!

ENGINEER: (READING) 'But Vazie had plans: he intended to drive a small tunnel, or 'driftway', under the river. This would be a drain during the construction of the main tunnel.'

VAZIE: Good, eh?

ENGINEER: 'But he soon hit quicksand and water.'

VAZIE: Yes.

ALL: So he called in Richard Trevithick!

VAZIE: He's a madman.

ENGINEER: He's a genius.

ENGINEER AND VAZIE REPEAT THESE LINES AND THEY BECOME A RHYTHMIC ACAPELLA BACKING.

DIRECTOR: He was a damned comedian! He demanded a thousand pounds. Oh, I said yes. Then there was the steam pump and a load of tin miners he brought up from Cornwall. Still, you've got to hand it to these Cornish: they do dig a good hole.
(SINGS TO THE ACAPELLA BACKING) Trevithick built a tunnel,
From Rotherhithe to Limehouse.
First he built a driftway,
Just five feet high and two feet wide.

WHEN NOT SINGING THE VERSES, EACH TAKES OVER THE BACKING.

VAZIE (SINGS): With a thousand feet of tunnel,
He'd achieved low water mark;
But then there came a big tide,
And the water filled the driftway.

ENGINEER (SINGS): The last to leave was Captain Dick,
He nearly didn't make it.
But came up with a bright idea,
For draining off the quicksand.

ALL (SING): Trevithick built a tunnel,
from Rotherhithe to Limehouse,
But the poor man only makes history,
when the man with money allows.

UNENGAGED PARTIES KEEP SONG GOING WITH 'DO-DO'S DURING DIALOGUES.

VAZIE: (SLIMY) You see, Sir? The man is quite useless.

DIRECTOR: Yes. Perhaps I ought to send him on his way. I don't like the cut of his jib.

ENGINEER: Don't be a fool. The man is a miracle. It would take most of us twenty years to achieve what he's done in six months. And now he's drained the quicksand.

(SINGS) And now he's drained the quicksand.... (CARRIES ON SINGING THIS AS PART OF THE BACKING.)

DIRECTOR: Hmmm. If he's inefficient, then I'll sack him for wasting my time. But if he's too good, he threatens my position.

(SINGS) He threatens my position.... (CARRIES ON SINGING THIS AS PART OF THE BACKING.)

VAZIE (SINGS): Trevithick sealed the damage,
With china clay dropped from a boat;
He said he liked a challenge,
Then he crawled back down his tunnel.

ENGINEER (SINGS): To build the full-size tunnel,
A cast-iron tube laid in a ditch,
The great ideas are simple,
He's got only a few feet to go... (CARRIES ON SINGING THIS LINE AS PART OF THE BACKING.)

DIRECTOR: (SPEAKS RHYTHMICALLY) Only a few feet to go?
Trevithick will be a hero!
Trevithick will be powerful!
Trevithick will be a rich man!
(SHOUTS) Stop!

EVERYTHING STOPS.

DIRECTOR: I'm afraid I do not like the way things are going. I am commissioning an independent report from a famous firm of North Country engineers.

VAZIE: (SINGS, DIRECTED AT DIRECTOR) He's got only a few feet to go, he's got (etc.)

ENGINEER: (READS) 'The engineer of the Thames Archway tunnel project, Mr Richard Trevithick, has shown most extraordinary skill and ingenuity in passing the quicksand, and we do not know any practical miner that we think more competent to the task than he is. We judge from the work itself, and until this occasion of viewing the work, we did not know Mr Trevithick.' These Cornishmen dig a good hole. (USING THIS LINE, TAKES OVER THE SINGING FROM VAZIE.)

VAZIE: But I had got the knife in,
I had the Director's ear,
I had friends who might be useful,
To a Tory's political career.

DIRECTOR: (SPEAKS RHYTHMICALLY) Trevithick will be famous,
Trevithick will be top,
Trevithick will make history,
But not if I say (SHOUTS) STOP!

ALL STOP.

ALL (SING): Trevithick built a tunnel,
From Rotherhithe to Limehouse,
But a poor man only makes history,
When the man with money allows.

DIRECTOR AND VAZIE CARRY ON SINGING THIS QUIETLY, GLOATING.

ENGINEER: (OVER SINGING) Oh well, shame about that. He was nearly there, as well. And what a revolutionary idea! Better leave the Rotherhithe tunnel for Brunel, I suppose. But it's a shame, because it will take him 18 years and ruin his health and all his backers. And Trevithick nearly made it big this time. Perhaps next time...-

SIR J AND LADY J COME OUT OF CHARACTER. THEY RETURN TO THEIR SEATS.

VICAR (ENGINEER) GOES TO COSTUME RACK AND CHANGES INTO DICKINSON.

SCENE: DICKINSON/TYPHUS/BANKRUPTCY/ CORNWALL

SIR J: Ah! we've got there, my dear.

LADY J: Oh, have we? Good. I've been so looking forward to this bit.

SIR J: Quite so. Ladies and gentlemen, sadly it is seldom that one encounters in this the world of (INDICATES ROOM) Art, with a capital A, a kindred spirit with whom one feels a total sympathy.

LADY J: One feels–how shall I put it?–that this is the right sort of person.

SIR J: Quite so, my dear. Now at this point in the story of this chap Richard Trevithick, my lady wife and I were fortunate enough to stumble across someone with whom we could immediately identify, didn't we, Lady Julia?

LADY J: Oh yes, John. You see, now came a most exciting development in Mr Trevithick's life, and it all came about like this: one Sunday afternoon, he was sitting in the backyard, as they call it, of his quaint little terraced one-up, one-down back-to-back cottage in Limehouse.... I don't know what he was doing; I've never seen one of these places –

SIR J: No doubt he was playing tennis, my dear.

LADY J: Do you know, I'm absolutely sure that you're right John, because he was suddenly seized with an absolutely desperate thirst and immediately seized a cup of water from the water-butt and drank it down. For a moment, he quite forgot that the water-butt was not an ethnic, rustic hand tooled example of traditional country crafts like we have up at the hall for watering the lawns –

SIR J: My wife chose it herself.

LADY J: But instead, it was the nasty old cast iron boiler from a steam engine. Eurr! But, to his surprise, the water didn't taste at all bad. And that set his mind thinking.

SIR J: He was that sort of chap, do you see. Intellectual sort of chap. Can't stand them myself.

LADY J: Why not fit cast-iron water tanks into ships? They could be made to measure to fit into the odd corners where nothing else would fit.

SIR J: And then–water in the iron tanks could be used for ballast and easily be pumped in and out.

LADY J: And then–if the tanks to keep the water in could be iron... then why shouldn't the hull to keep the water out be iron too? Actually, I still don't understand how an iron ship manages to stay afloat. How does it stay afloat, Johnny?

SIR JOHN DOES NOT KNOW.

SIR J: Oh, ah.... Archimedes, Eureka, that sort of thing (ASIDE) damn your eyes. Anyway, after that there was no stopping the man. He thought of telescopic iron masts, iron navigation buoys, iron floating docks–one might say that he had too many irons in the fire. Eh?

LADY J: (SILVERY LAUGH) Oh really, Johnny! Anyway, while he was thinking about ships, he thought he'd jolly well invent a new method of framing them and conceive of a revolutionary way of shivering his timbers, or something.

SIR J: Bending the timbers, my dear. He was that sort of chap, you see. You've got to hand it to him, I suppose. Not a bad afternoon's work. His mind turned to the idea of patenting all these inventions and setting up a little yard to build them. But now we hit a slight problem: Richard Trevithick was as usual broke. What could he do?

BOTH ARE GLEEFULLY EXPECTANT.

LADY J: Yes, what could he do?

ENTER VICAR AS ROBERT DICKINSON. HE IS A SPIV, WEARS A HORRIBLE HAT AND SMOKES A CIGAR.

DICKINSON: What you need is a partner, John!

LADY J: Hello!

SIR J: Yes, here he is.

SIR J AND LADY J ARE DELIGHTED TO SEE DICKINSON. THEY APPLAUD LOUDLY, ENCOURAGING THE AUDIENCE TO DO SO.

DICKINSON: My card, John. (GIVES CARD TO SIR J.)

SIR J: I say, Mr Dickinson–this card is blank.

DICKINSON: (TAKES IT BACK) What? Oh yeah. Never mind. You know who I am, obviously.

LADY J: Of course, Mr Dickinson. (GIGGLES.)

DICKINSON: Hello darling. (ASIDE TO LADY J) Outside, round the back, in the dark, ten minutes time and there's a fiver in it for you. All right?

LADY J: Oh, Mr Dickinson!

DICKINSON: Never fails, the old charm. It's me silver tongue. Oi. Tosh!

SIR J: Yes, what is it, Robert Old Boy? Fancy a pink gin?

DICKINSON: (INDICATES AUDIENCE) You know me; you know them. Introduce me to them.

SIR. J: Where are my manners? Robert Dickinson–the people of TRURO; people of TRURO–Robert Dickinson: businessman!

DICKINSON: Charmed! Delighted! (HE LEAPS INTO THE AUDIENCE. AND SHAKES HANDS, EXAMINING WATCHES WITH AN EYEGLASS. HE TAKES THINGS FROM PEOPLE'S POCKETS AND TIPS THEM FROM A HUGE WAD OF NEWSPAPER BANKNOTES.) Get yourself a drink, John. (HE SHOWERS THEM WITH USELESS NOTES AND RETURNS TO THE PLATFORM.) They love me. Now to the purpose of my visit at the request of, and great expense to, these two here: my demonstration tonight is entitled...Tosh?

SIR J: 'The Right Approach: the Modus Operandi of the Modern Man of Business'.

LADY J: And woman!

DICKINSON: How true. Now, to assist me in my talk, Brenda here has agreed to play the part of–a great test of her memory this–a young woman. Thank you, Brenda! (CLAPS.)

LADY J: Brenda? (STEPS FORWARD AND CURTSEYS, CONFUSED.)

DICKINSON: Here we go then: hello, little girl.

LADY J: (YOUNG GIRL WITH LISP) Hello, Mithter Dickinthon.

DICKINSON: Very good, very good! Tell me little girl, would you like a sweetie?

LADY J: Ooh! Yeth pleath, Mr Dickinthon! (TAKES SWEET.)

DICKINSON: (TO AUDIENCE) That's what we call 'the Sweetener'.

LADY J: I thay, Mr Dickinthon: whatth that you've got in your hand?

DICKINSON: Oho! (EVIL LEER) All this money? That's called my Big Wad. My daddy had one, so now I've got one.

LADY J: Ooh!

DICKINSON: Would you line to hold it my dear?

LADY J: Oh, I don't know. (TO AUDIENCE) Thall I? Yeth, I thall! Yeth pleath, Mr Dickinthon; I'd like to hold your Big Wad.

DICKINSON: Right you are, my dear. There! (GIVES HER LARGE WAD OF NEWSPAPER MONEY.)

LADY J: Ooooh! Ith'n't it big! What thall I do with it, Mr Dickinthon?

DICKINSON: Anything you like, my dear: you can buy things with it, like machines and people and politicians.

LADY J: Ith that what you did with it, Mr Dickinthon?

DICKINSON: That's right, my little beauty.

BELL RINGS.

DICKINSON: That's it; time's up. (HOLDS OUT HAND.)

LADY J: Eh?

DICKINSON: Time's up. You have to give it back now.

LADY J: Ohhh! Do l have to?

DICKINSON: Yes, I'm afraid so, my dear. Otherwise I'll send for some great big bailiffs to terrorise your family and wreck your home.

LADY J: Oh. I thuppothe you'd better have it, then. Here you are. (GIVES MASSIVE WAD TO DICKINSON.)

DICKINSON: Thank you my dear. (HOLDS OUT HAND AGAIN.)

LADY J: Whatth that for?

DICKINSON: I'm still waiting.

LADY J: But I've given your Big Wad back to you.

DICKINSON: Yes. And now I want some more.

LADY J: What for?

DICKINSON: For letting you hold my Big Wad.

LADY J: But I haven't got any more.

DICKINSON: In that case–Come here, me proud beauty!

LADY J SCREAMS.

DICKINSON SWEEPS HER UP, VAMPIRE-LIKE.

SIR J HOLDS CLOTH IN FRONT OF THEM, BEARING WORDS 'THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE'.

SIR J: How fortunate for Richard Trevithick that at this moment of ferrous revelation, his path should cross that of this man.

DICKINSON: (EMERGING FROM BEHIND CLOTH) What you need, is a partner, John!

LADY J: (EMERGES, BREATHLESS AND FLUSHED. MARGARET THATCHER:) Men like this can make our once great country great again.

DRUM BEATS TATTOO.

DICKINSON: I am just the man for the job.

SIR J: Amassing a small capital by the sweat of his brow...

ALL LOOK EVASIVE, CLEAR THROATS ETC.

.... he casts around for still waters to lay him down beside and spies– the Spirited Inventor!

DICKINSON: I will look after all the financial aspects, you understand....

SIR J: He invites him into partnership to exploit the innovation.

DICKINSON: I like that: 'Exploit'. Exploit is definitely a 'me' word.

LADY J: (MARGARET THATCHER) Men like this will get us back on our feet and keep us on our toes!

DICKINSON: Even if you haven't got any shoes.

LADY J: But they need Incentives!

DICKINSON: We need Incentives!

ALL: Want More Money!

SIR J: Ladies and gentlemen; we live in fast changing times. For those who cannot keep up, we cannot afford to maintain a soft wayside to fall by. But for us–the chosen ones of economic chance—I give you a new National Anthem: The British Entrepreneur!

LADY J: (SONG: 'THE BRITISH ENTREPRENEUR' ACCOMPANIED BY ROBERT DICKINSON ON THE ACCORDIAN.) The poor must take their chance;
The hungry must just eat their cake;
Ye Rich, rise and advance!
We praise those on the make.
The Army and the Law,
Your property will store;
While ye make money for
The British Entrepreneur,
The British Entrepreneur!

ALL: (REPEAT SONG.)

DICKINSON: In 1811, sick with typhus and brain fever, Richard Trevithick was declared Bankrupt. There will now be a short Intermission.

INTERVAL.

THE TALE OF TREVITHICK'S TOWER: PART TWO

SCENE: ON TREVITHICK'S RETURN TO CORNWALL; CORNISH ENGINE &C.

LADY J: Well, ladies and gentlemen, if you will please return to your places? We'll get on.

On recovering from typhus and brain fever, Richard Trevithick returned to Cornwall, where he was given a home in Hayle by his brother-in-law. There, he produced new innovations in steam engine design.

VICAR: Initially, there was the Cornish Boiler, first used to drive old Watt and Newcomen engines with high pressure steam. The fire burned inside the boiler in tubes, unlike James Watt's old kettles. The Duty, or efficiency, of the engines immediately doubled.

SIR J: And then came the famous 'Cornish Engine', using ideas first used in Trevithick's Plunger Pole Pump. The 'Pole', the lower end of which formed the piston, moved up and down above the engine and was connected to the pump rods below. It was a simple design, and the first Cornish Engine, at Wheel Prosper, became known as the most economical and efficient engine in Cornwall.

VICAR: Yes: you see, the high cost of importing coal to Cornwall led to a perpetual search for improvements in efficiency. Trevithick led the field: he explored 'Compounding', which means that when the steam is exhausted from the cylinder, it goes into another cylinder and does more work.

LADY J: And he built agricultural machines that were cheaper to run than a horse; and a strange steam-jet ship's engine; people thought it a device for hurling grenades. And Trevithick worked on for the Progress of Mankind!

ENTER JOHN BRYANT (PLAYED BY THE VICAR). HE IS A LABOURER.

BRYANT: My name is John Bryant and I was an engineman up at Dolcoath mine. We all remembered Cap'n Dick with his strange inventions and his war with James Watt; but we'd heard he'd gone upcountry and we were a bit surprised when he walked into the engine house one day.

ln his hands he had a piece of paper and he strode about the mine looking at our three great engines. 'Well, boys,' he says, 'I'm going to make these engines of yours shake the shafts out of themselves.' 'What's wrong with them as they are, Cap'n Dick?' we asked, but it weren't no good. 'Progress,' he says: 'More work for less coal; a better Duty'.

So off he went and came back a couple of days later with these new boilers, 'Cornish' boilers. He told us they would put steam into the engines at a pressure of forty pounds a square inch. One of us enginemen says: 'I wonder if they will, Cap'n Dick.'

Anyway, these Cornish Boilers were mounted, and we were set on them for a night shift. Three o'clock in the morning, the mine Captain comes up to grass. He comes in our engine house and he kicks that new boiler and he says, 'Damn that Dick Trevithick! The water's rising fast in the mine. Can't you boys pump any faster?' 'No sir,' we says, 'We're doing the best that we can. Must be these here pressurised boilers. They don't agree with our old engines'.

Anyhow, next afternoon, Cap'n Dick himself comes in, don't he, and he's looking black and teasy. He looks at those boilers, and he looks puzzled; then he examines the engines, and he looks baffled. He says, 'There's nothing wrong with these engines. They're working perfectly'. He went to the shaft, and sure enough, the water was falling in the mine. So what was wrong the night before?

Three o'clock the next morning, he's back; roused from his bed because the mine was flooding again. He looked at the engines and boilers and then at me, all odd, like: 'Well, John, somebody has been tampering with my new boilers. They're only operating on half the correct pressure.' 'Well, blow me down, Cap'n Dick!' says I, 'I can't think who could have done that. Can you, boys?' Everyone says no. Trevithick gives us a little talk, about how there was no need to be frightened, because the boilers were all made by Harvey's of Hayle and there weren't no exploding rubbish. 'We're not scared, Captain Dick,' we said. 'We know what we're doing.' 'Yes', he said, 'That's just what I'm afraid off.' Off he goes.

But would you believe it? Two hours later, he's back again! This time he's got a lot of men with him. He goes straight to those boilers and has a good look, then he turns on us: 'It's you! You've dropped the pressure; Dolcoath Mine is flooding!' 'Weren't us, Cap'n Dick,' we says. 'Who in Hell was it then?'–almost screaming, he was. We thought about that. 'Must have been they Knackers,' we decided, 'They mine spirits.' We're simple folk, us Tinners.

Well, he didn't know whether to kill us or weep on our breasts. In the end he sent us all home and they got new men in to work Dolcoath engine house.

DURING THE LAST PART OF BRYANT'S SPEECH MALE LUDDITE (SIR J) AND FEMALE LUDDITE (LADY J) ENTER BEHIND HIM.

F. LUDDITE: And did his machines work smoothly after that, brother?

BRYANT: Oh yes, sister. For one whole day. The next night gunpowder found its way into the coal heaps. There was building work at Dolcoath after that.

M. LUDDITE: And were the engines more 'efficient' now, brother?

BRYANT: Yes indeed, brother. So 'efficient' were they that in due course the Newcomen and Watt engines were demolished. Trevithick built a 75-inch engine and Dolcoath was pumped by two engines, not three. And a lot of men lost their livelihood.

F. LUDDITE: Progress!

M. LUDDITE: That's right, sister. It's Progress when the working man or woman is thrown out of work, or out of a home, or off the land. This is the age of Progress.

BRYANT: Progress creates prosperity. Everybody knows that.

F. LUDDITE: True, brother: prosperity for the woman, replacing the higher-paid man. Prosperity for the eight-year-old child replacing her worn-out mother.

BRYANT: (TO AUDIENCE) But how rude of me! I haven't introduced you all. Although they are my brother and sister, I'm afraid l don't know their names. Who are you, sister?

F. LUDDITE: I come from the cotton mills of Lancashire, where we live our lives in filthy back-to-backs and work 14 hours in the day and six days in the week. On Sundays we clean the machines. We were driven to the town by an Act of Enclosure, when the squire and the parson and the gentlemen farmers divided our common land up between them.

BRYANT: And may you never rest, sister?

F. LUDDITE: Oh yes brother, sometimes we rest. Sometimes they stop the machine to remove the remains of one of our children, sent in to tie up a broken thread.

BRYANT: And who are you, brother?

M. LUDDITE: I am a stockinger from Nottingham in the cold East Midlands. Our lives were hard and grim, but one day they brought new machines into our factory and told us all to get out. Our jobs were offered to whoever amongst us would agree to work for half wage. More offered than were needed, so they lowered their offer: half the new wage to be paid in truck.

BRYANT: These are the ways of 'Progress': machines created to decrease the terrible workload of mankind in his attempt to tame the world have been perverted to make our lives worse. But we are all for Progress; so we have forsworn our allegiance to that mad, blind bastard George the Third and taken a new oath—

ALL: To Good King Ludd!

BRYANT: In the name of Good King Ludd, I turned the tap on Trevithick and put gunpowder in his furnaces.

F. LUDDITE: In the name of Good King Ludd, I burned down the graveyard mill where they murdered my mother, husband and child and where they were killing me.

M. LUDDITE: In the name of Good King Ludd, I declined their truck and helped to goad their mules with this.

A LARGE SLEDGEHAMMER.

This is called the Great Enoch.

ALL: SONG (UNACCOMPANIED): 'THE GREAT ENOCH'.

VS 1.
The working people of this land,
Hard of arm, hard of hand,
We live in misery but know what life should be:
A life of pleasure, like the Lords,
Like the Ladies, like King George,
With joy that there can be,
In honest industry.

VS. 2
But then came Arkwright, Compton, Watt,
Trevithick and his chariot,
Standing in the steam,
Like figures in a dream.
Now one can do the work of eight,
There's seven starving at the gate,
And one with new regime,
A slave to the machine:

CHORUS:
Our hammer is the Great Enoch,
The clever and the sly,
have imprisoned all you common people,
Told you that you must not fight,

The clever weaklings know what's right:
They make the Combination Laws,
That stop you talking on street corners,
Saying you won't work for nothing.
Follow King Ludd! Smash their prisons!
Great Enoch will smash their prisons!

VS. 3:
This is an age of dark despair,
Self-made men, laissez faire;
Helping you work hard,
By seeing that you starve.
So overseas go British wares,
To happy natives everywhere,
They're made to work and buy,
Or the bayonet asks 'Why?':

REPEAT CHORUS

VS. 4:
If one can do the work of ten,
Why should our lives be harder then?
Machines and land and coal,
The property of all:
Equal work and equal wage,
Equal rights, the golden age.
When common sense is born,
King Ludd will die unmourned.

REPEAT CHORUS.

SCENE: HERLAND:

THE ACTORS REMAIN IN THE SAME COSTUMES. THEY SPEAK NEUTRALLY, DISPASSIONATELY.

LADY J: In future days, the trains would come
To every Cornish town and home

And turn them into granite caves.
Driven overseas by hunger
When the mines could work no longer
The Cornish folk embraced their brother.

VICAR: Trevithick, father of the train,
Was driven from his home by steam
The first of all the Cousin Jacks to go.

ALL: But first came Herland:

SIR J: James Watt in his later years,
When asked if he'd excelled his peers,
Would proudly point to the South–west:

VICAR: 'The Herland engine is my best'.

LADY J: Then Arthur Woolf, the engineer,
Built another engine there.
At Watt he sneered, and all the rest,

VICAR: 'My Herland engine is the best!'

SIR J: Trevithick saw no-one above
Himself in steam, his life-long-love,
And no doubt thought, unconsciously

VICAR: 'Just one last blow before I flee'.

SIR J: He challenged Woolf, he challenged Watt,

LADY J: He challenged God to call a stop.

VICAR: He challenged steam, he challenged fire,

SIR J: The strength of iron –

LADY J: - against desire.

VICAR: A Plunger-Pole Puffer, with
Two Cornish Boilers linked to give
The pressure to drive the machine:

SIR J: One hundred and fifty pounds of steam!

ALL: Friends and foes thought he'd gone mad

VICAR: And he behaved as though he had.
Materials did not exist,
To build an engine such as this.

LADY J: At Herland Mine they built in strife,
And pieces of Trevithick's life;
And when the engine was complete,
Even that victory was defeat.

LADY J: He challenged hope–

SIR J: He challenged law–

VICAR: He challenged God to say 'no more'!

LADY J: He challenged wife–

SIR J: He challenged friend–

ALL: The desperation of the end.

THE ENGINE RUNS. DRUMS, BLUE FIRE AND SMOKE. THEN SILENCE.

LADY J: Trevithick, father of the train,
Was driven from his home by steam
The first of all the Cousin Jacks to go.
In future days, the trains would come
With economics to each home
And turn them into Cornish caves.
Driven overseas by hunger
When the mines could work no longer
The Cornish folk embraced their brother.

SCENE: ENTER UVILLÉ.

ENTER UVILLÉ (SIR J). HE IS AN ATTRACTIVE BUT INSANE SOUTH AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN.

UVILLÉ: (DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE, WITH MUSIC) I'm the ghost of
Uvillé, Swiss emigre;
I own a silver mine down in Peru.
Now I have come, over to Brum (i.e. Birmingham)
ln order to pull off a business coup.
But what a blow! James Watt says no!
Steam engines will not work in the Andes.
We thought to dig for siller,
'Mongst the llama and chinchilla,
But I must return with tail between my knees!

(SPOKEN) Oh woe! Buenas noches everybody. I am Don Francisco Uvillé and, with my partners Don Pedro Abadia and Don Jose Arismendi, I have bought the rights to dig for silver in the mines of the Incas, fourteen thousand feet up in the Peruvian Andes. But the mines are flooded: what can we do? Aha, I have it. Don Francisco Uvillé has the answer! Everyone has heard of the great James Watt and his marvellous steam pumps, no? So I embark on a great ship to come and seek him out in his works at Soho, Birmingham. Four months I sailed, and I arrived in London. Immediately, I find Soho–but alas, it is the wrong Soho so, pausing only for a fortnight or two, I hurried to the lovely Black Country.

But then–calamity! James Watt tells me that because atmospheric pressure is so small up in the mountains, his engines will not work. Also, the parts are so heavy that they could not be carried by the little donkeys which are the only means of transporting them the 160 mountainous miles beyond Lima. Alas, so much for the wealth of all the lncas!

IN TIME TO MUSIC:

I return to London, my mission undone,
I went out for a walk through Fitzroy Square.

In a shop window–Oh bravissimo!
A little model engine, I declare!
Give it to me, quick! Who's this Trevithick,
You tell me has designed this thing of steam?
Send him a communiqué,
That I come, Great Uvillé!
To lead him to his nightmare in my dream....

LAUGHS NASTILY AND MADLY.

(SPOKEN) See you later. Shhhh....

SCENE: UVILLÉ AND TREVITHICK

LADY J: However, Uvillé did not travel directly to Cornwall to see Trevithick: he first wanted to try the High-pressure steam engine at altitude. So he bought the little model for 20 guineas, took ship for Lima and carried the engine on the back of a mule over the mountains to Cerro de Pasco. It worked there beautifully.

SIR J: Of course.

LADY J: I beg your pardon?

SIR J: Of course. It's all quite simple. The Watt engine would not run up there because it works using atmospheric pressure. Atmospheric pressure is much less at fourteen thousand feet. But the metal and water resisting the engine will still weigh the same. Whereas Trevithick's High-pressure steam boiler would produce the same pressure wherever it was.

PAUSE.

VICAR: (TO AUDIENCE) Did you get that? Never mind, Sir John. Satisfied that this was the engine for him, Uvillé finally set off for Cornwall. There he met and broached the scheme to Trevithick and, of course, it was exactly the sort of hare-brained enterprise to by-pass the more objective parts of his intellect and make straight for the all-powerful imagination. Trevithick was hooked.

SIR J: He sank everything into a scheme based in mountainous and trackless wastes on a continent in a state of political collapse following Spain's conquest by Napoleon. 'El Libertador', Simon Bolivar, was pledged to liberate the whole of South America from imperialism.

LADY J: And in October 1816, Richard Trevithick set sail for this morass—believing everything Uvillé had told him—as if to take up a contract just beyond the Tamar. Unfortunately, the guiding light, the mastermind of the silver mines of Cerro de Pasco was completely and utterly mad.

SCENE: SOUTH AMERICAN ADVENTURE–1.

LIGHTS DOWN.

LADY J. AND VICAR ENTER AS MASTER AND BOATSWAIN.

MASTER: Boatswain!

BOATSWAIN: Here master: what cheer?

MASTER: Good, speak to the mariners: fall to 't, yarely, ere we run ourselves aground: bestir, bestir.

BOATSWAIN: Heigh, my hearts! cheerly, cheerly my hearts! Take in the topsail. Tend to the master's whistle. Blow, till thou burst thy wind, if room enough!

ENTER SIR J. HE CLIMBS ABOARD THE BOAT (*A CHAIR*).

SIR J: The whaler 'Asp' set sail from Penzance on October 20th,1816. Four long months they sailed, dropping anchor in Callao Bay on February 17th, 1817. Awaiting the Viceroy's order to disembark, Captain Dick stood on deck and admired the 'stupendous Andes, which, far higher than the clouds, seemed like the boundary of the world'.

BOATSWAIN AND MASTER FORM A GUARD OF HONOUR AND PLAY MUSIC.

Trevithick was welcomed in Lima like a conquering hero. Church bells rang, a guard of honour assembled, and his horse was shod with the finest silver. The richest and most influential men in Peru greeted the Cornishman with a new agreement to extend the workings of the mine on a grand scale. Very soon, under Trevithick's supervision, the machinery at Pasco was put in good order. Trevithick was hailed as a saviour.

ALL: Viva Don Ricardo Trevithick. Viva! Viva!

EXIT SIR J.

MASTER: (WHISPERS TO AUDIENCE) But very soon conspiracy reared its ugly head in the form of Francisco Uvillé and the lawyer, William Page.

BOATSWAIN: Jealous of the enthusiasm that greeted Trevithick and his success in the Pasco mines, the gruesome twosome planned to dispose of the Cornishman now the mines were in good order.

MASTER: Silently, Uvillé plotted–

BOATSWAIN: First, obstacles were put in Trevithick's way to prevent him from running the Pasco mines smoothly.

MASTER: Then, vile, ungodly rumours were spread concerning Captain Dick's honesty and moral certainty.

BOATSWAIN: The major shareholders demanded answers to these questions.

MASTER: 'Has Don Ricardo got his fingers in the till?' they asked.

BOATSWAIN: 'Is Don Ricardo batting on a sticky wicket?' they wondered.

MASTER: But little did they knew of the twisted thoughts flooding the mind of Francisco Uvillé!

THEY PLAY UVILLÉ'S TUNE.

ENTER THE GHOST OF UVILLÉ.

UVILLÉ (DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE WITH MUSIC): My plan was very simple, my plan was very smart
I would dispose of Captain Dick once and for all.
Having worked up his temper since I arrived in September
It was clear he was ready for a brawl.
So I sent him to Sierra–the Peruvian Riviera
Prospecting for minerals as he went.
Along went a guide and two men by his side
Named Judson and Watson, from Kent.

(OVER MUSIC) Unknown to the gringos the guide was my trusty eunuch slave who had orders to dispose of the engineer. Along the mountain passes of Peru a traveller could encounter all kinds of bandits and undesirables. It was a great pity to have to kill such an eminent man as Don Ricardo Trevithick, but you must understand, a man such as myself cannot live on lire alone. I needed complete control of the Pasco mines. But, as you will hear, things did not go according to plan!

(DRAMATIC MONOLGUE WITH MUSIC)
That night as they slept beneath the silvery stars
My slave carried out the dirty deed!
He silently crept to where the men slept
And crushed their tender heads with great speed.
But only two skulls went 'crack', so my eunuch went back
To gaze upon Trevithick's bloody head—
But the bed wasn't slept in—he'd gone off prospectin'
My slave had squashed a pasty instead!

END OF MUSIC.

The fool! Trevithick had managed to escape the clutches of Francisco Uvillé this time, but it seemed that fate would not be so kind again. Growing opposition to Spanish colonial rule reached open manifestation in Peru just after Don Ricardo's arrival. The Spanish army was being routed in all parts of the country by the rebels. So, when Trevithick returned to the Pasco mines he was met not by the wrath of Francisco Uvillé, but by the Marauding Nationalist Forces.

ENTER LADY J. AS THE MARAUDING NATIONALIST FORCES (MNF).

SHE IS PULLING A TROLLEY. ON THE TROLLEY SOMETHING IS COVERED BY A SHEET.

MARAUDING NATIONALIST FORCES: Buenos noches, señor.

UVILLÉ: Do I know you?

MNF: I'm the Marauding Nationalist Forces, señor.

UVILLÉ: Of course.

MNF: I've just been in a great battle, señor, at the Pasco mines. We've been on the march all day, señor. My feet are killing me!

UVILLÉ: What is it you are pulling?

MNF: It's a bit of Don Ricardo Trevithick's pumping engine, señor.

UVILLÉ: What?

MNF: I'm going to keep it, señor–as a souvenir.

UVILLÉ: A souvenir?

MNF: Si, señor. After we defeated the Spanish Army at Pasco, we smashed all the machines up and threw the bits down the mine shaft. But luckily I managed to save this bit to take back home to mi mamá y papá.

UVILLÉ: My beautiful machines....

MNF: You see, señor, my mamá is very old–not steady on her legs–so I say to myself 'Rodrigo,' I say, 'Your mama needs a push-chair.' And then, I....

UVILLÉ IS CRYING.

Er, señor. You are suddenly down-in-the-dumps, señor. If you would like a bit of pumping engine too, señor, I can give you some of mine.

UVILLÉ: You do not understand. I was a shareholder in the Pasco mines. If it was not for me Don Ricardo Trevithick's beautiful machines

would never have been seen in Peru. It was me who sent to that strange little place known as Kernow in search of pumping engines. But did I get any thanks? Not a sausage, my friend. And if it wasn't for that buffoon of a eunuch and an unreliable ticker, I could have taken complete control of the mines at Pasco. I could have changed the course of history! I would be remembered as a great man. A great, great man. But will I be remembered now, señor? Will men build statues of Francisco Uvillé? No, my friend. Once I could have owned the richest silver mine in the world, but now it is too late. I am consigned to oblivion.

MNF: Oh dear, señor.

UVILLÉ: Oh dear! Is that all you can say? Oh dear? You stupid revolutionaries mess everything up. You know nothing. And now you have destroyed the Pasco mines!

MNF: We had to, señor, to halt the Spanish war effort.

UVILLÉ: Who is in charge? I wish to make a formal complaint to your commanding officer. Where is he?

MNF: Señor, my commanding officer is a great man, known throughout the Americas as 'El Libertador'. I must warn you that he will not take kindly to your protesting about a mine or two while he is shaping the American continent.

UVILLÉ: I don't care what his name is! Where is he?

MNF: Very well, señor. I introduce you to 'El Libertador' himself–Simon Bolivar!

MNF REMOVES SHEET TO REVEAL BOLIVAR SITTING ON A CHAIR, THINKING. HE IS SMOKING A HUGE CIGAR AND WEARING A GREEN COMBAT HAT.

UVILLÉ: You are Simon Bolivar?

BOLIVAR: No, Bolivar isn't my real name. I'm just breaking it in for a friend.

UVILLÉ: I am the ghost of Francisco Uvillé.

BOLIVAR: Pleased to meet you, Señor Uvillé. I never forget a face, but in your case I'll make an exception.

BOLIVAR TAKES UVILLÉ'S PULSE.

BOLIVAR: He's either dead or my watch has stopped.

MNF: Señor Uvillé died in 1817, before the battle at Pasco. He was an acquaintance of Don Ricardo Trevithick.

BOLIVAR: Trevithick? Isn't he the one that worked his way up from nothing to a state of extreme poverty?

MNF: You remember. After the battle at Pasco you forced him into your army.

BOLIVAR: Military Intelligence is a contradiction in terms.

UVILLÉ: What I demand to know is, why did you smash up all the machines?

BOLIVAR: What's a few thousand dollars to a man like you? Mere chicken feed. A poultry matter.

UVILLÉ: But you destroyed the mining industry in Pasco! The economic base of the whole region!

BOLIVAR: You know, you haven't stopped talking since I arrived. You must have been vaccinated with a phonograph needle.

UVILLÉ: Señor, your manners are intolerable! I refer you to the book 'Etiquette for Beginners' by Carlos Santiago.

UVILLÉ PRODUCES A BOOK FROM HIS JACKET POCKET AND HANDS IT TO BOLIVAR.

BOLIVAR: My publisher sent it to me to review, but I was so long writing my review I never got around to reading the book.

MNF: Señor Uvillé tried to kill Don Ricardo Trevithick.

BOLIVAR: I thought about killing him too, but I had a change of heart. Lot of good that did me. I've still got the same face.

UVILLÉ: This is impossible!

BOLIVAR STANDS AND TAKES UVILLÉ'S UMBRELLA.

BOLIVAR: That's what I thought, so you know what I did? I told him to invent me a carbine, because my old peashooter wasn't worth the lead I was feeding it on.

BOLIVAR FIRES THE UMRELLA AS IF IT WAS A GUN. WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A BIRD FALLING FROM THE SKY.

(TO AUDIENCE) That'll do nicely!

MNF: But even a new carbine didn't stop the Royalists overrunning the Pasco mines again!

MNF SEIZES THE UMRELLA AND POINTS IT AT UVILLÉ.

UVILLÉ PUTS HIS HANDS UP.

BOLIVAR (TO UVILLÉ): I blame his parents.

PAUSE. UVILLÉ REGAINS HIS COMPOSURE.

At which point our friend, Senor Trevithick, hop-hoodled it to Chile and made a fortune recovering brass canons for the government. Which reminds me–has anybody lost a glass eye?

BOLIVAR TAKES A MARBLE OUT OF HIS POCKET.

UVILLÉ AND MNF CHECK THEIR EYEBALLS.

MNF: Trevithick could have retired a happy man with all the lire he made in Chile, but he lost the lot pearl fishing in Panama.

BOLIVAR: Is that where she is? The last time I went fishing for Pearl she told me I was using the wrong bait.

UVILLÉ (TO MNF): What happened then?

BOLIVAR: Wouldn't you like to know!

UVILLÉ: What happened to Trevithick!

BOLIVAR: Oh, him. His luck really ran out. He teamed up with a Scot named Gerard.

MNF WALKS ROUND UVILLÉ AND BOLIVAR AND STANDS BETWEEN THEM, PUTS ON A TARTAN HAT.

MNF/GERARD: (BROAD SCOTTISH ACCENT) How ya doin', Jimmy? Fancy a wee dram at ma place?

UVILLÉ AND BOLIVAR LOOK ON IN HORROR.

BOLIVAR: I think this is where we get off!

EXIT BOLIVAR AND UVILLÉ.

SCENE: FURTHER ADVENTURES IN SOUTH AMERICA

GERARD: (TO AUDIENCE) Well, that seems to have seen them Charlies off alright. My name's Gerard, by the way—James Gerard. Now you may be wondering what a wee Scot like masel is doin' in a place like Peru. Well, I could have done worse, I suppose. I could have ended up in Bognor Regis! Do you like the exotic palm trees? £3.99 from Trago Mills!

What happened was, it all started when I took a fancy to one of the Macgregor lassies. Now in Lanarkshire, where I'm from, we Gerards and them Macgregors are bitter enemies–I don't know why; I think ma great-grandaddy was an Aberdeen fan or somethin'–so ma Dad didn't take kindly to me knockin' about with the opposition, if you see what I mean. So he says: 'Look. It's either the Macgregor girl or I cut off your inheritance' and bein' the cocky wee laddie I was I took the Macgregor girl—which was a big mistake, because she ran off with the milkman. So, without a penny in ma sporran I takes off and ended up as a trader on the Pacific coast. After a wee bout of heavy drinking and seven or eight wives later I met up with Captain Dick, god bless him. We had a whale of a time poking around the silver mines in Costa Rica and bought the mining rights for seventeen cases of Johnny Walker. But the problem was the mines were stuck at the

top of this huge plateau, so me and Dickie decided to make our way back to London to rustle up a wee bit of capital investment. Well, it was a long ride from Peru and I didn't find the prospect of sailing round Cape Horn very appealing, so we decided to hitch, and what a joyful experience that was! Not only was there me, Dick and ma trusty manservant, there were these two little horrors on their way to public school named Montague. I said I'd see 'em safely back in London for £650–but I ain't kiddin' you, it was a close run thing. Where are they? Hey, Montagues—get over here!

ENTER VICAR AND SIR J. AS THE MONTAGUE TWINS. THEY ARE IDENTICALLY DRESSED.

GERARD: I mean, just look at the state of that! I can't tell 'em one from the other, so I called this one Montague One and this one Montague Two; or was it this one Montague One... Never mind! Take it away, boys!

THE TWINS PLAY GUITAR AND MARACAS–SONG: 'GERARD'S ISTHMUS TANGO'.

GERARD (SINGS): Through the swamp and dark forest we did run
Not to fear! Hope is near–there's the sun!
We draw closer, but too late–it's out of bounds
Don't close the door! All we want is a few pounds!
So you make us crawl an inch, we crawl a mile
Drag our dignity in tatters all the while
Beg for cash–spare a penny, it's OK
Interest rates will pay you more and more each day
We build a raft, all for money–no mistake
Eat your fill—we want a slice of Christmas cake
Don't be mean, we can all accumulate
A bag of pennies, serve them on a dinner plate
But the wind is getting stronger all the while
And the boys are getting hungry, they don't smile
We may not make it, then the silver will be lost
Merchant bankers everywhere will count the cost

INTER & DANCE

We eat monkeys by the score, we dress in rags
But don't worry–we can live on beer and fags
Cartagena is not far, that's where we'll go
If we're lucky and there's money to borrow
Just one chance is all we ask, is that too much?
For a lifetime of despair and rancid muck
In the distance I can hear my children cry
The rich have had a share, but why can't I?

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE: WELCOME HOME

LIGHTS UP. THE THREE HOSTS ARE A GENTEEL WELCOMING COMMITTEE. THEY WAVE UNION JACKS

LADY J: My Lords, Ladies and gentlemen of this our Great Britain; plus her Empire, including Cornwall and other territories overseas: today we are here to honour a great man, a famous man; a man who, in striving to lift himself from his humble beginnings in an industrial and distant part of the Country has in fact elevated himself from mere engineer to pioneer, a mountaineer of achievement; an Inventor whose name will ring down through the ages.

Yes, we are fortunate indeed, my Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, for today is an historic day. For today we have seen the first journey of this revolutionary steam-locomotive here on the Stockton and Darlington railway. It was a triumph for both its inventor and the whole of mankind and will guarantee fame everlasting and, of course, the pecuniary posterity of the great man we feast here today– in short, he's going to be bleeding rich.

So my Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you the father oi the steam locomotive– Mr George Stephenson!

ALL APPLAUD VIGOROUSLY, 'AT LAST' ETC. THEN STOP. DOUBLE TAKE.

ALL: George Stephenson?

LADY J: Yes, I bet you all thought that was the welcome awaiting Richard Trevithick on his return to Britain, didn't you? Some of you are still hoping for a happy ending. No. When George Stephenson heard himself described as the 'Father of the Steam Locomotive' or 'the first man to run a locomotive on rails', he didn't see fit to deny it, although he had himself watched Trevithick's Newcastle locomotive running on a track in 1805. But Stephenson, like Watt, was in the right place at the right time: Trevithick was always in the right place, but twenty or fifty or a hundred years too early.

The welcome which Trevithick received on his return to Cornwall was somewhat less substantial....

THREE BUSINESSMEN SPRAWL ON CHAIRS, DRUNK, SMOKING CIGARS. THEY ARE MEMBERS OF THE HUNTIN', SHOOTIN' AND FISHIN' SET. THEY DO A LOT OF SPITTING AND BELCHING.

1ST B (STANDS): As representatives of various business interests in Cornwall and other parts of Great Britain, we would like to cordially welcome you home to the Cornwall of your ancestors, Mister, er....

2ND B: Trelawney? Tregonnigie? Treworthal?

1ST B: Yes, Mr Tre-(ahem) back to his native Cornwall, to which reports of his wonderful exploits on the continent of, ah... have preceded him.

2ND B (STANDS): Yes. For you, Mr Tre-em-ah are to be thanked for the very existence of deep mining in Cornwall today. The legacy of your inventions has put new life into the Cornish mines and we estimate that we have benefitted to the tune of about half a million pounds.

ALL APPLAUD.

3RD B (STANDS): Yes! Now everywhere can be seen the high-pressure steam engine, each example based on your ideas. Your 'Strong Steam' has made every one of us rich–except you! We see that you are indeed a son of Cornwall. All you have left from your eleven years of wandering are these pitiful souvenirs:

HE PRODUCES A BAG. AS HE MENTIONS THE ARTICLES, HE TAKES THEM OUT AND PASSES THEM ALONG; THEY DISAPPEAR INTO BUSINESSMEN'S POCKETS. FINALLY, THE BAG ITSELF IS PASSED ALONG AND DROPPED ON THE FLOOR, EMPTY.

3RD B: A gold watch; a drawing compass; a magnetic compass and a pair of silver spurs.

1ST B: Much as we would like to, we cannot bring ourselves to pay the money owed by us to you as royalties for the use of your ideas, but we do have a jolly good scheme, don't we chaps?

2ND B: Yes: why don't you petition Parliament for a grant in recognition of your marvellous inventions? They might give you a bob or two. we'll give you an excellent reference, won't we boys?

1ST B & 3RD B: Yes, rather!

ALL: Hear hear! Hear hear! Hear hear hear hear...!

SCENE: THE MOTHER OF PARLIAMENTS

LADY J. DONS WIG AND BECOMES PARLIAMENTARY SPEAKER.

THEY CHANGE THEIR POSITIONS SO THAT SHE IS ABOVE AND BEYOND THE OTHER TWO, WHO STAND SIDE BY SIDE FACING AUDIENCE. MP 1 IS SIR J; MP 2 IS THE VICAR. A BRIGHT WHITE LIGHT SHINES UPWARDS ONTO THEIR FACES.

SPEAKER: Order! Order!

ALL: Hear hear hear...!

SPEAKER: Order!

ALL: Hearrrr…!

SPEAKER: Order! l can't hear myself speak!

MP 1: (CONSIDERS HIMSELF A GREAT ORATOR) Mr Speaker, it is my opinion that if the Right Honourable Gentleman the member for Eton and Oxford would just shut up, then you would be able to near yourself speak.

ALL: Hear hear!

MP 2: Mr Speaker: it is my opinion that if the Right Honourable member tor Harrow and Cambridge could hear himself speak, then he might persuade himself to shut up.

ALL: Hear hear!

SPEAKER: Shut up!

ALL: Hear hear!

MP 1: Resign!

THE OTHERS GLARE AT HIM.

MP 1: Sorry.

SPEAKER: Gentlemen, much as it grieves me to curtail the sophisticated debate which is such an integral part of our freedom-loving and caring Democracy, if we don't speed up, we'll still he here when the bars open. After all, this is Wednesday: the weekend starts here!

ALL: Hear hear hear hear!

SPEAKER: Now the last piece of Business on the order paper for today, Gentlemen, is a Petition to the House on behalf of one Richard Trevithick of Cornwall, inventor and engineer.

MP 1: Move reject!

MP 2: Aye. Hang him as a deterrent to the others. What's he done?

SPEAKER PRODUCES PIECE OF PAPER

SPEAKER: He's invented the railway locomotive –

MP 1: Absurd! That was George Stephenson. Even I know that.

SPEAKER: Iron shipping, steam cranes, water-pump engines, high pressure mine engines that saved the deep mining industry–

MP 2: Nonsense! Surely that was James Watt.

SPEAKER: Mr Trevithick writes in support of his petition: 'Past services that this cun-tree have resevved from my invenentions sins 1815 are acknowlej to be savvings in the mines sins I left off above £500,000 and that the pressent esixtence if the deep mines is ow-wing to my invenentions'. So much for the education of the masses.

MP 2: He must be really thick! Wonder how many A Levels he's got.

ALL LAUGH

SPEAKER: Mr Trevithick goes on to complain that he has been cheated out of certain payments owed to him by one William Sims on the orders of Sir Archibald Cotten, the owner of the United Mines.

MP 1: Mr Speaker, I feel that we must not let such a smear be directed at the good name of Sir Archibald Cotten who is a well-known industrialist and entrepreneur and is to be complimented on his enterprise and initiative.

ALL: Hear hear hear hear...!

SPEAKER: I must thank the Right Honourable Sir Archibald Cotten for that contribution.

MP 2: Well said, Archie!

SPEAKER: He goes on, about illness and swindlers, bad luck, 'the base uses of fortune'–I think someone must have written that bit for him– ... then he admits to being a bankrupt!

ALL: Oho!

SPEAKER: And to fighting with the liberation armies of Simon Bolivar!

ALL: Aha!

SPEAKER: And he asks us, in view of the major contribution made by high pressure steam to Britain's manufacturing capabilities to give him a grant of one hundred thousand pounds.

LONG PAUSE.

ALL LAUGH UPROARIOUSLY, THEN STOP AND LOOK UNEASY.)

MP 1: Does he have... friends?

MP 2: Does he have any... compromising knowledge?

MP 1: Does he own a newspaper?

MP 2: Don't be silly. We own all those.

MP 1: Oh yes. So we do.

SPEAKER: No.

MP 1: Well… fie to him then!

MP 2: Yes....fie. Hah!

THEY SNAP THEIR FINGERS DEFIANTLY AND INEXPERTLY.

MP 1: The man is poor.

MP 2: The man's a failure.

MP 1: This country cannot afford to reward failure.

MP 2: If we did, EVERYBODY would want to be a failure.

MP 1: Everybody would want to be poor.

MP 2: That's quite true! Why, I would go and work down the sewers tomorrow if I thought I might get rich by being poor.

MP 1: So would I!

MP 2: So would everyone. Who would want to sit here all day in the warm when one could be earning just as much wading in faeces?

ALL: Hear hear!

MP 1: Tell him to come back and ask for some money when he's rich. Remember every Englishman's birthright: the freedom to starve under the Law.

SPEAKER: He does point out that this house rewarded Cartwright for the invention of the power loom....

MP 1: Yes, but he's my uncle!

SPEAKER: And Compton for the Spinning Jenny.

MP 2: My father-in-law.

SPEAKER: And that in 1813 we gave £50,000 to John Palmer merely for improving the stagecoach, whereas Trevithick has actually invented the steam carriage.

MP 1: I resent that. Mr Palmer is a man of sound business principles.

ALL: Hear hear!

MP 1: We gave him £50,000: he gave us Directorships worth £5000 per year. What does Mr Trevithick have to compare with that in terms of entrepreneurial initiative?

SPEAKER: So what is our reply to Mr Trevithick?

ALL BLOW RASPBERRIES.

SPEAKER: The answer is No!

SCENE: TO THE END

VICAR, SIR J, LADY J SIT BEHIND TABLE.

VICAR: These things do not change, do they? The paradox of a moral code based on sales figures: because he is poor, he deserves no reward: for if he had merit, he would not be poor, would he? And as

he deserves no reward, he must remain poor and thus will forever remain unrewarded.

Those with power, ladies and gentlemen, I am afraid will only judge others by criteria which make the powerful shine; and this is true from the very top of the social tree down to the local Arts Council denying a poor struggling theatre company a living.

SIR J: (POINTEDLY) Thank you, Vicar.

LADY J: Anyway, Richard Trevithick was by no means finished yet, was he? No, of course not. Onward Christian Soldiers, is that not true Vicar?

SIR J That's the spirit. Right: (READS) After the rejection of the petition to Parliament there came the ball and chain pump, commissioned to drain the Zuyder Zee in Holland. In a very highly regarded report, Trevithick detailed the straightening of the Rhine and the building of dykes from the spoil.

ALL: But!

SIR J: On the eve of the prototype ball-and-chain pump's departure for Holland, the Directors of the controlling company quarrelled at a meeting in London. The pump was consigned to the scrapheap.

LADY J: Trevithick's closed-circuit steam engine for marine use was a major advance on the steamships of the time, which drew seawater for the engines and so had to be equipped with sails for use while salt was cleaned from the boilers during the course of a voyage. The vertical multi-tube boiler was also a condenser and super-heater combined. Although this system forms the basis of all modern steam installations, the Admiralty told Trevithick that they were not interested in his silly invention.

VICAR: In 1830 Richard Trevithick invented the storage heater. It was a small fire-tube boiler on wheels with a detachable flue: when the water was warm and the flue taken off, the heater could be positioned wherever it was desired and the heat output during the day controlled by an adjustable skirt. Some of these heaters were made, ornamented with brass.

SIR J: He invented a mounting for muzzle-loading ships' guns which used the force of the recoil to elevate the gun to a loading position. No interest.

VICAR: He toyed with the idea of inventing the refrigerator but received no encouragement so didn't bother.

LADY J: He contented himself instead with jet propulsion for ships operated by an internal reciprocating pump. There was no interest in that either.

VICAR: And so we come to Trevithick's Tower. Now–

SIR J: Ah yes, now before the Vicar gets you all in tears over that ridiculous monstrosity of his, this overgrown phallic symbol of a tower, I want you to hear my point of view.

VICAR HAS BEEN SHOUTED DOWN. HE IS ANNOYED.

SIR J ADVANCES TO THE FRONT OF THE STAGE. HE IS ANIMATED.

SIR J: Now, the reason for all this whining about the Fate of Richard Trevithick as far as I can see it is that he never achieved business success. Now, why not, eh? Well, as a rather successful businessman myself, I think I am in a position to tell you.

You see, Trevithick was not inventing these things for the marketplace: he was inventing them for Humanity. With a capital 'H'. Humanity. He was one of those people who believe that if they do all right by Humanity, Humanity will do all right by them. And what can be wrong with that? Well, I'll tell you: it's bloody stupid! What on earth is Humanity going to do with a machine? Has it any coal to heat the boilers? No. Has Humanity water to fill the tubes? Has Humanity a factory to put it in or a workforce to drive to serve the machine? No. No, it isn't Humanity that has these things. It is us businessmen that have these things, because they all cost money. Does Humanity have money? No, of course not. How can it? Look, I'll write Humanity a cheque: 'Pay Humanity the sum of one thousand pounds'. You see? No good at all. Humanity can't cash a cheque until Humanity gets

itself a bank account. It won't be any use working for the good of Humanity until it gets itself a little bit more organised.

Richard Trevithick should have forgotten about Humanity and worked for me, for the Entrepreneur! James Watt, he knew all about real Progress. Richard Trevithick, now why did he never think of getting off his backside and telling people that this London Road Locomotive is exactly what they need, I don't know, to give their wife on Mother's Day or something. You heard those whining workers, didn't you? Eh? Complaining that machinery should mean less work for everyone, a higher standard of living and so on; same old thing, heaven on Earth, tra-la. l mean, look at it this way: the inventor of the machine might want it that way, the people who work the machine might want it that way. You out there might want it that way for all I know. Most of you look drunk. But you are all forgetting about me. Yes, me! I mean, don't worry about me, I only paid for the thing, I bloody well own it! It's mine! I can do what I like with it. If one tenth the labour is required to make this new machine produce as much as the old one, then I sack the other nine and keep their wages for myself. Why not? It's my factory, so murr! Humanity: no money, no machines, no reward for Captain Dick; it's as simple as that. So as far as I'm concerned, you can take your Richard Trevithick and flush him down the toilet bowl of history. (HE SITS.)

PAUSE. LADY J CLAPS HALF-HEARTEDLY

LADY J: (AWKWARD) Well.... l am sure we are all most grateful to Sir John for his... interesting remarks. Do I take it that he is now actually opposed to the building of this remarkable memorial to Cap'n Dick?

SIR J: Yes I damn well am. Ridiculous waste of time and money.

LADY J: Ah, well... that is rather embarrassing. Still, I am sure that is something that Sir John and I will discuss at home. (ICY) At length....

However, we will continue with the next item on the Agenda, which calls on that most enthusiastic of supporters of the proposed construction of Trevithick's Tower on the City Hall site: the Reverend Gerald P. Green. (ATTEMPTS TO INITIATE A ROUND OF APPLAUSE.)

VICAR IS GLARING AT SIR JOHN AND HAS NOT HEARD.

LADY J: Ah...Vicar?

VICAR: What? Oh! Trevithick's Tower: I think it should be obvious to even the meanest intellect (DIRECTED POINTEDLY AT SIR J) that Richard Trevithick had already built a tower. He laid the foundations at school when he refused to allow his undoubted natural abilities to be channelled into the accepted way of doing things, and thereafter every year he built the tower higher, with stones of achievement: his youthful tenure on the post of mine engineer; his leadership of the Western mine captains in the war against Boulton & Watt; high pressure steam, the Road Carriages and Pen-y-daren. There was the tunnel scheme; the steam dredger; iron ships; the Cornish Engine and Cornish Boiler; and so on and so on: fighting with Simon Bolivar and all the strange late inventions that we've just been hearing about. That is a tower of achievement and a phenomenal one, you must agree.

A SCALE MODEL OF THE TOWER IS UNVEILED.

VICAR: (CONT'D) But no doubt, when it came to measuring his life as the shadows were drawing in, Richard Trevithick would mourn that there was no achievement in the material sense at all; not even a memorial in the minds of other people. He had no money. He lived now in Dartford in Kent, many miles from Cornwall, his home. When people saw a locomotive or an iron ship, or even a mine, did any think of him? No. And yet he knew that his was a greater life than that of Stephenson or James Watt, to both of whom, as years went by, would accrue glories that were rightfully Trevithick's.

So in spite of this tower of achievement, Old Cap'n Dick began to draw up plans for a physical Trevithick's Tower.

LADY J: (RECITES) This tower was designed by Trevithick in 1833, to commemorate the passing of the Reform Laws in 1832. It was to be one thousand feet high. Comparisons may be made with Nelson's Column at one hundred and eighty-five feet; and the Eiffel Tower, not built until 1887–89 and only nine hundred and eighty-five feet.

Trevithick's Tower features an ornamental building round the bottom and a forty-foot equestrian statue at the top.

SIR J: (READING) This remarkable imaginary edifice was to be built of fifteen hundred cast iron sections, each ten feet square and gilded. The weight of the tower, one hundred feet in diameter at the base and twelve feet at the top, would be six thousand tons. A steam engine at the top would raise the iron sections into place and, on the tower's completion, would supply power for compressed-air lifts; and I've never heard of anything so ludicrous in my entire life!

VICAR: Do you see it? Cast iron–the material that had shaped his life as surely as he had caused it to be shaped; and crowned with a steam engine, a high-pressure steam engine, as the tower that was Trevithick's life was crowned.

Sir John, his morality shaped solely by Market Forces, tells us that the whole idea was ludicrous; and perhaps it was. But more ludicrous is the undoubted fact that, had Trevithick's Tower been actually built, we would never have been here tonight.

SIR J: (Snorts.)

LADY J: Well, of course not Vicar. If it already existed, we would hardly need to collect money to build it, would we?

VICAR: If this ludicrous monstrosity had been built, Richard Trevithick would now be one of history's most famous men–but not for his real achievements, not for his real qualities, but for this vulgar Victorian display of them. That is the truth of history and society: the good book is wrong! The meek shall never inherit the earth as long as there are–architects.

On April the twenty second 1835, Trevithick died in his room at the Bull Inn, Dartford, at the age of sixty-two. The cause of death was pneumonia. His workmates at Hall's Steam Engine Works carried him to the burial ground of the Chapel of St Edmund, King and Martyr, and paid for a pauper's funeral. An attempt to raise money for a headstone failed and now the grave is lost.

And these ordinary manual workers, more aware of his worth than those making fortunes out of his inventions, did him one final service: they stood guard over his grave, to keep his corpse out of the hands of those ultimate practitioners of entrepreneurial initiative: the body-snatchers.

LADY J AND SIR J HAVE TAKEN POSITIONS BEHIND THE VICAR. NOW THEY BECOME A HEAVENLY CHOIR TO ACCOMPANY THE CLOSING SPEECH.

SIR J AND LADY J: (SING) Oooooh .....

VICAR: In 1872, one of Richard's sons, Francis Trevithick, published a biography of his father in two volumes, intending that it should dispel the unjust ignorance of the Cornish Giant's work. In this, the book was highly successful: a tablet to Richard's memory was erected in Dartford Parish Church; a memorial at Merthyr, the site of the Pen-y-daren railway; a tablet in Gower Street near the route of the London locomotive; a wonderful statue at Camborne, gazing up Beacon Hill; and, greatest honour of all: a memorial window in Westminster Abbey.

How much easier it is to honour the dead than to value the living.

There is a poet of whom you will all have heard, an almost exact contemporary of Trevithick and in some ways like him: William Blake. At the time Trevithick was preparing to run his locomotive up the Beacon at Camborne, Blake was writing the words with which we shall close this evening's performance. I am sure you will agree that the second verse could have been written with Richard Trevithick himself in mind: Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you–Jerusalem:

LADY J: (SINGS) And did those Feet in Ancient time,
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?
And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among those dark satanic mills?

ALL: (SING) Bring me my bow of burning gold;
Bring me my arrows of desire;
Bring me my spear–O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!
I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem,
ln England's green and pleasant land.

LADY J: And so we come to the end of tonight's meeting. Please do not forget to lodge your voting slip on the way out, and don't forget to record any little comments that you might like to make. Goodnight to you all, and please....

ALL: (SING) Don't let it happen to us....
Don't let it happen to us....
Well, ashes to ashes and dust to dust,
But don't let it happen to us.

THEY TIDY UP THEIR PAPERS, ARGUING

THE END

(Paul Farmer & Mark Kilburn 1986.)

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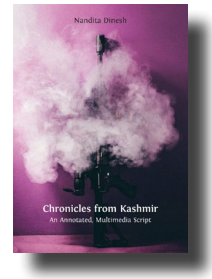

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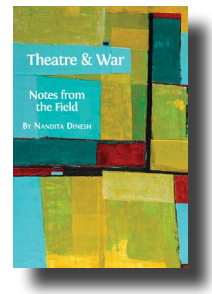

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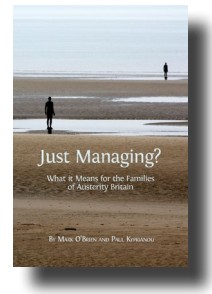

After the Miners' Strike

A39 and Cornish Political Theatre versus Thatcher's Britain. Volume 1

Paul Farmer

Farmer's account of A39's experimental political theatre practice in 1984–92 is an original and valuable contribution to the field of theatre and performance studies, especially political theatre history, agitprop, and working-class, socialist theatre. This is the first substantial work to account for the activities of A39 theatre, and one of the only texts looking in depth at political theatre in and about Cornwall.
Prof Rebecca Hillman, University of Exeter, author of the Preface

In this rich memoir, the first of two volumes, Paul Farmer traces the story of A39, the Cornish political theatre group he co-founded and ran from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s. Farmer offers a unique insight into A39's creation, operation, and artistic practice during a period of convulsive political and social change.

The reader is plunged into the national miners' strike and the collapse of Cornish tin mining, the impact of Thatcherism and 'Reaganomics', and the experience of touring Germany on the brink of reunification, alongside the influence on A39 of writers Bertolt Brecht, John McGrath and Keith Johnstone. Farmer, a former bus driver turned artistic director, details the theatre group's inception and development as it fought to break down social barriers, attract audiences, and survive with little more than a beaten-up Renault 12, a photocopier and two second-hand stage lights at its disposal: the book traces the progress from these raw materials to the development of an integrated community theatre practice for Cornwall.

Farmer's candour and humour enliven this unique insight into 1980s theatre and politics. It will appeal to anyone with an interest in theatre history, life in Cornwall, and the relationship between performance and society during a turbulent era.

As with all Open Book publications, this entire book is available to download for free on the publisher's website. Printed and digital editions, together with supplementary digital material, can also be found at http://www.openbookpublishers.com

Cover image: A39 in street theatre mode at Camborne Trevithick Day, 1985
Cover design by Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

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