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"That Sort of Fairy Tale's No Use in the New Victorian Age That's Coming": The Past as a Metaphor for the Present in Peter Nichols's *Poppy*

In 1982 the Royal Shakespeare Company premiered Peter Nichols's Poppy at London's Barbican Theatre. Using the past as a metaphor for the present, Poppy's historical depiction of the nineteenth century Opium Wars in China resonated strongly with the then Conservative government's economic policies and negotiations over Hong Kong's future. Poppy draws comparisons between the 'reigns' of Queen Victoria and Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and confronts audiences with Britain's colonial past. By way of theatrical juxtapositioning, the production criticises the present by evoking the past, wherein Nichols also uses contemporary references to 1980s politics and society to strengthen the metaphor. This article examines Nichols's use of British pantomime conventions to expose Britain's colonial history and considers the impact of history and Thatcher's three terms in government on the Half Moon Theatre's 1988 revival. The author argues that Poppy can be read as an outcry against, not only a celebration of Britain's colonial past, but also Thatcherism. Simon Sladen is Senior Curator of Modern and Contemporary Performance at the Victoria and Albert Museum and is recognised as one of the UK's leading experts on British Pantomime.

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Introduction

In 2011, to celebrate the Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) fiftieth anniversary, playwright Mark Ravenhill was invited to curate a weekend of readings in Stratford-upon-Avon. Given access to the RSC's catalogue of plays, he chose to present a double bill of titles from the 1980s: Peter Nichols's

pantomime-inspired *Poppy* (1983)[1] about the 19th Century Opium Wars and Doug Lucie's play *Fashion* (1987), a satire in which advertising companies compete for the contract to overhaul the Conservative Party's image pre-election. At first glance these two titles seem to bear no relationship to one another; however, Ravenhill's choice shows great insight into the plays' shared themes as they both actively respond to and are representative of the decade in which they premiered.

Growing up as a teenager during Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's government, it is no surprise that Ravenhill's early works such as *Shopping and Fucking* (1996) and *Some Explicit Polaroids* (1999) reflect and depict a generation affected by her policies. Indeed, his interest in exploring the impact and legacies of Thatcherism seem to have influenced his choice to programme *Poppy* and *Fashion* as a double bill: two titles that use different performance genres to criticise 1980s politics and society. Present at the readings, *Fashion* playwright Lucie reflected that both shows were not "trivial satires or mere agitprop", but rather "contemporary histories full of real characters who show us our modern predicament."[2] Although the link to Thatcherism is clear in *Fashion*, *Poppy* invites the audience to identify parallels between the 19th Century Opium Wars during Queen Victoria's reign and a return to Victorian values under Margaret Thatcher's premiership.

At its core, *Poppy* explores the economics of war, Britain's pursuit of superiority and how greed frequently drives exploitation and inequality through unfair trade. Describing Nichols's use of pantomime as "the perfect mechanism for telling a global economic story," Ravenhill's shared love of the genre may have also influenced his decision; he later reflected that "like all great popular theatre, [pantomime] speaks to an audience's need for justice."[3] When commissioned to write the Barbican's first Christmas family pantomime in 2006, Ravenhill decided to "pull [*Dick Whittington and his Cat*] back from being a Thatcherite story of greed and shopping, about a boy who came to London and was such a good City trader that he became the Mayor", and chose "to emphasise the greed of Alderman Fitzwarren and how he learns at the end to be less interested in money and more in humanity."[4] Such themes have always been prevalent in both British society and pantomime, with Nichols stating in 1982 that the "imperialist spectacle [pantomime] made for the Victorian mood" needed "new themes, stories and moods [and] new ironies" for the twentieth century.[5]

Previous scholarship on *Poppy* has interpreted the production as a piece of political theatre and is largely concerned with its definition as a pantomime, the way it presents the Opium Wars and how, in doing so, the show forces British audience members to confront history and their status as inheritors. W. B. Worthen discusses the practices of Bertolt Brecht and foregrounds performance as an ideological process, arguing that *Poppy* "dramatizes the continuity between the fictions of the stage and our own,"[6] while Richard Cave deconstructs pantomime to explore the nature of political propaganda and how *Poppy* "make us look at the familiar with fresh eyes."[7] Their work argues that, as a popular 19th

century performance form, contemporary pantomime continues to embody and disseminate the ideology of the Victorian period; however, they do not acknowledge the significance of specific contemporary references and cultural allusions that seek to root the production in the 1980s as an attack on Thatcherism. Citing *Poppy* as a piece of Documentary Theatre, Derek Paget situates the show in a long line of other RSC plays including *Jail Diary of Albie Sachs*, *The Women Pirates Ann Bonney and Mary Read* and *Accrington Pals*: work with a declared purpose and "*evident* factual base" as a "counter to bourgeois myths."[8] This is further addressed in the work of Marie-Luise Kohlke, who uses *Poppy* as a case study to analyse comedic depictions of the Opium Wars and the ethics of "killing humour."[9] In a briefing note for *Poppy*'s revival, Nichols stressed his desire that the show should not contain anything "Brechtish, Kabukian, Yankish, fancy or foreign," adding "Panto's ours: So was the trade in 'Poppy'," that is, opium.[10]

In *Poppy*, Nichols constructs a postcolonial reading of both pantomime and Empire using the medium of a patriotic, imperialist genre to present a narrative of the Opium Wars. This article aims to explore how Nichols subverts the genre's conventions and to identify how pantomime's Good/Evil binary is inverted by way of text and design to enforce Otherness and explicitly identify Britain as the Villains. It analyses how the past is then used as a metaphor to critique the present, paying attention to the similarities between the Britain of the 19th century and the 1980s with Victorian values and negotiations regarding Chinese territories acting as a bridge between the two eras. The RCS premiered *Poppy* during Thatcher's first term of government and, when it was later revived at the Half Moon Theatre in London's East End during her third term, the production had evolved to speak to a different audience's need for justice. British Society and opinion on Thatcher changed immensely during this period, with the text updated accordingly to further strengthen Nichols's intention. Particular attention is paid to traits of Thatcher and Thatcherism evident in the production's original character construction and dialogue and how this was later revised to strengthen criticism of both her premiership and policies.

The Royal Shakespeare Company and Poppy

In September 1982, the Royal Shakespeare Company moved into its new residence at the Barbican Theatre in the City of London. The venue, which had been designed in consultation with the company, would become its London base until 2002 and see the RSC present a variety of productions alongside their usual programme of Shakespeare. Having already written two pieces for the RSC, Peter Nichols's third constituted the first new piece of work for the Company's new home and, just as with his soap-opera inspired The National Health and musical revue-style Privates on Parade, he employed yet another popular entertainment form as a framework: pantomime, constituting his second attempt at using the genre for an historical narrative after a one-act history of the Maxim gun "didn't work in that form."[11]

A genre with roots in commedia dell'arte, British pantomime presents fairytale and folk narratives incorporating spectacle, comic business, speciality acts and musical numbers. After a period of evolution through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Victorian pantomime thrived and is the progenitor of today's contemporary form. Narratives often involve a quest and focus on the personal transformation of their protagonist, who is aided by a Benevolent Agent in the form of a Fairy or Genie. Malevolent Agents also exist to thwart the hero or heroine's happiness and act as antagonist toward their benevolent counterpart. Cross dressing was a key component of Victorian pantomime with the characters of Principal Boy and Dame two of the most popular on account of their transvestism. Topicality, satire and punning were integral to the performance, with audience participation embraced by the Music Hall stars who were regularly cast and popularised the use of double entendre.

As Jim Davis has argued, pantomime at Drury Lane in the late nineteenth Century "appeared to celebrate Britain's imperial strength and to support or encourage patriotism within its audience."[12] In the case of titles such as *Dick Whittington* and *Robinson Crusoe*, the narratives helped contribute to dominant ideologies about Britain's supposed superiority and role in civilising the rest of world. Seen as a "national institution" and "symbol of our Empire" by *The Star*, Drury Lane pantomimes were criticised by the newspaper for their strong imperial tone.[13] "Only a great nation could have done such a thing," wrote *The Star*'s critic, before adding, "only an undisciplined one would have done it."[14]

Utilising this notion in *Poppy*, Nichols set out to confront pantomime's inherent nationalism and critique its patriotism by way of the genre's participatory conventions. As John Elsom surmised in his *Mail on Sunday* review, "Nichols wanted to use the device of a tatty patriotic panto ironically, even bitterly, to remind us that our entertainment has deep roots in our imperialism."[15] Using well-known pantomime *Dick Whittington* as a base, Nichols constructs a new narrative which echoes that of the Gloucester-born boy who sought fame and fortune in London and ultimately became Lord Mayor. *Dick Whittington* is significant as not only was the title one of the most popular pantomimes of the 1890s, but it is arguably the only one from the contemporary canon based on a real historic individual: Richard Whittington (1354–1423).[16] Although the pantomime presents a fictitious interpretation of his life, the opportunity to overlay this with historical fact and challenge an audience's pre-existing expectations of not only his story, but also history and pantomime as a genre, must have appeared attractive to Nichols.

Set in the 1890s, *Poppy*'s Dick Whittington leaves Dunroamin' on the Down to seek fame and fortune in Victorian London. Nichols employs the stock characters of pantomime and reverses the Comic Idle Jack's name to Jack Idle to further contrast the character's laziness against Dick Whittington's drive. However, rather than set sail to Morocco for trade purposes, Whittington embarks on a voyage to Canton (Guangzhou) as the production uses "all the resources of the traditional British pantomime to tell the essentially serious, ultimately devastating story of the mid-nineteenth century Opium Wars."[17]

Unlike early productions of *Dick Whittington* that encompassed settings in a number of overseas locations including China, modern pantomime narratives predominantly use Morocco as a destination to distance and differentiate the title from the narrative of *Aladdin*. The choice of China over Morocco is significant as it enables Nichols to draw parallels between the two time periods via their geographical locations.

While one aspect of the narrative revolves around the past, the blend of Dick *Whittington*'s England and *Aladdin*'s China enables Nichols to plot the narrative of the Opium Wars and make reference to contemporary politics in and between the two countries. As Nichols reveals in a foreword to the published Half Moon Theatre revival of *Poppy*,

> My terminus wasn't Canton but Hong Kong, a barren island we'd got in 1842 by sending in the gunboats. On her own Far Eastern tour in 1982, our Prime Minister told astonished Chinese signatories that our two countries had friendly relations going back to the nineteenth century. One might assume from this that she'd not been briefed on the history but I think it more likely she knew about it very well and approved of Lord Palmerston's gunboats as the proper operation of market forces, just as Victoria does in the finale. This piece of insolence actually took place while Poppy was at the RSC yet only one critic mentioned it, the *Daily Mail*'s![18]

The fact that critics failed to identify the contemporary metaphor in *Poppy*'s historical narrative suggests a blindness to the present, an inability to decipher the contemporary critique. The historical narrative of the Opium Wars appears to have distanced audience members from successfully acknowledging the metaphor and thereby functioned ideologically in a similar way to the Drury Lane pantomimes as analysed by Davis.

Heroes turned Villains: Occident vs Orient

Edward Said writes that "style, figure of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstance" are things to consider when assessing a text, while also identifying that racist stereotypes "rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding for their effect."[19] The employment of pantomime conventions in *Poppy*, therefore, is knowingly ironic as Nichols utilises a form he describes as "an expansionist imperial spectacle that matched the Victorian mood of fantasy, trans-sexuality, opulence and jingoism"[20] to critique that which Victorian pantomime celebrated and contemporary pantomime inherited.

All pantomimes begin with a prologue in which Benevolent and Malevolent Agents wage a war of words against one another to establish the narrative. Nichols adopts this framework to ensure the production is read as a pantomime, but it also works to expose the audience to the genre's subversion from the moment they are introduced to the piece. In *Poppy*, rather than a Fairy

and Demon, these stock characters constitute two historical figures: Queen Victoria and the Emperor of China, firmly rooting the production in the past.

As the production's Fairy, Queen Victoria first appears by way of "a trap, holding her orb and sceptre" rather than flying in with a magic wand.[21] Such an entrance invites the audience to not only assess their understanding of the genre's conventions, where a trap entrance is usually reserved for the Villain to connote an ascent from Hell, but to question Victoria's supposed benevolent actions, which include declarations of war and the subsequent exploitation of a nation. Certain production photographs depict Victoria appearing Stage Right, a pantomime convention connoting 'Good', enforcing her Benevolent Agent status and further increasing the Orient/Occident divide. The employment of these conventions, therefore, reinforces Britain and China as opposing forces as in the Prologue Queen Victoria and the Emperor of China declare battle over who should be crowned "Most Favoured Nation."[22]

In opposition to Victoria, *Poppy*'s Emperor of China, in a role usually depicted in pantomime *Aladdin* as a comical bumbling despot, is presented "robed and splendid, in a throne floating high above,"[23] connoting superiority and power, but also contributing to the Orientalist stereotype of the mystic East as he hovers God-like above the stage. As Victoria Radin commented in her *Observer* review, "Nichols doesn't make the mistake of turning the Chinese into the goodies,"[24] but they do appear more educated than the cut-throat British who seek to profit from the illegal trade of opium and inflict free trade on China. In employing such an approach, the pantomime's Prologue sets the theatrical frame for the evening, challenging the audience's horizon of expectations and inviting them to re-assess their understanding of pantomime and British history.

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said writes that identity is a "construction – involved in establishing opposites and 'others'."[25] *Poppy* utilises this not only through plot, the production's framing and employment of pantomime genre conventions, but also through scenography.

Figure 1. Costume and set design by Farrah for Poppy*, Royal Shakespeare Company, Barbican Theatre, London, 1982. Douglas H Jeffery Archive: THM/374/1/856 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*

Designed by Farrah, *Poppy*'s "lavish sets"[26] were full of "opulence and dazzle"[27] and comprised "twirling parasols, dancing dragons, sumptuous costumes and a most elegant elephant."[28] Whereas British characters were costumed wearing white hunting regalia to enforce the boldness of the Union flag's red, white and blue, China was depicted as a golden land of mystery and fantasy. Flowing robes were contrasted with tailored trousers or Dick Whittington's lack thereof, open gilded parasols appeared the opposite of closed red, white and blue umbrellas, and unfolded fans provided a notable comparison to long, thin pointing canes. The production's design contributed towards the British appearing threatening, a pack of imperial hunters ready to brand any item, even the Principal Boy's underpants, with their Union flag and in doing so claim it as their own.

But scenography only constitutes one form of cultural representation. As Richard Cave suggests, the text is also fundamental in *Poppy*'s objective to "stimulate new political insight."[29] In *Poppy*, the British characters address the Chinese using derogatory terms such as "Chinks"[30] and "coolies,"[31] demonstrating a lack of respect for other cultures and forcing the audience to confront a racist past. The British characters' self-proclaimed duty to "raise China's morals till they are level with Cheapside's"[32] is highly ironic considering Cheapside's status as one of London's major trade hubs and thus a place of questionable morals itself. Francis King of *The Telegraph* explains that "The English are shown descending on China with a Bible in one hand and a cash book or a rifle in the other,"[33] symbols of their imperial quest. Their rousing chorus entitled "The Blessed Trinity," in which Victoria, disguised as the ironically

named missionary Miss Fortune, proclaims only civilisation, commerce and Christianity will save the Chinese, serves to expose the real motives behind Britain's actions and exemplifies Said's observation that, from an Occidental perspective, "since the Oriental was a member of a subject race, he had to be subjected."[34] By depicting the British in this way, audience members are invited to construct their own readings of the two cultures' historical relationship even though, as Worthen notes, Nichols "clearly indicates to them what conclusion their thought should reach."[35]

One way Nichols achieves this is by providing the Chinese with a voice of their own to retaliate against the British. Whereas the British characters speak to the Chinese using dialogue resembling an invented patois "Plis, day hullo / Number Two Shopman, Missee Dick Rittington,"[36] in return they are described by the Chinese characters as "grotesque,"[37] "barbarians,"[38] who import "foreign muck."[39] "Fanqui"[40] (foreign devils), a derogatory term for Westerners, is also used to demonstrate reciprocal hatred. Another more significant example of Nichols's playful use of language to challenge nineteenth century racial stereotypes which, as Said argues, the twentieth century has inherited,[41] can be found in the show's musical number, "They all look the same to us."

The song's Chinese honky-tonk melody is juxtaposed with the characters' overtly Oxbridge accents as through song the Chinese reveal their perception of the British in what Kaplan describes as a "reverse twist"[42] of Orientalism. Things accepted as 'normal' for British citizens, such as wearing trousers or using a knife and fork to eat, are presented as alien as Nichols's lyrics expose how stereotypes are built on uncontextualised and misunderstood observations. The song, with music by Monty Norman, reveals how the negative reading of situations can be interpreted as a way of coping with Otherness. The lyric and title "They all look the same to us" demonstrates the inability to recognise individuals, identifying peoples by common traits and stereotyping by way of general assumptions and sweeping statements. Through the musical number, Nichols invites audience members to question their own perception of other cultures by way of the comical rendering of the British.[43]

Victorian Values: Foreshadowing Thatcherism and locating the Iron Lady

Even though foreshadowing allusions to 1980s Britain are present in *Poppy*'s historical narrative, with the audience invited to draw similarities between past and present, Nichols goes further to explicitly make reference to the present. One technique employed to strengthen his metaphor is affording his English characters traits of Thatcherism. Achieving her first Premiership in 1979, Margaret Thatcher was leader of the Conservative Party until 1992, winning three terms of office. During her time as Prime Minister, Thatcher's policies championed privatisation, competition and a free market as she encouraged individuality, independence, self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Interpreted by many as a return to Victorian values, in a 1983 television interview Thatcher stressed, "The only one way to get prosperity and a higher standard of living in this country is to get our industries running as efficiently as any of those in the

rest of the world."[44] She believed that the manufacture and export of British products was key to achieving this, whilst encouraging entrepreneurship and initiatives that did not rely on the State. Referring to "Victorian times" and a desire to be seen as "one nation" again, Thatcher's aim was a population "strong and independent of Government."[45]

Nichols imbues such language in the character of Dick Whittington whose text in places replicates many of Thatcher's own words as he journeys from innocent yet driven individual to master of exploitation. In Act One, Scene Two, the following exchange takes place in musical number "The Good Old Days":

> DICK: How have we rewarded their loyalty and labour? Dunroamin's in ruins.
>
> DODO: And whose fault is that? It's theirs. [....]
>
> DICK: No, that sort of fairy tale's no use in the new Victorian age that's coming. Britain's going to have to go out into the market place, find new customers, sell more goods, compete with other nations [...] That's the only way there's any hope of living happily ever after.

Using Dick Whittington's drive for success, which is already a key aspect of the pantomime narrative, Nichols establishes the character as an advocate for Thatcherism, exposing the audience to the harsh realities of policies inspired by Victorian governance and incorporating contemporary references to the ability for tenants to purchase their council house and rising inflation. *Poppy* depicts the dangers of nostalgia and encourages the audience to learn from the past as a warning, strengthened further by the inclusion of contemporary terms such as "free trade", "Comprehensive School" and "City Man." To signal this intention, Nichols represents Whittington as a successful "twentieth century City-of-London" person with "a dark suit, bowler, rolled umbrella, Financial Times" in the finale.

The embedding of contemporary politics is further strengthened through characters Lady Dodo and Obadiah Upward sharing aspects of Thatcher's biography. An aggressive character, who declares, "Anything that moves I put a bullet in,"[46] Lady Dodo constitutes *Poppy*'s pantomime Dame. Such a trait reflects Thatcher's media persona and refers to her decision to attack the Argentinian naval vessel, the ARA General Belgrano, during the Falklands Conflict of 1982 (discussed further below). The choice of Dodo, an extinct bird, as the Dame's name connotes an individual out of touch with the era, with the title 'Lady' a possible reference to Thatcher's Iron Lady status. Gender is important here. Pantomime Dames are almost always played by a man, from which much of the role's comedy stems as the performer presents a female character with masculine traits. During the 1890s, the New Woman became a target for pantomime writers as evidenced in Herbert Campbell's costume parodying the fashion at Drury Lane (1894-6), shades of which can be seen in Figure 2. As Alice the Cook in *Dick Whittington*, Campbell was dressed in a shirt, tie, jacket and plus

fours breeches with accessories including a cane, monocle, hat and cigar.[47] Depictions of Thatcher with masculine traits were often embraced by satirists during her premiership, the most famous being *Spitting Image*'s caricature puppet with an overtly aggressive persona. The grotesque representation was often dressed in a suit jacket and referred to as 'Sir'.

Figure 2. Geoffrey Hutchings as Lady Dodo in Poppy*, Royal Shakespeare Company, Barbican Theatre, London, 1982. Douglas H Jeffery Archive: THM/374/1/856 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*

Further Thatcher allusions can be found in the character of Obadiah Upward who started life as a grocer's assistant in Bromley, Kent and later purchased the business. A clerk responds, "How enterprising of you to buy that old established grocer," referring to Thatcher's policies and personal life as both the daughter of a grocer and having lived in Farnborough, a village in Bromley, Kent between 1957 and 1964. Even Upward's name is embedded with the Thatcherite totem of upward mobility and like Thatcher's father, the character too is afforded the position of Alderman.

Benjamin Poore argues that "the way in which we represent the past onstage tells us much about how we regard ourselves in the present"[48] and although pantomimes are set in a timeless land of make-believe, *Poppy* was presented and set in a time when China and Great Britain were in talks about the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong. After defeating China in the first Opium

War, Britain took sovereignty of Hong Kong Island in 1842 and, after a second Opium War, acquired the Kowloon Peninsula in 1860. A 99-year lease for the area, including the New Territories, was granted by the Qing Dynasty in 1898 and it was this lease that Thatcher expressed a desire to extend when it expired in 1997. "The friendship between Britain and China," she said, "is good for us and good for the world."[49] Thatcher's words demonstrate a colonial mindset, with the use of "friendship" masking a history of conflict and exploitation. *Poppy* exposes this through its narrative, but another conflict may also have resonated with audiences and helped strengthen the past as a metaphor for the present.

Poppy's 1982 premiere marked little over three months since the end of the Falklands War, the largest air-naval combat since WWII, when Britain responded with force to Argentinian activity in its overseas territory. Presented at this time, with the Falklands conflict fresh in Britain's national consciousness, the similarities between 'Good Fairy' Queen Victoria and then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's goals of making Britain great (again) and (re-)asserting its colonial power would have been difficult to ignore, especially considering the piece's dramatic ending when Queen Victoria appears as Elizabeth the Second "waving in the royal way."[50] Not only does this suggest a continuation of societal ideals, issues and problems, it also critically addresses the fact that Britain has not yet been able to break free from such historical linearity as the country inherits, accepts and in some instances embraces its imperial past.

In *The Fall of Hong Kong*, Mark Roberts writes that the people of Hong Kong, "heartened by Thatcher's willingness to go to war for one of her colonies," followed Britain's actions in the Falklands with great interest.[51] Statistics suggest 85% of Hong Kong citizens wanted to remain under British administration,[52] yet as Frank Welsh explains, "Independence for Hong Kong might well have been desirable, but trade and good relations with the largest country in the world [China] were much more so."[53] And, whereas the Falkland Islands had a population of 1,813 in 1980,[54] Hong Kong's equalled five million, of which three million were British subjects.[55] Fearing mass immigration in anticipation of a change in rule, the UK government passed the British Nationality Act in 1981, which excluded Hong Kong citizens from the right of abode in the UK, even though they were British citizens. Although negotiations resulted in the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region and the assurance of "the rule of law, economic autarky, and the preservation of as many personal freedoms as possible,"[56] the Sino-British Joint Declaration was criticised for what some described as delivering "five million people into the hands of a Communist dictatorship."[57] The citizens of Hong Kong were once again at the disposal of Great Britain and had been afforded no say over their own future.

Once Hong Kong's future had been determined, Thatcher remarked, "Britain has been responsible for Hong Kong for nearly 150 years. It is an association which is a source of justifiable pride to us all."[58] It was this positive spin on what Michael Billington described as Britain's "arrogant, greedy and violent colonial history"[59] that *Poppy* criticised. As Billington's review explains,

"we [the British] attempted to justify the opium trade by the benefits it brought to India, [and as *Poppy* shows] [...] we were as insensitive then as we apparently still are to ancient Chinese values."

Former RSC Literary Manager, Colin Chambers, refers to the Barbican residency as "disastrous" as the company sought to produce productions of the same "technical accomplishment and standard" of those on Broadway.[60] As a result, Nichols's "subversive idea [...] was lost among the grandeur"[61] and Nichols thoroughly regretted his choice not to present the production at the Theatre Royal Stratford East where *Oh! What A Lovely War* (1963) had achieved great acclaim for its Music Hall / End of the Pier framework featuring a Pierrot Troupe alongside projected images and statistics to critique the First World War. Stratford East had expressed a desire to stage *Poppy* and even participated in a reading.[62]

Although most reviews echoed Billington's sentiment that *Poppy* left the "audience in a state of festive gaiety" and provided "a good night out,"[63] the *New Statesman*'s Benedict Nightingale offered a different interpretation:

> Don't be misled by the generally kindly reviews. It was a pretty flat opening at the Barbican, even allowing for the presence of critics and professional first-nighters, who would rather die than join in the shouts and choruses demanded by the actors.[64]

In *Inside the Royal Shakespeare Company*, Colin Chambers refers to *Poppy*'s corporate evening audiences being "present for the alcohol, not the art,"[65] identifying another area for critique – the RSC's economic model. The *Mail on Sunday*'s John Elsom described the show as one that "concentrates on the conventional RSC pieties about the folly of profit", quipping that "With such costly extravaganzas, the one vice of which the RSC can ever be accused is the love of profit."[66] Critics criticised the extravagance of the production with the *Sunday Telegraph*'s review warning that the "whole RSC operation at the Barbican was in jeopardy for lack of funds."[67] The show did, however, transfer to the West End with multiple commercial producers credited and the company was in talks with a Broadway producer, embodying a mode of production that saw the subsidised sector adopt commercial practices including sponsorship. By this point, the RSC had embraced Thatcherism and even increased its product base by creating a cast recording of the show for sale as merchandise.

Poppy ***at the Half Moon Theatre – a rougher, tougher, revival***

Reflecting on the RSC's staging of *Poppy*, Nichols "was embarrassed by the opulent production," stating "a book might be written on the course of this show from high hopes to bad blood."[68] Nichols's tumultuous relationship with RSC director Terry Hands was well documented in the press. Writing in *Midweek*, Nick Smurthwaite described "a fair amount of acrimony in the air, Nichols accusing Hands of cutting lines without his permission, Hands accusing Nichols of hypersensitivity."[69] In the interview, Hands is quoted as calling Nichols "a

wayward, self destructive genius"[70] and soonafter Nichols stated that he would never write for British theatre again on account of how the RSC treated him and his work. Six years later, the Half Moon Theatre's artistic director Chris Bond turned to *Poppy* for his last season with the company. "When I saw its original production," he recalls, "I compared it, not to its disadvantage, with Unity Theatre's immortial [*sic*] '30s production of *Babes in the Wood*."[71] Established to present politically motivated work representing people of the working classes, Unity Theatre company's 1938 pantomime criticised British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasement. Highly political in nature and featuring Chamberlain, Mussolini and Hitler as characters, the production evaded censorship due to Unity Theatre's status as a Members Club. The production was well received, attracting international attention and enabling the company to eradicate its debt.[72] According to critic Montague Slater, *Babes in the Wood* had a "more direct effect on current politics than any other single production in the history of the English stage."[73]

Not unlike Unity Theatre, Half Moon Theatre, based in East London, was founded as a socially engaged company presenting work about, for and with its underrepresented, diverse local community. Continuing in that tradition, *Poppy* had the potential to replicate the success Unity Theatre experienced with *Babes in the Wood*: a production that criticised the government and its actions through the medium of pantomime. Aware of *Poppy*'s historical narrative about the Opium Wars, Bond also saw the show's parallels to the present day. He reflected that rather than opium, "Today it's heroin. The same philosophy of unbridled monetarism reigns supreme. Millions of people are being corrupted and destroyed by exactly the same interests – in some cases by exactly the same firms."[74] By the time of *Poppy*'s revival in 1988 during Thatcher's third term of government, Britain had experienced record unemployment of over 3 million between 1983–1986, lived through the miners' strike of 1984[75] and saw a decline in the power of trade unions. This hardship was juxtaposed against the government's privatisation of national industries (steel, railways, airways, airports, aerospace, gas, electricity, telecommunications and water),[76] the deregulation of financial markets in 1986 and an economic boom that created a generation of young urban and upwardly mobile professionals or 'Yuppies', a derogatory term which came to define affluent, arrogant and obnoxious individuals who engaged in consumer culture and overtly exhibited their wealth and success. The products of enterprise culture, Yuppies became markers of conspicuous consumption and Thatcherism against a country experiencing mass unemployment and hardship. As Harry Edwards wrote of the Half Moon revival of *Poppy* in *Civil Service Magazine*, "the satire has become more pungent since the original presentation of the show because of growing present day materialistic values."[77] With the economy under constant analysis during Thatcher's premiership, *Poppy* as a title gains extra resonance, particularly at an East London venue. Referring to the poppy seed of the Opium Wars, "poppy" is also Cockney rhyming slang, in East End dialect, for money. Even more so than its original production, the title came to signify the interrelationship of exploitation, addiction, trade and economics, suggesting an addiction to money is the root cause of exploitation, power and greed.

Nichols was attracted by the opportunity to rework the show into a "rougher, tougher, shorter, sharper"[78] production, collaborating with Norman and Bond to create "a custard pie full of razor blades" that more closely resembled his original intention.[79] The Half Moon Theatre's "concrete space" was transformed into an old Victorian proscenium arch theatre using "backcloths based on prints of the time" avoiding the modern spectacle that the then-newly opened Barbican Theatre offered.[80] In addition to the Ellen Cairns's design, the Half Moon's locale and mission further contributed to it achieving a production Nichols described as "more or less as I'd imagined."[81]

The Half Moon's poster firmly rooted the production in a Victorian aesthetic by adapting an 1859 French cartoon and substituting the British Admiral's head with Queen Victoria's, complete with crown and veil, as she pours opium down a Chinese citizen's throat.[82] Playfully adding "British Product" to the poster reflected a renewed sense of pride in manufacture, which was undercut with one poster's subtitle "A pantomime for all patriotic and dirty minded families." Another poster provided the ironic subtitle "Celebration of Victorian Values", going on to describe them as "hypocrisy, drug dealing, racism, money, worship and sexual repression", words that had also been used to describe the 1980s.[83] The marketing artwork firmly declared *Poppy*'s intentions and established a set of principals upon which the show was intended to be read.

As opposed to the RSC's mainly white, middle-class Conservative audience, the Half Moon's comprised a different demographic. Documents in the Half Moon Archive reveal that the company planned to target local unions and residents of Tower Hamlets. Advertisements were placed in local newspapers whose distribution areas comprised strong Labour Party supporters. Revisions to the text reflect the production's locale, with references toto unions was cut and dialogue referring to deregulation, profits and PLCs (Public Limited Companies) added. This approach suggests the amendments sought to remove the text's explicit criticism of unions and increase anti-Thatcher sentiment via reference to economic policy. American tourists were also identified as a potential market. Not exposed to the RSC production's bad press on account of creative disagreements, the Half Moon production hoped to capitalise on the show's prestigious roots and Society for West End Theatre Award (Olivier Award) for Best New Musical, encouraging travel outside the tourist area of the West End.

In his review of the revival, Mark Steyn noted, "A lot can happen in six years."[84] Thatcher was now in her third time of office and negotiations about the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong to China had been concluded. This provided Nichols the opportunity to update his text and improve clarity about his intention, which was already being aided by the Half Moon's approach to staging. One of the most significant additions to the revived production was musical number "Kowtow":

VERSE: What's the hottest dance around?
Setting fire to the town?
You can't dig it if you're proud
So surrender, join the crowd
Asian, Western, Tory, Whig,
Hands together, do this jig.

CHORUS: First you go down on your knees
Knock your head – that's bound to please
That is how
To do the Kowtow.[85]

On 24 September 1982, when leaving the Great Hall of the People after negotiations in Beijing, Thatcher lost her footing and fell, landing on her hands and knees in a position resembling a sign of respect in Chinese culture. The musical number satirises the incident, which was widely covered by the international press. Beijing backed Hong Kong Newspaper *Ta Kung Pao* used the incident to described Deng Xiaoping as "an opponent who was harder than steel"[86] compared to Thatcher's Iron Lady status with other Chinese newspapers interpreting it as a symbol of China's power over Britain and Thatcher's subservience.

With the ability of hindsight, the 1988 production reflects on the agreement to transfer sovereignty in 1997, 13 years after negotiations concluded and nine years after Half Moon's revival. The addition of Lady Dodo's knowing line. "And we won't let them have it back in a hurry, will we?", after dialogue. "We give you Hong Kong Island…", suggests a duality of both time and character, talking in the present, but situated in the past, with her aside breaking the fourth wall, uniting the historical quasi-fictitious stage world with that of the audience's contemporary Britain. This is a key pantomime convention: the genre often breaks its theatrical frame to speak directly to the audience and incorporate topicality to increase a sense of community and enjoyment. Laughter signifies the audience's acknowledgement of the reference and ability to decipher the wider metaphor at play due to the incongruity of the historical character having such foresight.

Revisions to further enforce the past as a metaphor for the present build upon Nichols's desire to draw allusions between Dick's embodiment of Thatcherite principals and Britain's treatment of the Falkland Islands. Making reference to *The Sun* newspaper's notorious "GOTCHA" frontpage headline when Argentina's ARA General Belgrano was sunk by a Royal Navy submarine, a rewrite for the Half Moon production sees Dick Whittington use the exclamation during a gunfight in Act Two Scene Nine. This inclusion draws attention to the controversial headline, which was published on the newspaper's first edition, before it was aware of casualties. It also draws attention to *The Sun*'s pro-War stance, its use of jingoism throughout the conflict and the media's ever-increasing influence over the government.[87]

One of *Poppy*'s strongest uses of a pantomime convention for political means can be found in the production's songsheet, where audience members are encouraged to partake in their own colonial war. For *Poppy*'s revival at the Half Moon, the songsheet was developed from the RSC production in which the audience was divided in two, with Dodo and Upward's sides each responsible for singing lines about either the French or the British involvement in destroying the Summer Palace in Beijing in 1860. France used the excuse that a French missionary had been executed by Chinese hands to join Britain in the war and, whilst a negotiating party sought to secure China's surrender, forces looted Chinese art, artefacts and antiquities from the Summer Palace. Learning of the news, China killed 20 negotiators, which led to the burning of the Summer Palace by British and French troops in an act of retaliation. The destruction lasted three days and resulted in the death of over 300 residents. Some song lyrics recounting the atrocity were shared between characters, with the whole audience joining in to create the sound of shooting the crystal chandeliers.

The participatory song was amended to focus on the violence of the French and British's actions with the divided audience invited to join in with the onomatopoeic sounds of either the Gatlin Gun or grenades as they 'fought' one another.

CHORUS: Rat-a-tat-tat-tat! Ker-pow-splatt! Rat-a-tat-tat-tat!
Rat-a-tat-tat-tat! Ker-pow-splatt! Rat-a-tat-tat-tat!
Hip-hooray, what a frabjous day -
And the whites don't have to pay.
Did you ever see such a succulent dish of Chinese
takeaway?[88]

By singing along and acting out the ransacking of the Summer Palace, the shared community, comprising those on stage and in the audience, demonstrate their allegiance to anti-Chinese cause. As Cave suggests, however, the willingness of the mainly adult audience to participate in *Poppy* can be read as exposing the pro-British view "as an ideological construct, dangerous precisely because it is naive, *unthinking*, uncivilised, a glorification of the will to power."[89] Participating audience members become co-conspirators, complicit in the looting of the Summer Palace and by rejoicing "Hip-hooray" in the song's refrain, as Worthen explains, "sing for [them]selves the song of domination."[90]

Theatrical participation, Worthen argues, is cast as social complicity[91] and as a result the songsheet, according to Cave, can be interpreted as "a study of the nature of political propaganda that simplifies issues in the popular imagination the better to control and limit a nation's capacity to judge."[92] However, in the Half Moon production, the fact that the audience as French and British forces are encouraged to turn on one other as allies highlights the exploitative and unstable nature of conflict. Given that the songsheet is a staple of pantomime, participation may have occurred unquestioned. The strength of the genre convention may have overridden any political objection. The action of participation echoes a British audience's historical counterparts who may not

have had direct involvement in the expansion of the British Empire, yet were encouraged to engage in expressions of patriotism, for example singing 'Rule Britannia', a refrain of which was cut from the Half Moon production. Most accounts of the songsheet are limited to single lines in reviews; however, an interview with Bond for the Half Moon's online archive reveals one of the reasons he chose to stage *Poppy* was for his Chinese dentist Mr Lee, who lived on the same street as the theatre.[93] Bond provides no further information about Lee's reaction to the show, but the anecdote suggests a diverse audience and therein the possibility of discomfort, shame and tension on account of audience members' own cultural heritage.

This more confrontational, sombre end to the show is reflected in its final scene directly after the songsheet, which was also rewritten for the Half Moon production.

> JACK: All true. No fairy-tale. Not just a song.
> They sacked the palace, occupied Hong Kong,
> […]
> 'Once upon a time' has now become
> 'Happy Ever After.' Well, for some –

Such a conclusion confirms Nichols's intention to challenge patriotic narratives of British colonialism in China. While Dick Whittington appears in a modern morning suit, Jack and Sally no longer appear as American Tourists, leaving the audience's final vision of Sally one of her ashen face and blackened gums having become addicted to opium. As Josie Long, who played Dick Whittington in the Half Moon production concludes, "as it went on you realised what a capitalist pig I was and they ended up booing me."[94]

Conclusion

With its focus on the Opium Wars between Britain and China, productions of *Poppy* sought to expose the darker side of patriotism and by way of pantomime asked its audience to consider its identity as inheritors of Britain's colonial past. In a decade in which Zimbabwe, Vanuatu and Belize attained independence, and in which Canada achieved patriation, *Poppy* depicted the harsh reality of imperialism as its quasi-fictitious narrative linked and made comparisons between the ages of Victoria and Thatcher by way of the two women's relationship with China. Not only was Britain coping with the loss of its colonies during the 1980s, it was also suffering from an identity crisis as debates about the failure of multiculturalism suggested that perhaps rather than move on from the past, the present had merely inherited and reproduced it. *Poppy* sought to expose some of the mechanics behind the racist construction of Others and in subverting many of pantomime's genre conventions the production successfully criticized Britain's actions of both past and present. The 1980s was also a decade in which Britain experienced great economic change due to Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government. Privatisation, competition and a free market were championed as her policies became criticised for further benefitting and protecting the privileged. The differences between the RSC and Half Moon's

production illustrate the significant role audiences play in influencing a show. *Poppy* demonstrates the genre of pantomime can still be used for political means, even if not all audience members much like their Victorian counterparts, are aware of the production's political message.

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[1] *Poppy* ran at the Barbican Theatre from 25 September 1982 to 19 March 1983 before transferring to the Adelphi Theatre in London's West End from 14 November 1983 to 18 February 1984. The revival of *Poppy* was staged at the Half Moon Theatre, Mile End from 25 August 1988 to 24 September 1988 and received a second season at the venue from 28 December 1988 to 28 January 1989.
[2] Doug Lucie, "I've grown accustomed to my plays being ignored," *WhatsOnStage*, last modified June 11, 2013 https://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/doug-lucie-ive-grown-accustomed-to-my-plays-being-_30950.html.
[3] Mark Ravenhill, "Are you burning with questions about the financial crisis? Well - panto has all the answers," *Guardian*, last modified November 24, 2008 https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2008/nov/24/pantomime-theatre-credit-crunch.
[4] John Walsh, "Mark Ravenhill: Shock & Paws," *Independent*, last modified November 23, 2006 https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/mark-ravenhill-shock-amp-paws-425470.html.
[5] Peter Nichols, "Hardy Annual," in *Poppy* Theatrical Programme (London: Royal Shakespeare Company, 1982), 11.
[6] William B. Worthen, "Deciphering the British pantomime *Poppy* and the Rhetoric of Political Theater," *Genre* 19.2 (1986): 184.
[7] Richard Allen Cave, "Deconstructing Pantomime," in *Unconventional Conventions in Theatre Texts*, ed. Günter Ahrends and Hans-Jürgen Diller (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1990), 41.
[8] Derek Paget, "Documentary Theatre in the United Kingdom, 1960-1990," in *Englisches Theater der Gegenwart Geschichte(n) und Strukturen*, ed. Klaus Peter Müller (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1993), 117-119.
[9] Marie-Luise Kohlke, "Neo-Victorian Killing Humour: Laughing at Death in the Opium Wars," in *Neo-Victorian Humour: Comic Subversions and Unlaughter in Contemporary Historical Re-Visions*, ed. Christian Gutleben and Marie-Luise Kohlke (Leiden: Brill / Rodopi, 2017), 72.
[10] Meeting Notes for *Poppy*, 1988, Uncatalogued, Half Moon Theatre Collection, Royal Holloway University of London Archives, Egham, Surrey, United Kingdom.
[11] Peter Nichols, *Nichols – Plays: Two* (London: Methuen, 1991), 407.
[12] Jim Davis, "'Only an Undisciplined [Nation] would have done it': Drury Lane Pantomime in the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Victorian Pantomime: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Jim Davis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 105.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] John Elsom, "*Mail on Sunday* review of *Poppy*," *London Theatre Record* 2.20 (1982): 554.
[16] Peter Yeandle, "Performing the Other on the Popular London Stage: Exotic People and Places in Victorian Pantomime," in *Staging the Other in Nineteenth-Century British Drama*, ed. Tiziana Morosetti (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015), 134.
[17] Peter Nichols, *Poppy* (London: Methuen, 1982), i.
[18] Nichols, *Nichols – Plays: Two*, 409.
[19] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), 21.
[20] Nichols, *Nichols – Plays: Two*, 407.
[21] Nichols, *Poppy*, 1.
[22] Ibid, 104.
[23] Ibid, 1.
[24] Victoria Radin, "*Observer* review of *Poppy*," *London Theatre Record* 2.20 (1982): 554.
[25] Said, *Orientalism*, 332.
[26] Mark Amory, "*Spectator* review of *Poppy*," *London Theatre Record* 2.20 (1982): 550.

[27] Kenneth Hurren, "*What's On In London* review of *Poppy*," *London Theatre Record* 2.20 (1982): 550.
[28] John Barber, "*Daily Telegraph* review of *Poppy*," *London Theatre Record* 2.20 (1982): 552.
[29] Cave, "Deconstructing Pantomime," 39.
[30] Nichols, *Poppy*, 81, 107.
[31] Ibid, 69.
[32] Ibid, 74.
[33] Francis King, "*Sunday Telegraph* review of *Poppy*," *London Theatre Record* 2.20 (1982): 554.
[34] Said, *Orientalism*, 207.
[35] Worthen, "Deciphering, the British pantomime *Poppy*," 175.
[36] Nichols, *Poppy*, 61.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid, 60.
[39] Ibid, 59.
[40] Ibid, 60.
[41] Said, *Orientalism*, 197.
[42] Charles Kaplan, "The Only Native British Art Form," *Antioch Review* 42.3 (1984): 276.
[43] Produced only a year after the Brixton Race Riots, which exposed police racism and contributed to the marginalisation of black communities, *Poppy*'s text possesses a certain resonance and suggests that by the 1980s little progress had been made in the UK to re-address outdated views of non-Western cultures.
[44] Margaret Thatcher, "TV Interview for London Weekend Television *Weekend World* ('Victorian Values')," Interview, London Weekend Television, January 16, 1983, accessed September 1, 2020 https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105087.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Nichols, *Poppy*, 10.
[47] Davis, "'Only an Undisciplined [Nation]'," 111.
[48] Benjamin Poore, *Heritage, Nostalgia and Modern British Theatre: Staging the Victorians* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2.
[49] Margaret Thatcher, "Speech at Chinese Welcoming Banquet," Speech, Great Hall of the People, Beijing, China, September 22, 1982, accessed May 18, 2020 http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=105022.
[50] Nichols, *Poppy*, 115.
[51] Mark Roberti, *The Fall of Hong Kong: China's Triumph and Britain's Betrayal* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1994), 40.
[52] Frank Welsh, *A History of Hong Kong*, 2nd edn. (London: Harper Collins, 1997), 509.
[53] Ibid, 507.
[54] Andy McSmith, *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Constable, 2011), 111.
[55] Roberti, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, 29.
[56] Ibid, 512.
[57] Welsh, *A History of Hong Kong*, 517.
[58] Margaret Thatcher, "Speech to the unofficial members of the Hong Kong Executive and Legislative Councils," Speech, Legislative Council Chamber, Hong Kong, China, December 20, 1984, accessed May 18, 2020 http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105820.
[59] Michael Billington, "*Guardian* review of *Poppy*," *London Theatre Record* 2.20 (1982): 553.
[60] Colin Chambers, *Inside the Royal Shakespeare Company* (London: Routledge, 2004), 76.
[61] Nichols, *Nichols – Plays: Two*, 408.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Billington, "*Guardian* review of *Poppy*," 553.
[64] Benedict Nightingale, "*New Statesman* review of *Poppy*," *London Theatre Record* 2.20 (1982): 555.
[65] Chambers, *Inside the Royal Shakespeare Company*, 84.
[66] John Elsom, "*Mail on Sunday* review of *Poppy*," *London Theatre Record* 2.20 (1982): 554.
[67] King, "*Sunday Telegraph* review of *Poppy*," 554.
[68] Nichols, *Nichols – Plays: Two*, 408.

[69] Interview with Peter Nichols published in *Midweek*, 25th August 1988, Uncatalogued, Half Moon Theatre Collection, Royal Holloway University of London Archives, Egham, Surrey, United Kingdom.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Interview with Chris Bond published in *The Morning Star*, 24th August 1998, HMT/6/8/2-4 Half Moon Theatre Collection, Royal Holloway University of London Archives, Egham, Surrey, United Kingdom.
[72] Colin Chambers, *The Story of Unity Theatre* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1989), 165-177.
[73] "Ann Lorraine Davies," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, last modified September 23, 2010 https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-68985.
[74] Interview with Chris Bond published in *The Morning Star*, 24th August 1998, HMT/6/8/2-4 Half Moon Theatre Collection, Royal Holloway University of London Archives, Egham, Surrey, United Kingdom.
[75] "The Thatcher Years in Statistics," *BBC News*, last modified April 9, 2013 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-22070491.
[76] "Privatising the UK's nationalised industries in the 1980s," Centre for Public Impact, last modified April 11, 2016 https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/case-study/privatisation-uk-companies-1970s/.
[77] Review of *Poppy* by Harry Edwards for *Civil Service Magazine*, September 1988, Uncatalogued, Half Moon Theatre Collection, Royal Holloway University of London Archives, Egham, Surrey, United Kingdom.
[78] Letter from Peter Nichols to Half Moon friends about *Poppy*, July 7, 1988, HMT 6/8/2-4, Half Moon Theatre Collection, Royal Holloway University of London Archives, Egham, Surrey, United Kingdom.
[79] Pre-production letter from Peter Nichols to Half Moon Theatre Company, 1988, HMT 6/8/2-4, Half Moon Theatre Collection, Royal Holloway University of London Archives, Egham, Surrey, United Kingdom.
[80] Nichols, *Nichols – Plays: Two*, 408.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Honoré-Victorin Daumier, "Profiting by circumstances to engage the Chinese to treat themselves to 200 millions of opium," Harvard Art Museums, 1859 https://www.harvardartmuseums.org/art/190323.
[83] Programme and Marketing: *Poppy* (1988), Stages of Half Moon, accessed September 1, 2020 https://www.stagesofhalfmoon.org.uk/productions/poppy-1988/.
[84] Mark Steyn, "*Independent* review of *Poppy*," *London Theatre Record* 8.18 (1988): 1183.
[85] Nichols, *Nichols – Plays: Two*, 486.
[86] "China Media: Remembering Margaret Thatcher," BBC News, last modified April 9, 2013 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-22075415.
[87] Chris Horrie, "Gotcha! How *The Sun* reaped spoils of war," *Guardian*, last modified April 7, 2002 https://www.theguardian.com/business/2002/apr/07/pressandpublishing.media.
[88] Nichols, *Nichols – Plays: Two*, 496.
[89] Cave, "Deconstructing Pantomime," 35.
[90] Worthen, "Deciphering the British pantomime *Poppy*," 183.
[91] Ibid, 182.
[92] Cave, "Deconstructing Pantomime," 35.
[93] Interview with Chris Bond, Stages of Half Moon, accessed September 1, 2020, https://www.stagesofhalfmoon.org.uk/productions/poppy-1988/.
[94] Interview with Josie Lawrence, Stages of Half Moon, accessed September 1, 2020, https://www.stagesofhalfmoon.org.uk/productions/poppy-1988/.