

Ambiances

Environnement sensible, architecture et espace urbain

7 | 2021

Staging Atmospheres: Theatre and the Atmospheric Turn - Volume 2

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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/ambiances/4172>

ISSN: 2266-839X

Publisher:

Direction Générale des Patrimoines - DAPA - MCC, UMR 1563 - Ambiances Architectures Urbanités (AAU)

This text was automatically generated on 19 December 2021.

On Atmospherics: Staging Stormzy and nonbinary thinking

« *Atmospherics* » : Mise en scène de Stormzy et de la pensée non binaire

Rachel Hann

- 1 In the summer of 2019, the UK Grime artist Stormzy became the first Black British performer to headline the Glastonbury Festival¹. Influenced by American hip-hop and the 'UK Garage' scene of the late 1990s, 'Grime' is a British rap style that, as cultural studies scholar Lee Barron argues, 'is effectively ethnographic in nature: it is derived from participant observation in the most immediate, lived sense because its leitmotif is the streets' (Barron, 2013, p. 532). Cultural geographer Jon Anderson aptly summarized the performance at Glastonbury as 'Stormzy announcing his spatial affinity to the world' (Anderson, 2021, p. 12). Indeed, Anderson suggests that 'Stormzy foregrounded his cultural geographies from the get-go' (Anderson, 2021, p. 12). Namely, the technological place of the festival's main Pyramid Stage included projected street names of the South London estate Stormzy grew up in, amplified voice samples of Black Britishness being discussed in the national media, slogans on criminalization of young Black men, and a Black Union Jack flag emblazoned on a stab proof jacket. These performed cultural geographies were, however, enacted through the 'scenographic' techniques of light, haze, costume, sound, and stage constructions. Indeed, the combination of these scenographic techniques, it is argued here, when coupled with the broadcast space of the British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC) produced a set of political 'atmospherics' that were felt across the nation and beyond.
- 2 When approached as an exercise in staging 'atmospherics', I argue that Stormzy's performance signals the critical role scenographic tactics play in reinforcing, producing, and encountering political spatial affinities. Indeed, the opening of Stormzy's set includes a video projected onto two screens either side of the main stage with the American rapper Jay-Z at a planning meeting for the performance. Framed as an inspiration for the whole set, he invites Stormzy to ask 'how can I create a culture around this whole thing? Because culture moves the world' (TAWBOX, 2019). My aim for this article is to argue 'atmospherics' as a framework for teasing out how culture is

moved through means of atmospheres. It is also a proposal for a renewed alliance between cultural geography and scenography. The notion of atmospherics builds upon my previous proposal for 'scenographics'. As outlined in *Beyond Scenography* (Hann, 2019), scenographics extend beyond the disciplinary frame of scenography (and by implication, theatre) and are representative of a collection of place orientating traits that proceed from the stagecrafts of set, costume, lighting and sound design (such as wayfinding lights, feeling soundscapes, sensing appearance, or observing temporary structures). Scenographics are accordingly always plural; they stress the generative affordances that are produced from the combination of these stagecrafts, rather than a distinct stage strategy (to which I assign scenography). In disciplinary terms, I propose that 'Scenographics afford a means of specifying the 'stage-like' potentials of a situation that may otherwise be captured by notions of performativity and theatricality' (Hann, 2019, p. 28). It is the investigation of this stage-like-ness, or to be more precise, scenographic, quality of material cultures such as gardens or visual merchandising that my argument for scenographics has thus far been focused upon.

- 3 This article, however, marks my departure from focusing on scenographics as the analysis of the stage-like-ness of material cultures. Instead, I argue that scenographics are a methodology for investigating 'world' processes. Cultural geographer Derek McCormack observes a similar line of thought when suggesting that a 'stage or a set is a machine for producing the aesthetic scenographic affects of a world and, what is more, those who witness the production of these affects often know it: they are not dupes' (McCormack, 2017, p. 9). Similarly, I argue that 'Scenographics irritate the disciplined orders of world' (Hann, 2019, p. viii) and 'to speak of staging is to speak of how scenographics enact an 'othering' of place' (Hann, 2019, p. 32). Acts of staging atmospheres foreground the ontological slippages implied by otherings of place and the tools required to observe, analyze, and speculate competing orders of world. My proposal for atmospherics is offered as one tool for investigating the 'aesthetic scenographic affects of a world' and, in turn, also reframes scenographic practice as a machine for speculating possible worlds. McCormack's use of 'envelopment' is another such tool, where it is 'a process through which atmospheres are disclosed and become palpable as elemental conditions of experiences via different configurations of bodies, materials and devices' (McCormack, 2018, p. 5). To investigate envelopment, McCormack adopts the 'speculative device' of the balloon as a figure for 'doing atmospheric things', as 'objects, processes, or events that in some way disclose, generate, or intensify the condition of being enveloped by the element force of atmospheres' (McCormack, 2018, p. 10). For the purposes of this article, I have adopted the staging choices and affects produced and engineered by Stormzy's Glastonbury performance as a speculative device that *does* atmospheric things.
- 4 Ideas associated with 'new materialism' occupy a similar position to that of atmospherics. Indeed, atmospherics is adopted as a way of isolating the 'assemblages of assemblages' (DeLanda, 2016, p. 3), to use philosopher Manuel DeLanda's phrase, that form the agents or tactics of Stormzy's speculative device. Similarly, anthropologist Kathleen Stewart frames 'worlding' as a 'sensory aesthetics and lines of force and how such things come into sense already composed and generative and pulling matter and mind into a making' (Stewart, 2014, p. 119). I approach the scenographics of Stormzy's performance as generating a 'worlding envelope', which celebrated and fore-fronted Black British places, people, and narratives. Crucial to this is Haraway's articulation of *being with* or 'Becoming-with, not becoming is the name of the game; becoming-with is

how partners are [...] rendered capable' (Haraway 2016, p. 12). Foremost to this idea is that 'Natures, cultures, subjects and objects do not preexist their intertwined worldings' (Haraway, 2016, p. 13). Stages and staging as worlding envelopes privilege how atmospheres are encountered, performed, and represented *with* places, peoples, and things to focus on staging as an enacting, extending, or weaving of preexisting rhythms, politics, and imaginations. My argument for scenographics as a type of atmospherics affords focus to the tactical processes that were disclosed, generated, or intensified through the worlding envelope of Stormzy's headline act at Glastonbury.

- 5 Simply put, scenographics are tactical atmospherics. By tactical, I mean the designed conditions that repeat, project, and sustain a distinct feeling of world. This differentiation affords greater focus to tactical affects produced with/in atmospheres, or at least imagined ideas of tactical or causal relations, that are implied with McCormack's notion of envelopment as 'a process for sensing a condition; it is a process through which atmospheric things emerge whose form, shape, and duration depends upon their capacity to sense and respond to the atmospheres in which they are immersed' (McCormack, 2018, p. 5). McCormack frames the locality of atmospheres through the standpoint of envelopment as 'it is not restricted to any particular scale: it names a spacetime that can be relatively contained (in a room, for instance) or massively distributed (across crowds, cities, economics, or indeed planets)' (McCormack, 2018, p. 20). Scenographics, I propose, share this same spatial indeterminacy as scenographic orientations equally relate to the place othering methods of a stage environment, as well as the place orienting tactics of contrived world feelings (imagined communities, maps, spatial narratives, etc.). In that regard, the purpose of this article is to present my case for scenographics as a 'type' of atmospherics.
- 6 To investigate scenographics as a type of atmospherics, I introduce Stormzy's performance at the Glastonbury as an example of staging atmospherics in action. Born Michael Ebenazer Kwadjo Omari Owuo Jr. in 1993, Stormzy grew up in Norbury in South West London and has become a figurehead for Black British culture. His headline gig in 2019 at the Glastonbury festival in Somerset, South-West England was heralded as a 'historic performance' (McCormick, 2019) and a 'victory lap for black British culture' (Petridis, 2019a). Combined with the rapper's studentship offers for black students to attend university (see Berrington, 2018) and vocal defense of inequalities in the housing system following the Grenfell Tower Fire (see Lewis, 2020), Stormzy's performance for the Pyramid stage affirmed his status as an 'ambassador for black Britishness' (Stormzy in Myers, 2019). It also, in the words of the co-producer for the show, Chris "Bronski" Jablonski, 'brought theatre to grime' (Bronski in Cowan, 2020). My analysis on the staging for Stormzy's headlining act, first, gives further critical profile to the event in question and, second, considers the multiple scenographic tactics and techniques employed to affirm and affect the social, political, and cultural atmosphere produced. I then conclude with a challenge to the disciplining assumptions of binary aesthetic models of staging and draw out the benefits of approaching staging from the conceptual standpoint of atmospherics.

Staging Stormzy at Glastonbury

- 7 Developed after a five month lead-up, the creative team for Stormzy's set on the Pyramid stage was led by producers Amber Rimmel and Bronski, both of TAWBOX. The pair brought in lighting designer Tim Routledge and set designer Misty Buckley to collaborate in creating 'a stage that would make Stormzy "feel at home"' (Hitti, 2019). The idea of feeling 'at home' afforded a focus to the project from the outset. Rimmel outlines how 'our concept was to celebrate the culture of South London. We particularly drew inspiration from the architecture of East Croydon and gave that vision to Misty, who came up with a set featuring different levels – one that allowed us to have more performers on stage' (cited in Cowan, 2020). Influenced by Beyoncé's performance at Coachella 2018 with historically Black university marching bands, Stormzy set out to realise an equivalent cultural moment that, whereas Beyoncé had affirmed Black American culture, he would celebrate Black British culture all broadcast live on terrestrial television by the BBC.
- 8 Buckley's stage design was arguably the most physically ambitious to have been hosted on the main stage at Glastonbury Festival to date. Rimmel stated that it 'was definitely the biggest and heaviest set that has been on that Glastonbury stage, so we held our breath. We've certainly given them something to think about, as we've proved you can build huge sets on the Pyramid' (cited in Cowan, 2020). The representation of the brutalist architectures of Croydon along the backwall was reminiscent of the video designer Sam Pattinson's projected mapping of council estate houses onto Buckingham Palace for the Queen's Jubilee in 2012 (see Hayes, 2012). Indeed, Routledge had worked on major national events such as the London Olympics' opening ceremony and drew direct comparison to director Danny Boyle's representation of Britain as a 'green and pleasant land'; 'To some extent Danny Boyle brought a farm to East London and we took South London to a farm' (Routledge in Trendell, 2019). The merging of urban and rural feelings of place would be a signature feature of the show's overall atmospherics. It questioned the divisionary politics that situate places as near and far, home and foreign, local and global. It is these same categorization-based politics that the scenographics of Stormzy's performance sought to transgress.
- 9 The politics of the set (used here to reference the order of the music) were both explicit and open to interpretation. Bronski was keen to stress that 'if you noticed, Stormzy doesn't say one political thing out of his mouth. Not one' (cited in Cowan, 2020). The Grime artist had been clear from the outset that the stage would be shared with other Black artists to profile the scope and confidence of Black British culture. While the gospel choir reflected his own religious community, the decision to include the dance duo Mthuzeli November and Cira Robinson from Ballet Black further reinforced an underlying ambition to challenge stereotypes of what Black British culture looks and feels like. As part of the set, Stormzy also sampled an interview (see BBC Newsnight, 2017) with David Lammy MP on the injustices faced by young Black youths and their criminalization in a biased and disproportionate justice system (see Lammy, 2017 for full report). Journalist Naimah Archibald-Powell suggested that through this combination of Black voices, places, and bodies 'Stormzy has allowed our culture to believe; we can headline Glastonbury, be ballet dancers, go to Cambridge and excel anywhere we choose. Most importantly, we don't have to leave our culture behind to do it' (Archibald-Powell, 2019). Novelist Zadie Smith confirms the significance of Stormzy's

performance as representing the day 'when the hyphenated 'Black-British' would appear, to the English ear, as permanent and central a condition as 'African-American' (Smith, 2019). Consequently, the staging can be confidentially stated to be a conscious effort to re-locate, evoke and extend the feeling of being Black in 2019 Britain.

- 10 In terms of collaboration, Stormzy left most of the creative staging decisions to the design team. Bronski notes how the Grime artist 'is super collaborative as well as being super trusting. From meeting one, we were on the same page regarding the underlying concept of celebrating black British culture' (cited in Timms, 2020). The staging sought to amplify Black British voices, but also places and bodies in a manner that extended beyond the typical remit of a Glastonbury headliner. There was a concerted effort to adopt the broadcast media space afforded by a major international festival and tap into the 'atmosphere of a nation', as sport commentators often term it, to offer a positive celebration of Black British culture. 'Ultimately this performance was always going to be a celebration', notes Routledge, 'Not just a celebration of a big show but a celebration of the achievement in getting there, and also celebrating Stormzy's roots, his culture and all the highs and lows of that' (cited in Trendell, 2019). Routledge had previously collaborated with TAWBOX for grime artist Dave's 'Psychodrama' tour, which started from the premise that it is 'really hard to do anything moody these days because of bloody mobile phones' (Bronski in Yalcinkaya, 2019). Due to the light produced by the phones, the team had felt limited as it was difficult to 'sneak the artist in, bring up the lights and everything goes mad' (Bronski in Yalcinkaya, 2019). Their design for Dave's entrance involved two stage lifts that allowed the artist to emerge from the stage floor, a decision that was taken directly because of the phone screens present in the auditorium. For Stormzy, however, there was a greater focus on producing a feeling of community and the need to explicitly connect the places of South London with the nationally broadcast media space of Glastonbury.

Atmospherics and nonbinary thinking

- 11 The opening video with Jay-Z in many ways 'sets the scene' for Stormzy's set. Along with projections of the pair meeting with producers in a non-descript office either side of the main stage, Jay-Z's advice is writ large via white text projections on the unlit Pyramid stage itself. 'SO WHEN YOU STEP ON THAT STAGE / YOU'RE GONNA TO SEE IT / BECAUSE THEY ARE REALLY READY / THAT'S CULTURE' (TAWBOX, 2019). The phrase 'THAT'S CULTURE' is then repeated several times as part of a visual and sonic glitching of the recorded material. Stormzy's culture was already familiar. It was already latent within the broader political atmospheres of Britain. Jay-Z's advice amounts to adopting the heading gig as amplifier for that latency. Then the atmosphere changes. Pyrotechnics fire, an alarm sounds, red light washes flickers, a horizontal dotted projected lines scroll arounds the main stage. Stormzy is heard over the sound system: 'My name is Stormzy. My name is the problem [...] This is South London' (TAWBOX, 2019). This shifting between advice and declaration of intent is critical to understanding the atmospherics of Stormzy's set. It also points towards that role of scenographics in cultivating a feeling that something special, political, momentous is about to happen. Indeed, it is the familiarity of scenographics as tactical atmospherics, I argue, that Stormzy's performance strategically coopts for political affect.

- 12 The framework of atmospherics is offered as a conceptual lens for understanding stage atmospheres more generally. Indeed, stage atmospheres are familiar, if conceptually unwritten. Both theatre practitioners and scholars will, as a matter of course, refer to the atmosphere of a production with little direct recourse to what is being inferred. As an example, in the month of January 2020 alone there were five reviews published by London-based theatre reviewers that use the term.² Critics often employed this concept as a descriptor for scenography, whether video designer Enrique Munoz Jimenez and sound designer Dominic Brennan's 'atmospheric staging' (Goodall 2020) or set and costume designer Libby Watson's 'cosy atmosphere' (Harrison 2020). It is also employed in relationship to an implied directorial mood, where directors Nickie Miles-Wildin's 'atmosphere is bleak and confrontational' (Cunningham, 2020) or Bronagh Lagan's musical is 'soaked in atmosphere' (Chapwell, 2020). No further descriptors are provided as to what makes a stage atmosphere, for instance, cozy or bleak. Atmosphere in these journalistic contexts infers an all-encompassing combination of lighting, sound, set, and action that imparts a feeling or mood. It also points to a limited lexicon for articulating the tactics for crafting atmospherics.
- 13 In terms of theatre and performance studies, I argue that the indeterminate mixture of feelings, technologies, and places that give shape to staged atmospheres afford a timely lens for revisiting deep orthodoxies of theatrical practice. Yaron Shyldkrot (2019) and Katherine Graham (2020) embrace a similar reading of staged atmospheres in their discussion of haze and mood lighting in performance, respectively. Tom Cornford, building on Russian actor-director Michael Chekhov's (1891-1955) analysis of stage atmospheres, suggests that the 'atmospheres of a performance are thus a measure of the ways in which the feeling of an event-space affects and is affected by those who occupy it' (Cornford, 2021). Following these positions, I propose that in approaching acts of staging as a crafting of atmospherics this, in turn, lays the groundwork for investigating nonbinary stage aesthetics. To achieve this, I depart from this established, euro-centric, model of 'theatrical reality'. Indeed, my own history of theatre has been a history of negotiating binary divisions. Characters are distinct from actors, audiences listen to performers, and stages are ostensibly inside (interior, focused) and society is outside (exterior, diffuse). Philosopher Stanley Cavell (1926-2018) argued that this binary model was representative of an ontology of theatre, where stage action takes place beyond the constituted reality of its audience. Instead, I argue that a nonbinary approach to stage aesthetics re-orientates stage encounters as indeterminate worlding envelopes. Moreover, I suggest that scenographic techniques foreground the intuitive qualities of staged atmospheres and collapse binary divisions between subjectivities and objectivities, the observed and the observer, inside and outside.
- 14 Juliane Rebentisch offers a close reading of Cavell's stage ontology in *Aesthetics of Installation Art* (2012). The art theorist summarizes Cavell's approach to the stage as 'the distance between the spectators and characters indeed corresponds to the reifying distance separating us from the other when we are outside of the theatre' (Rebentisch, 2012, p. 29). Rebentisch goes on to suggest that Cavell proposed in 'a certain experience of theater, however, the theatrical structure of the ontological separation between the auditorium and the events of stage shifts to fulfil a different function, becoming the condition not of aesthetic distancing but instead of an experience of existential separateness from the other' (Rebentisch, 2012, p. 29). It is this existential separateness that is formative to models of binary thinking. In Cavell's model, this separateness is

first and foremost between the audience and ‘the drama’ (the plot, characters, and world of the play). He proposes that if an audience member were to interrupt the staging of a play by climbing onto the stage, they are merely intervening in the performers’ theatrical representation. The drama and its characters remain separated and unaffected by this intervention, as Cavell stated it is ‘only in this perception of them as separate from me that I make them present’ (Cavell, 1969, p. 338). The audience knows that the performers are acting, but still invest in the separate world of the play and, Cavell argues, this is only possible due to the innate separation between ‘reality’ and ‘fiction’, auditorium and stage, ‘self’ and ‘other’.

- 15 Cavell’s reading on the separateness of stage ontology is representative of numerous histories of philosophy that celebrate Cartesian thinking. Critical discussions of atmosphere transgress this position, first and foremost, in their conflating of the two pillars of binary aesthetics, the subjective and the objective. The subject (human) – object (world) binary has produced a system of aesthetic analysis that privileges categories above processes. Nonbinary thinking is adopted in this article to point to a set of theories and concepts that are incessantly agnostic to the notion of a boundary. Atmospheres are a prime example of a nonbinary concept. Philosopher Gernot Böhme has argued that atmospheres ‘indeterminate above all as regards their ontological status’ (Böhme, 1993, p. 114). Political geographer Ben Anderson notes that this ontological indeterminacy is crucial to how, what he terms, ‘affective atmospheres’ operate:

They are indeterminate with regard to the distinction between the subjective and objective. They mix together narrative and signifying elements and nonnarrative and asignifying elements. And they are impersonal in that they belong to collective situations and yet can be felt as intensely personal. On this account atmospheres are spatially discharged affective qualities that are autonomous from the bodies that they emerge from, enable and perish with. (Anderson, 2009, p. 80)

- 16 The convergence of counterpoints and learnt divisions of matter and air, material and immaterial, emotion and world, make the concept of atmosphere immediately applicable to an investigation of staging and nonbinary thinking. Böhme notes the mutual relations between these topics, where ‘atmospheres are involved wherever something is being staged, wherever design is a factor - and that now means: almost everywhere’ (Böhme, 2013, p. 2). While the umbrella label of ‘nonbinary’ is not generally aligned with the study of atmospheres, the purpose of this article is to further examine Böhme’s claim and focus down into the particulars of crafting atmospheres.
- 17 To return to McCormack’s position that a ‘stage or a set is a machine for producing the aesthetic scenographic affects of a world’ (McCormack, 2017, p. 9), the worlding capacity of scenographics was an overt condition of Stormzy’s performance. From the opening with Jay-Z to the remixing of Lammy’s reports on the criminalization of young Black men, the felt affects of the set’s atmospherics were cumulative in bringing forth a political attunement to Black Britishness at the national level. Anthropologist Arturo Escobar would term this attunement as ‘pluriversal’. Escobar proposes that ‘pluriverse refers to the idea of multiple worlds but also to the idea of life as limitless flow’ (Escobar, 2020, p. 26). Escobar calls into question the ‘Cartesian license’ that ‘not only placed “man” on the highest rung of the ladder of being but led science to investigate reality by separating mind and matter, body and soul, and life and nonlife’ (Escobar, 2017, p. 81). Pluriversal ideas and practices seek to reimagine world feelings beyond the

philosophical projects of the Global North and, in that regard, afford a route to decolonizing akin to the work of Bonaventura de Sousa Santos on Global South epistemologies:

The epistemologies of the South occupy the concept of the epistemology in order to resignify it as an instrument for interrupting the dominant politics of knowledge. They are experiential epistemologies. There are epistemologies of the South only because, and to the extent that, there are epistemologies of the North. The epistemologies of the South exist today so that they will not be necessary someday (de Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 2)

- 18 De Sousa Santos stresses that Global South epistemologies are not seeking to replace those of the Global North, but rather augment and offer alternative ways of knowing that privilege experience over category. Likewise, epistemologies of the South are ‘nongeographical’ ‘composed of many epistemological souths having in common the fact that they are all knowledges born in struggles against capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy’ (de Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 1). Inclusive of the imperialism of Chinese and Japanese nation building activities as well as Euro-centricity, the overall objective of Global South epistemologies is to offer tools for observing the claims of Global North philosophies of world and challenging the narrative that there is no alternative (to globalization, neoliberalism, etc.).
- 19 In terms of nonbinary thinking, pluriversal thinking accounts for a range of nonbinary practices and experience, not least gender. Pluriversal approaches directly acknowledge binary gender as a product of Global North ontologies. Maria Lugones observes how strict categories of gender were imposed and policed by colonial powers, where:
- [the] heterosexualist patriarchy has been an ahistorical framework of analysis. To understand the relation of the birth of the colonial/modern gender system to the birth of global colonial capitalism—with the centrality of the coloniality of power to that system of global power—is to understand our present organization of life anew. (Lugones, 2007, p. 187)
- 20 Lugones instead argues that an ethos of ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ was forced upon pre-colonial social arrangements, through linguistic and economic subjugations of colonial powers. Likewise, the dualistic model of gender, with only two points of variance, is challenged by concepts such as ‘two-spirited’ (Indigenous North Americans), ‘Chibados’ (Ndongo), ‘Hijra’ (Indian subcontinent) or ‘Māhū’ (Hawaiian). Escobar suggests that these gender variant concepts are reflective of pre-colonial forms of thinking that align with pluriversal models of experience. They also point towards the underlying ethos of pluriversal thinking, where ‘Another world is possible’ (Escobar, 2017, p. 15) beyond colonial ontologies and binary models of experience. Correspondingly, pluriversal thinking stresses how models of binary thinking produce definitive categories of experience that impact upon all aspects of a culture; from gender to knowledge, social value to ecological awareness. Whether challenging world narratives or reconsidering gender as process-based and generative (rather than definitive), pluriversal design is an act of speculating arrangements that alter the conditions of ‘the possible’. Consequently, pluriversal thinking and the ontological indeterminacy of atmospheres are indicative of the usage of ‘nonbinary’ employed in this article. Whether in terms of gender or critical theory, nonbinary thinking encompasses an array of concepts that embrace models of experience that focus upon processes over categorization.

- 21 In terms of design and staging practices, Escobar draws upon current and historical Colombian design cultures to propose ‘we design our world, and our world designs us back – in short design designs’ (Escobar, 2017, p. 4). Describing this pluriversal relationship as an ontology of design or ‘ontological design’, Escobar suggests that:
- I present ontological design as a means to think about, and contribute to, the transition from the hegemony of modernity’s one-world ontology to a pluriverse of socionatural configurations; in this context, designs for the pluriverse becomes a tool for reimagining and reconstructing local worlds. (Escobar, 2017, p. 4)
- 22 Central to a pluriversal approach are social, spatial, or staged interventions that challenge the ‘One-World story’ of the Global North. Escobar argues that the ‘notion of a “One-World World” (OWW) is predicated on the West’s ability to arrogate to itself the right to be “the world” and to relegate all other worlds to its rules, to a state of subordination, or to nonexistence. It is thus an imperialist, colonial notion’ (Escobar, 2020, 14). Moreover, pluriversal thinking stresses the ‘also-politics’ that come with investigating multiple world narratives and resisting formal categorizations. Indeed, critical to Escobar’s argument for the pluriverse is that ‘another possible is possible’ (Escobar, 2020, 5), which challenges how the ‘Western realist episteme translates non-Western reals into beliefs’ (Escobar, 2020, 15). Ideas of ‘the possible’ are, in Escobar’s model, controlled and policed by Global North binary models of the real and the not real. As a lens for spatial and world imaginaries, atmospheres arguably transgress this colonial imaginary to practice ‘possible reals’. Pluriversal thinking affords a useful lens on framing atmosphere-led aesthetics as doing the labour of imagining world as always in process, in motion, and resisting fixed categories. As with concepts of assemblage and worlding, an aesthetic model of experience led by atmosphere focuses on the affects and effects generated by an event (whether technological, political, biological, or meteorological) and resists a binary imaginary of the ‘non-atmosphere’ or ‘not-atmosphere’. Atmospheric models of spatial imagination are affirmatively nonbinary and seek definition through their generative affects and transgress counter-category models of experience.
- 23 The scenographics for Stormzy’s performance of his track *Blinded by Your Grace, PT 2* (2017) evidence how atmospheres resist a binary counterpoint, such as not-atmosphere. The song is performed twice. Once as a lowkey duet with Coldplay’s Chris Martin and once with a full gospel choir, put together by the Black run talent agency The Music Confectionery. As a practicing Christian, Stormzy opens the set by stating ‘Glasto, we’re gonna go to church right now’. The duet with Martin is sat at a piano with the pair wearing white. It finishes and fades to blackout. Stormzy emerges in a purple spotlight. He sings the first few bars of the track. It fades to black again. Then the beat comes, the lights pulse a burnt orange colour to reveal a choir. Their spot-lit bodies provide a sort of sculptural form that stands out, as the lights slowly shift from purple to orange over the course of the track. The atmosphere of this sequence is bound to a scenographic rhythm, encountered through a tactical crafting of an intimate relationship with Martin, to foregrounding a Black, historically religious, community vocal practice. While both versions are at a slower tempo to the rest of the headlining set, the atmospherics enacted by the choir feel more directly in line with the politics and geographies signalled from the outset. Martin’s appearance does, however, fit the bill of a typical headliner at Glastonbury (which often have a special ‘guest’). The choir is arguably more pluriversal in its signalling of distinct world making practices, but

neither are without atmosphere. Both cultivated an atmosphere that, while different, obverse that culture, to return to Jay-Z's advice, is never without atmosphere.

The atmospheric of Stormzy

- 24 In practice, atmospheric are proposed as the phenomena that register upon human sensory matrices which, in turn, evokes feelings of atmosphere. Whether a shift in temperature, luminosity, scent, or pitch, atmospheric are the orientating affects of atmospheres. They also operate as the tactical politics that frame a place or event as welcoming, alien, caring, or disruptive. Accordingly, the atmospheric of Stormzy performance will always be multiple, as the event innately emerges with, apprehends, and projects preexisting atmospheres and narratives of expectation. For instance, journalist Alex Petridis observes the mixture of atmospheres in Stormzy's performance, where it was 'one of those elusive Glastonbury moments festivalgoers talk about so much, where the atmosphere and what is happening onstage collide to create something it is impossible to imagine happening anywhere else in the world' (Petridis, 2019a). Petridis statement, while typical of the possibly casual use of atmosphere within music journalism, points to a critical feature of atmospheric more generally. Rather than crafting a contrived aesthetics that positions the action of one group (performers) beyond the actions of another (audience), Petridis' comment on the merging or confluence of the two seemingly distinct atmospheres brings into the focus the argument of this article. Atmospheres are ever present. Humans are always with multiple levels or modalities of atmosphere. The provocation of atmospheric sits as a methodology for voicing the felt orientations of atmospheres that evoke the 'punctum', which Ronald Barthes describes as the 'element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me' (Barthes, 1980, 26). Indeed, the arising of particular felt affects and observed effects from the broader situation, or scene, of an atmosphere is to encounter the orientations, forces, or tactics of atmospheric. Yet, the atmospheric of Stormzy's performance, and the enveloping atmosphere of the festival at large, were generated through a range of tactics that are technological, political, or meteorological in conception. For the purposes of this article, it is assumed that at least some of these tactics can be described as being in some way 'scenographic'.
- 25 The most overt scenographic technique featured within the performance was the stage set itself. Hitti outlines how 'Sliding video doors and lighting effects were used to transform the stage from an "arty" pared-down backdrop to a prison-style interior, complete with projections of barbed wire fences' (Hitti, 2019). The 'transformational' qualities of scenography through representational techniques (projection, textures, colour palette) are a main stay of any scenographer's practice. The transitioning between distinct feelings of place was equally important to the team, as Bronski outlines 'Working with our incredible lighting designer, Tim Routledge, we often look to emphasise [Stormzy's] sculptural form. We can go from a dominant figure to a softer, charming figure with lighting, set and video' (Bronski in Timms, 2020). Indeed, these scene changes through a range of technological and material techniques would score atmospheric shifts in rhythm, tempo, and pace as Stormzy journeyed with his audience in staging Black Britishness. This 'scoring', in the rhythmic as well as highlighting sense, observes how the tactical qualities of scenographics are rendered legible for an audience. As Stewart notes of affects and scenes more generally, 'They can be "seen",

obtusely, in circuits and failed relays, in jumpy moves and the layer textures of a scene' (Stewart, 2007, p. 4). It is this quality that I describe as the 'irritant' of scenographics. Scenographics irritate the normative orders of place to enact temporary orientations that, as well as calling attend to their techniques (directed lights, bright costume, etc), also remain open to possibility. Stormzy's scenographics were tactically affirming the 'space' of Black Britishness through scenographic orientations that were atmospheric, both technically (mist, haze, sound, light, etc.) as well as politically (world making).

- 26 Overall, my mapping of scenographics and atmospherics is offered as a frame for isolating the ontological slippages and orientating tactics that shape broader narratives and experience of world:

Scenographics have the potential to enact speculative worlds that afford new insights into what it means to be worldly or how to be *with* worlding orientations. It is this potential that opens out the study and practice of scenography into the borderless disciplinary positions occupied by performance studies. (Hann, 2019, p. 136; emphasis in original)

- 27 In pluriversal terms, atmospherics are the staging of the conditions of the possible. Scenography cultivates a similar sense of the possible through tactical atmospherics, albeit within the politically contrived frame of theatre-making. If there is to be a hierarchy of terms, the orientating traits of atmospherics are presumably apolitical (or at least beyond human politics) whereas the othering orientations of scenographics imply (or are read to imply) causal political agents. Jon Anderson observes the world-making potential of Stormzy's performance, suggesting that '[r]egardless of intent, no one watching could be under any illusion: today, this place was Stormzy's – he had transformed the place of the stage into a platform for his culture' (Anderson, 2021, p. 13). Yet, Stormzy's performance had intent. It was designed to speak towards a nation and enact a feeling of Britishness that was ready, open, and coopted by and for Black culture. It is this tactical approach to the scenographics produced that make Stormzy's collaborations with TAWBOX an apt example for this article. They also signal that distinction between difference types of atmospherics, possibly defined by their relationship to intention (however framed, practiced, or indeed imagined).

- 28 Cultural geographer Kristen Simmons (2017) argument for 'settler atmospherics' offers a point of departure for these discussions on 'type'. Concerned most directly with indigenous land rights and the Standing Rock protests of 2016, Simmons stresses that settler atmospherics denote how 'antiblackness is as pervasive as the climate' (Simmons, 2017).

For indigenous nations, the imbrications of U.S. militarism, industrialism, and capitalism have always been palpably felt on indigenous lands and through indigenous bodies, from extraction to experimentation. The regimes of these foundational violences are the surrounds of settler atmospherics. (Simmons, 2017)

- 29 While this is inclusive of the weaponized 'atmoterror' – to use Peter Sloterdijk's (2009) term – of suppression tactics such as tear gas, Simmons proposes that 'settler atmospherics are the normative and necessary violences found in settlement—accruing, adapting, and constricting indigenous and black life in the U.S. settler state' (Simmons 2017). Moreover, the role atmospherics play in reinforcing, or suspending, a sense of the possible as an 'attunement to settler atmospherics can perpetuate further injury [...] It can be pathologized as anxiety, paranoia, or conspiracy in an atmosphere of uncertainty and half-knowing' (Simmons ,2017). Cornford implies a similar line of enquiry when arguing that to 'analyse institutional racism atmospherically, then, is to

analyse its objective operation and subjective consequences at an embodied level' (Cornford, 2021). The implied tactical or designed arrangements that produce settler atmospherics as a policing of 'the possible' is where the concept crosses over with the broader argument for scenographics. Critically, the usage of 'type' in this article points towards the crossover and merging of any category with other positions, orientations, and feelings. Whereas settler atmospherics are orientated towards relationships to nation state and histories of colonialism, scenographics account for the feeling of worldly possibilities that are reinforced through scenographic tactics (such as gesult design, maps, land borders, etc.). Atmospherics *are* everywhere. Scenographics are *potentially* everywhere.

30 Ballet Black's entrance during Stormzy's performance is an apt example of scenographics as a method for tactically irritating settler atmospherics (or racist atmospherics more generally). The stage area filled with oil-based fog from smoke-machines located in the wings. The music from the amplified speakers and collective cheering from the crowd masks the noise of the heater and fan mechanism, which converts the oil reserve into a thick cloud of vapor particles. There is a discernable shift in the pace and mood of the set. Ballet Black emerge from the vapor as it slowly settles as a layer of gas that slips out into the crowd and the wings. The rhythm of the scene is seemingly dictated by the gentle fall of the vapor. Textual light projections beam through the cloud and give context to the challenges faced by black dancers (namely explaining that 'caking' ballet shoes with makeup had, until recently, been necessary as they only came in white or pink). The scenographics of this scene change were designed to introduce a feeling of calm, reflection, and appreciation of Ballet Black's highly-trained, dancing bodies. Interestingly, the use of smoke, haze, and dry ice on stage is referred to by some professionals as 'atmospherics'. In framing scenographics as a type of atmospherics, I imply an understanding of staging processes as contrived technologies for producing atmospheres. While a select few may be aware of the technical processes, it is the knowledge that shifts in atmosphere are potentially causal to a human agent (a control box, etc.) that further frames the experience as designed (and safe). Yet, I propose, this designed atmosphere behaves beyond human imaginaries of 'control'. The preexisting prevailing winds and humidity of the meteorological atmosphere immediately becomes a part, and an agent, of this scenographic event. Pluriversal design invites the idea that atmospherics are produced *with* causal agents that, at the same time, both include and exceed human expectations of control.

31 As with McCormack's observations that those who encounter tactical scenographics 'are not dupes' (2017, p. 9), audiences are aware of the technological, meteorological, and political atmospherics that produce affective assemblages. Yet, the feeling produced by their proximity of *being with* these agents are as formative to atmospheric experience as the causal agents of the atmospheres themselves. For example, during Stormzy's set the audience are out in the open air. Albeit on a warm summer night, the wind was blowing, and the temperature had dropped. These nonhuman atmospherics were familiar, expected, and meteorological. Audiences 'read' these atmospherics as distinct from the scenographic atmospherics produced by the light and sound etc of the gig. Yet, if atmospheres are laden with potentially (of possible world feelings), atmospherics are the operational tactics through which this potentiality is felt, absorbed, and politicized. Meteorological atmospherics are not without politics. As with

scenographics, they are felt orientations that conflate emotion and proximally trump the classically conceived direct line between message and receiver (object and subject). Indeed, weather is not only incessant, but also incessantly felt with and through human bodies. Anthropologist Tim Ingold argues for, what is here termed a nonbinary, perspective between ‘human’ and ‘ground’:

A living, breathing body is at once a body-on-the-ground and a body-in-the-air. Earth and sky, then, are not components of an external environment with which the progressively ‘knowledged-up’ (socialized or enculturated) body interacts. They are rather regions of the body’s very existence, without which no knowing or remembering would be possible at all. (Ingold, 2010, p. 122)

- 32 Ingold’s nonbinary argument for bodies as ‘weather-worlds’ that are incessantly co-constructed within and through weather systems speaks to the indeterminacy of atmospheric more generally. If bodies are only known through their co-construction with ground (or world), then scenographics are usefully placed to test, subvert, and even re-order the politics of how place is framed by broader world narratives.
- 33 The scenographics of Stormzy’s staging explicitly acknowledged how places are filled with sensation, memory, and politics. In the opening set for *Know Me From* (2015), Stormzy invites the audience to reply to the lyric ‘Where do you know me from, where do you know me from?’ while images of tower blocks from South London estates in districts such as Norbury and East Croydon – including scrolling text of these place names and the street ‘Wooderson Close’ – are projected onto Buckley’s scaffold structure. Stormzy’s ambivalence to the distinction between the festival’s inside and the politics outside is overt, but no less atmospheric in its execution and intention. While it is easy to imagine that this atmosphere is contained, Stormzy’s performance underlines the porousness of contemporary political atmospheres. They can be felt at a distance. Atmospheres leak through persistence, reference and collective investment. Newspapers, television, social media, and imagery invite, or indeed demand, that the atmosphere of Stormzy’s performance is seen and felt way beyond the fields of rural Somerset. The scenographics of Stormzy’s performance can be re-read through the lens of what political commentators refer to as ‘optics’: the designed collision between the ‘right place’ for the ‘right message’ as iconified by the political photo-op. Stormzy’s ‘place’ at Glastonbury was felt long after the farm had returned to its focus on cows and dairy.
- 34 The condition of *being with* had been formative to the socially aware and community focused staging practices of Stormzy before the Glastonbury performance. TAWBOX had previously produced Stormzy’s 2017 gig at Brixton Academy, which ‘generally stuck to a more linear and simple stage set, then let the nature of the show do the theatre’ (Bronski in Hitti, 2019). The atmospheric of this performances held the room in a more intimate manner for the South London venue packed with fans, a raised stage with the audience close by, directional light, amplified sound, and some projected images on a backwall. Reviewer Graeme Virtue described the opening as ‘Stormzy r-a-tats on moody curtain-raiser First Things First, looming through a dense cloud of smoke and strobes’ (Virtue, 2017). The scenographics of this first collaboration with TAWBOX focused on establishing an interpersonal atmosphere that Stormzy’s fans had come to associate the rapper with. Another notable occasion was, upon the release of the studio album *Gang Signs & Prayer* (2017), Stormzy held a series of ‘pop up’ performances across London. As Archibald-Powell notes, ‘Fans filled Boxpark [a street food and ‘piazza’ style music venue] in Croydon and stood on tables and chairs to cheer

on one of their own who was dominating the charts, changing the course of the scene and making moves in music' (Archibald-Powell, 2019). At Boxpark and other small pop-up locations across London, peers, friends, and fans of Stormzy surrounded him as he played up to a handheld camera to further circulate the feeling of 'something happening', which the multi-site album launch sought to instill. The group rapped the lyrics along with Stormzy all on the same ground level. While Stormzy emerged as a figurehead for the lyrics, the community that surrounded him also owned the words. Of course, fans singing the lyrics while a star performs is a *de facto* quality of a main stage performance at major festival such as Glastonbury. However, the moving between the atmospheric of the impromptu gig's of 2017, where Stormzy's stage was informal and co-designed by the gathering of people that attended, to the formal architectures of Glastonbury's Pyramid stage represents an unusual background to the event.

- 35 Knowledge of the pre-conditions to Stormzy's appearance invites what Escobar would describe as an investigation of the conditions through which possible worlds are negotiated. I wish to invite the idea that the atmospheric of the pop-up gigs are also part of the atmospheric present at the Pyramid stage. The feelings of place, community, and a Black British confidence are all manifestly with Stormzy at Glastonbury. Indeed, there is one scene within the Glastonbury set where the atmospheric of a music video released on YouTube as part of the *Gangs Signs & Prayer* launch were 're-performed'. The video had Stormzy in the centre with a handheld camera (as-if-it-were a phone) recording him rapping surrounded by fans in a park outside. In particular, Stormzy wore an orange Adidas sweatsuit. For the re-performance, the stage starts in blackout. Princess K, a 10-year-old dancer, wearing that same orange sweatsuit appears in a spotlight. The projection on Buckley's set shifts to steel panel textures. Lights flicker with the beat of the arriving music. A girl's voice is heard over the speakers' rapping words from the nursery song 'Sticks and Stones'. Princess K then proceeds to breakdance and, symbolically, take centre stage 'as Stormzy'. This costumed Stormzy is then confronted with 15 dancers as the first bars of Stormzy's track *Return of the Rucksack* (2017) plays. Shirtless Stormzy with 'Trapstar' branded boxershorts showing under orange low-worn sweatpants enters and proceeds to rap. Princess K and Stormzy then 'face off' as if in an MC-come-dance battle all encircled by the 'crew' of the 15 dancers. Throughout this section images of text seemingly from a textbook are interlaced within Buckley's set structures. Stormzy also has a publishing house #Merky Books (in collaboration with Penguin Random House), which may be the source of the text, albeit uncited. #Merky Books is described as 'home to bold voices from untraditional spaces that are inclusive and intersectional' (Penguin, 2021). Terms such as 'sisterhood', 'beautiful', 'racism', 'education', 'particularly white', and 'Black queen' momentarily come into view in a text saturated projection sequence. The overall experience of these combined scenographic tactics cultivated a party atmosphere, if combative and hard won, that elevated Princess K, as a costumed Stormzy, as an intersectional example of a Black British confidence that was firmly and proudly cross-generational, gender aware, and publishing its own voices. The combative atmospheric produced, amplified, and shaped by the scenographics of the Pyramid Stage were felt as a moment of celebration, born in South London, nationwide.
- 36 While there are many differences between the atmospheric of the pop-up gigs and performances such as Princess K as a costumed Stormzy, one such difference is that staging technologies and scenographic tactics are explicitly acting on behalf of the

people that signal the ‘culture’ Stormzy’s is platforming. Crucial to this comparison is considering how these two different formats evoke atmospherics that exceed a strict focus on the time and space in which they seemingly first occurred. The people at Stormzy’s impromptu gigs in 2017 matter; they matter in terms of the political and cultural (in)justices and for which they joined with Stormzy to rap about. They matter as individuals whose past and future life experiences are complex, multifaced and irreducible to an act of representation. The atmospherics they engineered together are predicated on their co-presence in the committed act of being with each other and for each other in that moment. To accept that the technological environment of the Glastonbury stage shares atmospherics with the pop-up gig in a park, is to acknowledge that atmospherics exceeds the methods of production to sustain the felt *also-politics* of pluriversal thinking. The people in the video shared online at Boxpark in South London still feel themselves, their places, their home, on the stage with Stormzy in rural Somerset. The atmospherics of Stormzy’s mainstage appearance are built upon and with the atmospherics enacted in South London. They share something; an ethos, an imaginary, a sense of an emergent possible world feeling. It is this capacity to feel with an atmosphere, and that this process does not exhaust that atmosphere, which is critical to the ontological argument for atmospherics. Consequently, the indeterminacy, incompleteness, or ‘withdrawn object’ of atmospheres includes within in an inexhaustible invitation for ever more people, places, and things to share this state of envelopment.

- 37 The inexhaustibility of political atmospheres reflects a wider quality of indeterminacy. Atmospheres as a confluence of emotions, gases, motions, and materials means that (whether approached as an entity or event) they only shift from one compositional frame to another. Atmospheres dissipate into other atmospheres. They do not ‘disappear’. Atmospheres are always co-present: building upon past atmospheres and setting the conditional forces for future atmospheres. While based on the ‘weather-worlds’ of Ingold (2010) and the incessant bodily groundings of the meteorological, this understanding is not formative to our own planet’s atmosphere. For example, there is an ‘atmosphere’ in out-of-space insomuch that the lack of gases and gravitational forces generates its own formative atmospherics. There is undoubtedly a feeling of being beyond Earth. That feeling is produced through the atmospherics (whether knowledge of a bodies location, lack of air, or the reliance of technological systems for life preservation) that generates an atmosphere of risk, ambition, or even (inter)national pride. Whether the combative atmospherics of the MC-come-dance battle or the affirmed voices of a gospel choir, Stormzy’s set was always designed to be felt beyond Glastonbury as a lasting atmosphere. With Jay-Z’s advice as a starting point to ‘make culture’, the headlining gig was felt nationwide as an atmosphere that centred Blackness and South London cultures as a cornerstone of contemporary Britishness. Yet, it is the indeterminacy of this atmosphere, which resists categorization or even textual description in some ways. The same indeterminacy or uncertainties of how and what atmospherics *are* is also evident in the argument for scenographics. To categorially ‘define’ these traits or tactics is to shift the focus away from the condition of indeterminacy, which made them a matter of interest in this first instance.
- 38 Philosopher Graham Harman describes the attraction of indeterminacy as the ‘allure’ of elemental objects. McCormack highlights how Harman’s conception of allure is predicated on a ‘withdrawal’, where ‘Allure names the fact that an object (or entity) cannot present itself fully to another object: something always remains inaccessible to

whomever or whatever perceives or apprehends it' (McCormack, 2018, p. 56). The withdrawal of atmospheric allure underlines its resistance to categorical thinking. For instance, the atmospherics of Stormzy's performance are *also* scenographic, choreographic, dramaturgical, political, cultural, etc. To stress the also-politics of atmospheres is critical. These pluriversal or 'vital forces', to employ Jane Bennett's (2009) term, of atmospheres as an assemblage of seemingly highly determined things (scaffold, lanterns, cables, etc.) and highly undetermined things (emotions, reception, understanding, etc.) affords a renewed aesthetics of staging that focuses upon the generative affects of being with an event; or as Haraway (2016) would put it, *rendered capable*. Atmospherics invite a nonbinary spatial imaginary that stresses the complicity of 'others' in the experience of 'self'. While pluriversal thinking offers several routes for investigating the indeterminacy of self (as an example of binary thinking, mind-body, self-other), that goes beyond the scope of this article. The key takeaway is that atmospherics emerge *with* preexisting atmospherics. And, moreover, that the ever-present-ness of atmospheres affords a route to a pluriversal stage aesthetics that co-perform with all the complexities of preexisting cultures, spaces, and felt power relationships to place.

- 39 In conclusion, my argument for atmospherics is bound to a larger cultural shift towards practicing world otherwise. Atmospheres as a model for theatrical reality invite scholars, practitioners, and audiences to observe and even transgress the binary categories of Global North ontologies. The staging choices and broadcast space of Stormzy's performance at Glastonbury evidences a tactical awareness of the impact scenographics have upon a national psyche or narrative. This may be in relation to straightforward steps such as acknowledging that cultures are produced through/as atmospheres. It may also extend to rethinking how atmospheres are worlding envelopes of the possible. Atmospheres afford the conditions through which the possible happens. The staging Stormzy's headlining gig enacted an atmosphere that centred Black Britishness as part of the 'possible'. An atmosphere that celebrated and affirmed Black culture as part of a felt Britishness. Atmospheres such as Stormzy's set give political permission for feelings, relations, and actions to occur that otherwise, in other atmospheres, would be pushed aside or focus given to other contexts and world feelings. In this regard, the atmospheric turn in theatre may be as much a project of reimagining and challenging models of aesthetics as it is in recognizing the complexity of process-based ontologies of experience. Consequently, the argument for atmospherics is potentially a steppingstone towards a nonbinary aesthetics of staging that promotes an embrace of processes that exceed categorization. As with pluriversal design, atmospherics give volume to modes and methods of thinking beyond Global North orthodoxies of experience. Critically, Stormzy's performance highlighted the power of scenographics as tactically atmospheric. Scenographics offer a methodology for investigating atmospheres as a matrix of broader nonhuman agents, affects, techniques, politics, worldings, assemblages, and envelopes that are here described as atmospherics.

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NOTES

1. For matters of clarity, I encountered Stormzy's performance live streamed on BBC iPlayer along with 1.1m to 1.6m TV viewers respectively. The figures of iPlayer streams were 380,000. A recording of this is posted to TAWBOX's vimeo account: https://vimeo.com/350770344#=_
2. These were (in order of reference): *Shackleton and his Stowaway* at Park 90 Theatre (London) with video by Munoz Jimenez and sound by Brennan; *Once* at Ashcroft theatre, Fairfield Halls (London) with set and costume designed by Waston; *Cuttin' it* at Royal Exchange Studio Theatre (Manchester) with direction by Miles-Wildin; *Rags the Musical* at Park 200 (London) with direction by Lagan. *The Process* at the Bunker Theatre (London) reviewed by Daniel Perks (2020) also references 'distressing atmosphere' in relationship to Jean St Clair's acting.

ABSTRACTS

Taking the UK Grime artist Stormzy's performance at Glastonbury 2019 as a case study, this article investigates the tactics, technologies and processes revealed through the act of staging atmospheres. Process-based philosophies of experience, such as pluriversal design and worlding, are adopted to examine the ontologically 'nonbinary' perspectives that an atmosphere-led stage aesthetics invite. Methodologically, Stormzy's headlining act produced by TAXBOX and collaborators is analyzed through the geographer Derek McCormack's approach to speculative devices (such as balloons or stage sets) as 'doing atmospheric things'. This includes an analysis of stage atmospheres as indeterminate 'worlding envelopes' and the role of atmospherics in enacting, projecting, or affirming possible worlds for Black British culture. McCormack's proposal of atmospheric envelopment is extended into the study of theatre and performance by positioning 'scenographics' as a type of atmospherics. Put simply, this article offers an initial argument for considering the tactical affects of scenographics within the production of atmospherics. The article concludes with a challenge to category-based (binary) stage ontologies and argues the benefits of atmospherics as a process-based (nonbinary) approach to stage aesthetics.

En prenant comme étude de cas la performance de Stormzy, l'artiste britannique de Grime, à Glastonbury en 2019, cet article examine les tactiques, les technologies et les processus révélés par l'acte de mise en scène des atmosphères. Des philosophies de l'expérience basées sur le

processus, telles que le design pluriversel et le « faire-monde », sont adoptées pour examiner les perspectives ontologiques « non binaires » auxquelles invite une esthétique scénique fondée sur l'atmosphère. D'un point de vue méthodologique, le spectacle de Stormzy, produit par TAXBOX et ses collaborateurs, est analysé selon l'approche du géographe Derek McCormack, qui considère que les dispositifs spéculatifs (tels que les ballons de baudruche ou les décors de scène) produisent des « choses atmosphériques ». Cela inclut une analyse des atmosphères de scène en tant que « lieux d'ambiance » indéterminés et le rôle des « atmospherics » dans la mise en œuvre, la projection ou l'affirmation de mondes possibles pour la culture noire britannique. L'analyse de McCormack sur l'enveloppement atmosphérique est étendue à l'étude du théâtre et de la performance en positionnant la « scénographie » comme un type d'« atmospherics ». En d'autres termes, cet article offre un premier argument pour considérer les effets tactiques de la scénographie dans la production d'« atmospherics ». L'article se conclut par une remise en cause des ontologies de la scène fondées sur les catégories (binaires) et fait valoir les avantages d'une approche atmosphérique en tant qu'approche processuelle (non binaire) de l'esthétique de la scène.

INDEX

Keywords: atmosphere, Stormzy, scenographics, festival, performance, worlding, pluriversal design

Mots-clés: atmosphère, Stormzy, scénographie, festival, performance, « faire-monde, design pluriversel

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