LANDSCAPE as PLAYGROUND

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The environmental experience of landscape as fictional and real in a performance.

Liina Unt

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A SUBSTANTIAL PART of this dissertation is about places. Intensive writing in itself is a topohilic activity. Although the writer is immersed in the fictional space of words and thoughts, writing makes one peculiarly alert and open to the surrounding environment. It creates very lasting place experiences. Significant parts have been written in the wilderness of Pedassaare, on a rooftop in Falesia, and on a romantic terrace in Zoagli. I have written it in the four homes where I have lived in Helsinki and Tallinn, on almost all forms of transport, in a car repair shop, on stage, in dressing rooms… I cannot begin to count the places where the dissertation has taken me.

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Introduction

A THEATRE PERFORMANCE in a landscape is a form of play that uses the body of a natural environment to stand for something entirely fictional that perhaps happened in another place in a completely different time. While this transformation is characteristic to the art of theatre, performing in a landscape is set apart by the totality and the depth of the environmental experience. The landscape envelops the performers as well as the audience. It cannot be erased, blacked out or blinded, as is easily done on a classic stage, in a black box or in various halls. The scale of elements and their individual richness, from the ground that the actors and audience walk on to discrete blades of grass or pebbles in a river, is exceptional and differs from interiors in its mode of availability, as well as in the scope of details. The attempt to cover up the sky and ground ultimately leads to building a roof, a floor, and finally a house.

If the landscape is presented as a fictional one, the audience is immediately surrounded by a fictional world and it is virtually impossible to draw a clear line defining where the fictional landscape created for the performance ends. The sky, the ground and a distant forest can be perceived as parts of the theatre landscape, thus enveloping the participants in a total surrounding fictional environment. To some degree, the entire world can become fictionalized, while the act of fictionalization itself remains invisible; there is no clear need to indicate the

transformation visually. A gesture, a spoken word, a prop or a costume, or even the title of the performance or knowledge about the play or the author can trigger the perception of a fictional landscape, which appears in the body of the real, physical one.

Landscape is a very intricate complex that consists of visible and invisible elements perceived in time. The geographers Hannes Palang and Kadri Semm state that, "(t)here are material features in the landscape that are easy to measure and describe. Simultaneously there are non-material features, e.g. cultural and scenic components that are difficult to quantify. Finally there are underlying processes, i.e. all natural and human processes together with their interrelations." (Palang and Semm 2004: 50) Thus a performance enters a landscape filled with connotations, meanings, narratives and memories, some of which are shared and widely known, and some of which are intimate and personal; the performance makes them available to the perceiver. In the phenomenological view adopted in this dissertation, landscape is not only available through factual knowledge, but also through perception, by virtue of multi-sensory participation, by being aesthetically engaged. The dissertation regards landscape as a spatio-temporal process that is experienced as an enveloping subject-centred space, an environment.

The first and most obvious question that arises is: if scenography uses the physical appearance of the landscape and the landscape is the perceivers' and performers' shared environment, how is it possible to exclude unwanted meanings and connotations, i.e. those that do not support the staging? How is it possible to create new ones? The aim of this research is to study how scenography can exist in its invisible mode in a space filled with pre-existing physical elements and meanings, and create new and re-use already existing meanings of a landscape with minimal physical alteration. I argue that landscape and scenography form a specific relationship that can be best understood as a form of play, a process of creating a play environment for the performers and the audience in the course of the performance.

Play is an intricate and interesting concept. While there are numerous theories of play in the arts and philosophy, not to mention such specialized fields as education and psychology, the play environment has remained in the margins. Even in theatre, which is widely recognized as a form of play, especially in its ritual connection, research on scenography as a play environment is lacking. Play is an engaging activity that constructs a fictional world that runs parallel to everyday reality, but never excludes it. In theatre, this dichotomy is perhaps best expressed in the dual nature of performer/character, in which the character appears in and through the body of the performer, never cancelling the possibility of perceiving her as a real person, someone trained to be an actor. A performance is not only a text which is embodied in and by the performers, but also a text which becomes implaced[1]; it acquires and creates a place, creates a new fictional world and makes it temporally visible in a particular place. The understanding of the fictional place and the transformation of objects and places from real to fictional depends on active participation, i.e. one has to be actively involved in play to follow its course. To some extent, the play environment is the result of a joint creation between all players. It is temporal and lasts only for the time of the play.

Like the object of its study, scenography in a landscape, which balances between a number of disciplines (theatre, architecture, landscape studies, aesthetics etc.), the dissertation adopts a transdisciplinary approach within a hermeneutic and phenomenological frame of reference. To some extent, "transdisciplinary" characterizes contemporary scenography *per se,* as it is still establishing its own distinctive theoretical background. While the art of designing spaces for performances is as old as the art of theatre itself, scenography as a concept emerged only in the 1950s–1960s to denote an environment that is designed for a particular production in a particular theatre, and which participates actively in the process of making meaning. Historically the study of European set design has moved hand in hand with art history and classical aesthetics. Contemporary scenography launched a search for its roots in semiotics, performance theory,

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1 I adopt the concept of implacement from Edward Casey (1993: xi-xiii), who understands it as a human being's inevitable physical immediate placement in the environment as a part of it. The concept of implacement – immediate placement – will be addressed in 1.3.1.1 Body in place.

literary studies, anthropology, geography, architecture, environmental aesthetics and numerous other disciplines. Scenography itself is a junction of many lines: text, space and actors; architecture, painting, sculpture and installation; geography, environmental studies and psychology, to name only a few possible fields. As such, it is a highly transdisciplinary form of art, which is studied in the current dissertation mainly with the help of the hermeneutics of play, phenomenological environmental aesthetics and phenomenological landscape studies.

I would like to note another change. In a broad sense, the art of creating a fictional performance environment in Europe has focused on aesthetically pleasing sets that reflect on the spatio-temporal context of the performance, and its characters, general ideas and concepts, in ways that range from abstract to concrete. There have been significant alternative practices of using space, but the traditional Italian stage has almost become a symbol of classic European theatre. It presents a special area, a camera obscura, for performing. Both metaphorically and physically, the environment is emptied to make space for a fictional world that emerges into the void and fills the visual field of the audience. The black box and other types of modern stages still operate on the idea of creating a specific empty area for action. Therefore, historically scenography (set design, theatre design, production design) has been about making imaginary worlds visible. This dissertation turns the table. Scenography is discussed as an invisible form of art that changes physical, visually and connotatively filled, environments by shifting the focus, building links between existing elements and desired fictional ones. The understanding of such a play environment/scenography demands participation in the play; it is created as a joint effort. This establishes the aesthetic appreciation of the environment differently, and this appreciation is available only to perceivers as participants, because only participation in the fictional world guarantees the experience of fictionally assigned functions, fictional places and fictional beauty. The experience of scenography as a play environment lacks the distance necessary for classical aesthetic contemplation.

Given the inherent relationship between perceiver and place which the study argues for, it seems only fair to state the location of this study. It is embedded in the tradition of occidental thought and European theatre practice, and it has been carried out in northern Europe, on the two shores of the Gulf of Finland. While open-air theatre is immensely popular in Finland, most of the examples are drawn from the practice of Estonian theatre. During the past 15 years, Estonian theatre has undergone a boom in performing outdoors. The idea of performing in the open air is not new in the world or even in the context of the relatively young professional theatre tradition in Estonia, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2006. However, the present period is outstanding in terms of its scope and intensity. One of the fascinations of open-air theatre, which due to climatic reasons is performed only in the summer, is the lure of discovering new places. On the one hand, it can be seen as an alternative to the performances in the well-known festival grounds and open-air stages. These performances have mainly been comedies, either special touring productions or performances of theatre productions that are adapted from interior stages. They have commonly acquired the connotation of being easy entertainment or easy money. These performances use stages as empty containers that can accommodate any space and thus do not connect with the specific landscape outside the fictional environment of the performance. Therefore, the search for places that do not have an established reputation as theatre venues often takes the form of re-articulating the close ties between the environment and performance. On the other hand, the tendency plays with the strong sense of attachment Estonians generally have towards their local landscape and the nostalgic appeal of old rural landscapes (see Palang et al 2004). Performances have been given on lakes, in bogs and marshes, wild forests, remote villages one does not find on a map, popular tourist destinations, historic mansions and in castles. Although the practice of performing in the open air is world-wide, the Estonian examples have been chosen because of the extent to which scenography uses the existing landscape to stand for the fictional

landscape of the performance, and because of the author's background. Within the hermeneutical and phenomenological viewpoint adopted in the study, I cannot disregard my own position as a practising scenographer in Estonia. Firstly, location is important because of the intimate relationship dwelling creates. I agree with the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's statement that our view of the world reflects the environments we live in, their social, economic, climatic and aesthetic features. The latter is especially important in discussing scenography. Secondly, as a practising theatre artist, I am aware of the problems and merits of writing about one's own work. While I recognize the input of immediate inside knowledge in theoretical discussion, I personally feel that the density of knowledge connected with my own work hinders me from putting things into perspective. The decision to focus on the work of other scenographers is a conscious choice. Yet, in the audience I am both a viewer and a theatre maker, someone who has developed specific skills of perception. The performer, theatre director and researcher Mike Pearson (2006: 11) contrasts the questions viewers and informed insiders ask during a performance. While the viewer's question is "What does it mean?" or "What does it mean to mean?", the critical mind of a colleague also wonders "How are they achieving this, here?" Thus I speak as a member of the audience who has knowledge of the creative process of putting on a performance, of creating a scenography and seeing it evolve during rehearsals.

My position as a researcher and artist also places empirical knowledge and theoretical interest so close together that it is almost impossible to tell them apart. The choice of the productions discussed in the dissertation is a matter of interrelated decisions. *Kingdom of Vargamäe* revealed its structure and led to the discussion of *Republic of Wargamäe*, in a search for answers to the same theoretical questions, which in turn opened up the topic of invisible environments. Productions are not regarded as examples to prove a theory. I would like to stress that art can discuss philosophical issues and thereby work as a research method. But I also believe that theory is not something that can be conveniently used to

explain practice. In this study, practice and theory are partners that inform one another.

The current study uses three central concepts: landscape, place and play. As there are two active participants – landscape and scenography – the problem will be addressed on two levels, the potentiality of landscape in regard to a theatre performance, and the nature of the relationship between scenography and landscape. Landscape is discussed within the concept of found environments, i.e. environments not built or extensively modified for performing. The term site-specific, another widely used notion, is here used only to describe the concrete relationship between the environment and the work of art (text, scenography, play) in which the work of art articulates the site.

The dissertation leaves aside other play environments, as time and space do allow in-depth discussion. In addition, the current framework makes it possible to employ a scenographer's specific knowledge of theatre environments, bearing in mind that play as a concept needs to be discussed from within. Environments that consciously design their spaces to engage the viewer in play, with the interaction between real and fictional (e.g. amusement parks, theme parks, holiday villages, malls and casinos), form a possible continuation of the current study.

Compositionally and thematically, the dissertation consists of four parts, each divided into chapters. The first part takes a closer look at the landscape to seek out the causes for its appeal in theatre. The first chapter problematizes the question of defining a landscape. While landscape is an everyday concept, it is complicated to define it, especially as each definition has an individual history and, more importantly, indicates a different type of engagement, a different position in the landscape. A working definition suggests that landscape is characterized by its boundaries, the identification of which depends on the interest and knowledge of the viewer, which can range from scientific to experiential; and landscape components that are similar within those boundaries. The dissertation focuses on the phenomenological implaced and embodied experience of landscape, in which

the viewer herself is an integral part of the landscape. The second chapter looks at landscape as the material embodiment of living in the landscape. Landscape is not limited to its physical appearance; it equally consists of ideals and ideas, of past actions that have shaped it, of legends or stories of historical events that give reason to protect it, and of personal experiences and memories that may link together diverse places and, for instance, make one see a visually whole landscape as "mine" and the "neighbour's". Landscape is a layered structure that consists of visible and invisible elements that can have different life spans. Based on the concepts of implacement (Casey 2000) and perception as skill (Ingold 2000), I argue that landscape as a layered spatio-temporal structure is accessible outside the limits of previous knowledge; it becomes available and understandable through engagement with the landscape. From the viewpoint of engagement, landscape is accessible as placescape, a network of subjective (or culturally shared) foci. The third chapter deals with the concept of place widely employed in human geography and phenomenological environmental aesthetics for the personal experience of environment. Place is understood as the personal and meaningful centre of human space, the meaning of which comes from experience, knowledge, perception and engagement with the environment. As a result, place is the primary element of implaced and embodied perception, the cornerstone of environmental experience.

A performance given in its original place of events can be a very effective way of articulating the narrative dimension of the landscape. It relies on the commemorative power of the landscape to store memories by connecting them to landmarks, which makes landscape a hidden stage of potential unfolding memories. The second part – Performing a Landscape – argues that every performance in a landscape that builds constitutive ties with the landscape as a site of events is also the performance of the landscape. The landscape unfolds in front of the audience's eyes for a relatively short period of time in a new context. *Bogship*, performed in Soontagana, Estonia, is an excellent example of performing

a landscape, because the text is based on legends connected to the particular site. Despite its original material, the production is a work of fiction that incorporates events that may have produced a different contemporary landscape. Based on the example of *Bogship*, the dissertation discusses the issues of coherence between fictional landscape in text, landscape memory and scenography.

However, a return to the site of events does not cover the spectrum of performing in a landscape and using the existing landscape in its visual and connotative richness. A maple growing in Helsinki in 2011 may become a tree in Hellenic Greece; a Classicist Baltic-German tea-house in remote northern Estonia may become Ranyevskaya's house in a cherry orchard through the power of word and gesture. Furthermore, the function of being Ranyevskaya's childhood home does not cancel the perception of the building as a tea-house. I propose that the process can be characterized as play, the parallel existence of fictional and factual worlds, which exist simultaneously without excluding one another. The player is fully aware of the fictionality of her environment, which guides her actions and experiences, but makes the experiences and feelings no less real.

The third section – Play – looks into the diverse interpretations of the concept of play with the aim of distilling characteristics that are inherent to environment, especially in regard to art and aesthetics. Play is a problematic concept. It is often overlooked as a non-serious and leisurely, even childish, activity. The concept also seems to escape precise definition as it can fully be discussed only from within. Thus the first chapter takes a look at the tradition of discussing and defining play. The second chapter focuses on the connection between art and play in order to outline the framework for understanding aesthetic environments as play. If play is understood as an interactive process of engagement, in which players make agreements that change the meaning and function of events, objects and places, then the aesthetic experience of play environments should also be understood as a form of active engagement. In some circumstances, it can become an act of creation through mutual participation. By adopting Gadamer's hermeneutic

approach, the focus of aesthetic experience shifts to the relationship between a work of art (the scenography, play environment) and the perceiver, who participates in the creation of the artwork by intentionally accepting agreements. I propose that aesthetic experience in play is best described as a form of aesthetic engagement, which is based on the notion that the viewer in the landscape is an integral part of it, and experiences it as a process of multi-sensory synaesthetic engagement with the environment.

The fourth part examines landscape as used in a theatre production in the framework of play environments. Play is regarded as the art of temporal agreements that last for the time of the play and that can create any number of meanings without physical intervention. The first chapter addresses the question of engagement in theatre on a more particular level. It should be noted that, while it is easy to observe the role of performers and perceivers or technicians involved in the actual performance as players, the performance also includes the work of directors, scenographers, lighting designers and numerous other people. Firstly, the idea of a performative event suggests that a theatre performance is a long process, in which the actual performance is only one component. Secondly, in the framework of intentionality as one of the key factors, intentionality exists on two levels – author(s) and perceivers – which includes all involved parties. The second chapter applies the principles of the play environment to the discussion of a scenography that uses landscape with minimal physical interference, using the example of two Estonian theatre productions which were performed in the birthplace of the author, now a museum. Both productions characteristically disregard the openly available connotations of the landscape, which is often identified with the landscape in the novels they are based on. Instead, the scenographies create independent placescapes in almost visually barren fields. I argue that fictional landscape is mainly understood through the creation of meaningful places. However, in play, places are experienced as processes rather than locations. Play performs a dual function in landscape. It

has the capacity to create meaningful places that help to experience fictional landscape. In a surrounding landscape environment, fictional places are not only seen, but experienced with all of the senses. The experience of the fictional place that itself vanishes can last beyond the performance and result in the creation of a permanent place experience that redefines the relationship between the perceiver and the original landscape. The emotions and experiences created in play can be real and lasting. And the distinct temporal character of play enables the perception of places as process, helping to clarify the temporal character of landscape itself.

1. LANDSCAPE

1.1 Landscape

LANDSCAPE IS A complicated concept to define. On the one hand, it is a part of everyday living that can be recognized clearly. On the other hand, it is used as a visually determined concept which depends on perception, which, in turn, is deeply connected to the way we think. Landscape is not merely a result of an act of looking; its boundaries are conditioned by the things we know to look at, and the way we are taught or used to seeing. This dissertation concentrates on landscapes outside cities and other highly concentrated built areas.

The perception and experience of the same landscape can be radically different for a local and an outsider. A fisherman hardly ever experiences his familiar shores and fishing places as joyous resorts for swimming and sunbathing. The subtlety of colour is probably not the first thing a farmer notices in a barren field. The question is not limited to the type of relationship (work, leisure, scientific interest, tourism etc.) that a person has with a particular landscape. Knowledge, previous landscape experiences and interests all affect the understanding and appreciation of a particular landscape. Dwelling increases familiarity, and the environment becomes increasingly multi-sensory and multifaceted, so sometimes the distance to make an aesthetic judgement may be lacking, which does not mean that locals do not appreciate the aesthetic qualities of their familiar surroundings (Tuan 1990: 97). Local inhabitants

have more intimate and detailed knowledge, which can in some cases become so extensive that parts of the environment become invisible; they become overlooked as habit replaces novelty. Different age groups experience landscape differently. Not only the quantity of previous experiences, but the development of perception and abstract thought influence the way the world is organized. Toddlers are intensely aware of a landscape's individual elements – a huge rock, tree stump and a plant with thick green leaves in a patch of grass – but their ability to distinguish between self and others, which is weakly developed in children under six or seven, does not enable them to make sense of landscape as an entity (ibid.: 56). People who live inland may have trouble recognizing a seascape on a foggy and cloudy day, when the thin line between water and sky is blurred.

The understanding of a landscape depends on the foci that one looks for in the landscape and the general frame or perspective one takes. In addition to personal contact, it follows that different disciplines that study landscape (physical and human geography, biology, climatology, architecture, aesthetics, literature studies, economy etc.) treat landscape differently.

The human geographer Michael Jones groups the different approaches into three basic categories: scientific, applied and humanitarian. The scientific approach claims that landscape *is-* that it is a complex of all natural elements and/or circulation systems, a sample of nature. Applied landscape studies regard landscape as an objective entity, but as something that also carries values. In humanitarian fields, which range from cultural geography, environmental psychology and sociology to aesthetics, it is a way of seeing (Jones 1991), in these fields, the focus is on the ways human beings understand and interpret landscape, on the close ties between human culture and nature, between social and cultural groups and landscapes.

A landscape can turn out to be a multitude of landscapes, the limits of which depend on the characteristics of the particular territorial unit, as well as its

observer and her[2] interests. The surrounding environment, in its local character, socio-economic importance and cultural heritage, has a great impact on its inhabitants and their culture. Therefore, landscape can mean different things in different cultures and different languages (Palang and Kaur 2005, Peil 2001, Tuan 1990). The historical tradition of relating to the immediate environment shapes the way of thinking about it.

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines landscape as: (a) a picture representing a view of natural inland scenery, the art of depicting such scenery; (b) the landforms of a region in the aggregate, a portion of territory that can be viewed at one time from one place; (c) a particular area of activity or a scene (e.g. the political landscape). Etymologically the word probably originates from the 16th century Netherlands, where *landchap* was used as a technical term in painting. By the end of the century, it had become a term in other Germanic languages (German *Landschaft* and English *landscape*), where it quickly gained a new and broader meaning. Landscape started to denote a picturesque view in nature. The Italian *paessagio* and French *paysage* are related to the Latin *pagus*, which means a piece of land that people identify themselves with. It carries a sense of belonging, a home-region, the borders of which must be more or less clearly defined (Sinijärv 2001: 11). The original identification of the term "landscape" with a picturesque view or home place is fascinating, because it raises the possibility of looking past ugly and unpleasant environments. Although the idea of the sublime accommodates notions of fear and awe, it seems that landscape is seen as something aesthetically pleasing.

It is interesting to observe that the initial double meaning of *landscape* as a representation and physical environment is still present in its current use. The Merriam Webster Dictionary clearly states that landscape can equally mean a multi-sensory environment and its representation, visual image or view. *Paysage*

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2 Instead of double pronouns, the feminine is used throughout the book, because I inhabit the world in and through a female body and, strictly speaking, within the phenomenological framework, I can claim not to have access to a male point of view. I do not, however, support the solipsist world-view in which all experiences are singular and cannot be shared. It should be mentioned that my native language, Estonian, lacks a distinction between masculine and feminine forms in grammar.

has a similar double denotation in the French language and has been adopted as a technical term for landscape painting in Russian and Estonian. New word formations based on "landscape" (e.g. cityscape, townscape) retain the double meaning as a representation of the given object and the object itself.

Since I speak from an Estonian background, it is perhaps informative to point out the cultural genealogy of my native language's word for landscape – *maastik*. In the 1919 dictionary of neologisms, *maastik* appeared as a synonym for countryside (*maakoht*: *maa* – land, ground or earth, *koht* – place). The word was first used by artists and writers (Ratas 2001). The founder of modern geography in Estonia and Finland, J. G. Granö, regards landscape primarily as a visually defined spatial unit. To stress the engagement of all senses, he proposes another term, *ümbrus* (surroundings or environment) to describe a person's immediate environment. This surrounding environment is divided into a far zone, landscape that is primarily perceived visually, and a close zone or proximity, the invisible intimate part in the otherwise visual landscape (Kant 2000: 218, 220–222). The double meaning as a representation and a physical environment points to an inherent dualism between visuality and engagement, which Lehari (2001: 67) relates to the ambiguity of the term in aesthetics.

Landscape – depending on the context – is an environment, a territorial unit, a view and its representation. This range of meanings indicates that landscape is a part of nature and, at the same time, a part of culture. The relationship between the two is crucial in understanding landscape.

1.1.1 Between nature and culture

Without a doubt, landscape is a part of nature – it is at least partly made up of natural elements (plants, earth, landforms etc.). The cultural contribution can be interpreted differently. Human culture affects landscape on multiple levels. In Europe, tilled fields and pastures have been familiar sights for centuries; in the

present context of urbanization and industrialization, it is easy to regard these as natural landscapes. Farming and forestry have extensively affected the face of nature, even in areas that are no longer used for agriculture. Landscapes are temporal (they change over time), and their understanding depends on the time-frame and living context of the observer. It could be argued that in contemporary Europe even areas of pristine nature are somewhat artificial: their present state is the result of conscious preservation. Quite similarly, nature parks and reserves can preserve a geological and biological balance that has been fixed at some point, but can be the result of excessive farming, as is the case with Estonian coastal meadows. In its other extreme, no action is taken whatsoever: human interaction is forbidden and nature is given the power to exercise its laws within fixed spatial limits. Landscape parks form a special case since they look like untamed nature, but are in fact designed and carefully cultivated. Parks that imitate "natural" nature and hide their man-made origins became immensely popular in 18th–19th-century England and the English style spread as an international trend across Europe. Reoccurring elements, such as romantic creeks and stretches of untrimmed trees grouped into forests and ruins, are meant to leave the impression of wilderness or even nature that has taken civilization over.

In this perspective, it becomes difficult to draw the line between natural landscape and cultural landscape if the latter is understood as a landscape that has been affected by human actions. As Ingold states, even thinking in a landscape and thinking of a landscape are forms of interaction with landscape (Ingold 2000: 147). Oral agreements, as well as decisions made on paper, all affect environments. Cultural landscape may very well be one of the most controversial and misunderstood concepts in human geography. In extreme cases, these interpretations state that natural landscape is a medium and culture an agent (Palang and Semm 2004: 50). The geographer Urve Sinijärv warns of the side-effects of a sharp division between natural and cultural landscapes. Urbanization inevitably heightens the contrast between cultural and natural landscape, and

thereby threatens to increase the otherness of nature (Sinijärv 2001: 13). Instead, Sinijärv sees the culture-nature dichotomy in the particular relationship between the inhabitants of a given environment and their landscape(s). In her view, cultural landscapes can be natural – born from long-term close inhabitation in the landscape – or artificial – the results of plans inscribed on the landscape. If culture is seen as an all-pervasive concept, an inevitable by-product of human understanding, even the term nature becomes problematic. Nature in this context means biological life, which exists with or without human interference and which human beings are an integral part of.

In this dissertation, landscape is understood as a complex of cultural and natural factors that inexorably affect each other and cannot be treated separately. It is clear that landscape cannot be understood in terms of environment, nature or land, or in terms of space. The geographers Palang and Kaur state, "Land is ground, it can belong to someone, and it can be divided into pieces. Nature leads its own life. It has little human activity, if any at all. Space is abstract, great and incomprehensible. If one needs to ground it, then the unit of space is assigned a name and turned into a location. Landscape has something of all three, but also something that is in none of them" (Palang and Kaur 2005: 364). Landscapes change over time and depend on the perceiver's knowledge and attitude towards them. Therefore, landscape is always a result of lives lived in the landscape and, in a certain sense, an embodiment of memory.

In order to clarify the relationship between culture and nature in landscape, the human geographers Palang and Semm adopt the idea of total landscape originally proposed by Keisteri, which divides landscape into three parts. "There are material features in the landscape that are easy to measure and describe. Simultaneously there are non-material features, e.g. cultural and scenic components that are difficult to quantify. Finally there are underlying processes, i.e. all natural and human processes together with their interrelations" (Palang and Semm 2004: 50). Landscape is thus a combination of processes and results – visible and invisible –

which in turn affect ongoing processes.

To sum up, a general definition for this dissertation would agree with the statement that "landscape is a certain territorial unit that has clear boundaries that separate it from other units, and the landscape components /…/ within those boundaries are similar"[3] (Kokovkin 2001: 40). Kokovkin's definition, although it focuses on geography, points out two very important aspects in understanding the complexity of a landscape. Firstly, landscape has boundaries. On the largest scale, the boundary is the horizon, the physical horizon that encloses our view, and the horizon of knowledge (e.g. scientific, cultural or personal), which affects the perception of a landscape. In geography, the limits of the landscape are bounded by the knowledge of the particular geo-complex. Cultural knowledge in its diversity frames each landscape individually. A local person can easily identify the limits of her village, although they are not physically marked. For her, a pasture that on first glance seems to be a visual continuance may consist of two or more neighbouring landscapes, e.g. her land and her neighbour's. Or it may be the area she was allowed to play in as a child, and the rest that remained outside the agreed upon, but unmarked, safe home territory. Ingold (2000: 189) stresses the ongoing dialogue between the inhabitant and the landscape that should be discussed from within, i.e. as an interactive process. Landscape is therefore not a composition of individual entities, but a construction created and understood through relationships between objects and subjects that evolves and changes over time. Different practical needs and forms of livelihood demand certain conditions. People are influenced by the conditions of their environment and affect it at the same time. Each individual landscape gives information on the lives carried out there. (ibid: 189, 191) These relationships can be seen as the defining elements of a landscape. In identifying the limits of a landscape, all relationships can participate in the act of constructing, which extends the question beyond long-term inhabitation. As constituents, these relationships gather individual objects together into one landscape.

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3 If not otherwise indicated in references, all translations are mine. LU

The second aspect is the position of the observer: whether she places herself within the boundaries or outside them. This choice of position determines whether a landscape is perceived as a visual composition or as a surrounding multi-sensory environment, and thus affects the relationship with the landscape. Although consisting of real, incontestably physical and visible elements, landscape is relative to a certain degree. This is mainly because of the relativity of its boundaries, which does not, however, mean that landscapes are exclusively subjective concepts. According to Jagomägi (2001: 118), a landscape is a unit of space that a group of people can perceive in a rather similar way.

The experience of a horizon and a viewing point is also behind such expressions as political, social or human landscape. Sinijärv (2001: 12) suggests that such expressions indicate the presence of a common ground or field, which gives a spatio-temporal dimension to a certain network that functions in it. This network is comprised of key points (or figures), spatio-temporal units and relationships between them. This usage is directly related to the everyday experience of a landscape, where the viewer can distinguish different elements within a unifying frame.

1.1.2 Landscape as a view

The perception of landscape is hermeneutic: sensory data is interpreted according to one's conception of space. Scientific knowledge, traditions in rendering and understanding space in two- and three-dimensional images, cultural knowledge and personal experiences all participate in looking at a landscape and deciding where the particular landscape begins and ends.

Traditionally, the understanding of space is categorized into three interrelated levels: physical, perceptual and conceptual. Conceptual space is an abstract concept that makes the comprehension of physical space possible. Perceptual space is similarly an abstract construct, but it is modelled by the senses and

experiences. (Lehari 1997: 13, 16) The architect and theoretician Christian Norberg-Schulz offers a more elaborate five-level scheme: pragmatic, perceptual, existential, cognitive and abstract space. The pragmatic space of action builds the link between an individual and her environment, while perceptive space makes possible an immediate orientation and helps to form her identity. Existential space constructs a clear image of the environment and integrates the perceiver into cultural and social structures. Cognitive space makes it possible to think about space, and abstract space offers tools to describe all of the mentioned individual levels of space. It is important to note that the scheme works in a circum-referential way: concepts of good or beautiful landscapes that affect the decision to redesign an environment are rooted in the experience of pragmatic and perceptual space. (Norberg-Schulz 1971: 11) At the same time, the given environment is perceived through the lenses of cognitive space informed by previous spatial experiences. In order to understand the factors that condition our understanding of landscape as a hermeneutic concept, it is essential to look at the concept of space that has influenced the perception of landscape in Western culture.

Cartesian vision presents space as a universal system of co-ordinates that are connected with uniform temporal continua. Space, in this context, is primarily a visual concept, and vision in turn has supremacy over all other senses. In the first part of *Topophilia*, which deals with the account of human senses in perception, the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan points out that the visual field is larger than the fields of the other senses; therefore, distant objects can be seen even when they cannot penetrate the fields of other senses. Consequently, humans have the tendency to regard visible objects also as emotionally distant. However, the visual field also has a cultural bearing. Compared to hearing, for example, seeing is regarded as objective and active, while hearing is passive, which is expressed in such sayings as "seeing is believing", and in regarding rumour as "hearsay". (Tuan 1990: 10) The peculiar relationship between seeing and hearing becomes evident in theatre

terminology, which lacks a term that would combine both. Etymologically, *theatre* is derived from the Greek *theatron*, a place of seeing (*theasthai*: to behold). Given the size of Greek amphitheatres, which generally had good sight-lines and accoustics, gestures aimed at visual sensation had to be amplified. While the visual connotation is present in such everyday terms as viewer or spectator, the body of viewers is called an audience, those who hear (from the Latin *audentia*: a hearing, listening). Current Western theatre practice lacks a word that would combine all senses. Even the word "visitor", which suggests a casual passing by, is connected to seeing (the Latin *visitare* – to go to see – stems of *videre*, to see, notice or observe). This dissertation adopts the term "perceiver". Audience and viewer are used alternatively, but only in their general context, without specific reference to the individual senses.

The philosopher Martin Jay (1994: 24, 28–29) shows that vision has been paired with the rational mind throughout history. The gift of seeing is not only the reception of outside reality, but also a process of making meaning. The duality of vision as a projection of outer reality and the wisdom of the mind's eye (either human or divine) has granted vision a privileged position. While Jay traces the origins of the identification of seeing with cognition to ancient Greece, it reached its peak in Cartesian vision. Subsequently, this led to regarding vision as a proper and objective relationship between subject and object in which the act of seeing became an "eternal container of objective processes" (Jay 1994: 29). The supremacy of *ratio* and the impartiality of the observer turn seeing into an act of distant contemplation that produces objective knowledge. This duality also stresses the clear division between subject and object. In its objectivity, Cartesian vision holds the promise of being accessible to everyone; it is a construction that can be reproduced and investigated with pure reason outside the restrictions of corporeality.

This separation of subject and object has spatial consequences. Firstly, it suggests the presence of separating the space between the subject and object.

The object exists independently and can be perceived outside the viewer's subjectivity. Secondly, it requires a system of representation and reproduction. Linear perspective has been the predominant model of rendering space from the Renaissance onward. It is based on Euclidean geometry and treats space as a separate and constant co-ordinate field that is filled with independent objects. "Space is a medium that is abstract, universal and impersonal, a medium in which discrete objects are placed and in which they can be located clearly and irrefragably" (Berleant 1991: 55). The image is constructed on imaginary lines that vanish into the horizon and can be turned into a picture at any given point on the lines. Metaphorically speaking, it is a series of images or slices that stand one behind the other, which comes surprisingly close to the contemporary understanding of virtual pictorial space in computer programmes that generate a structure of layers that are placed in front of each other. A successful rendering is based on conveying objects in terms of the distance between the objects and the observer's eye. Essentially, linear perspective is a geometrically constructed view from one fixed viewpoint that leads to a fixed vantage point. Linear perspective is often criticized for favouring vision over the other senses. More than any other system of rendering space, it meets and promotes the needs of occulacentrism. Leaving aside the criticism that it suggests a correct point of view and can be identified with the gaze of an almighty authority (which makes vision and representation vulnerable to power structures and hierarchies), it idealizes and abstracts vision. The promise of objectivity has provoked Berleant (1991) to see the use of linear perspective in representational paintings as an equivalent to disinterestedness.

Linear perspective is a view from one fixed and unblinking eye, not "two active, stereoscopic eyes of embodied actual vision, which give us the experience of depth perception" (Jay 1994: 54–55). Therefore, it flattens space; instead of a visual world, there is a visual field. The key word is distance, which here is to be understood foremost as a visual category. Indeed, vision conveys space more

acutely than any other sense. In art the illusion of perspective not only depends on the correct rendering of space, but also places the observer outside the space, which exists without her and irrelevant of her actions. In fact we are talking about two separate spaces – that of the perceiver and that of the view. Distance is not only conveyed in the picture, but also makes the picture stand apart from the spatial context of the viewer.

Linear perspective is still the most widely accepted way of rendering space; its popularity is partly based on the fact that it most closely resembles the human experience of visual perception (see Lehari 1997). This also means that linear perspective is still used as the most common model for conveying space. Berleant claims that, although we accept alternative models offered in physics and other sciences, space is still understood in Cartesian terms. He further suggests that the representation of landscape in this model can be called panoramic landscape: "A panoramic landscape emphasizes physical distance and breadth of scope, offering a primarily visual experience that both rests on a sense of separation between viewer and landscape and conveys that separation in pictorial form" (Berleant 1991: 63). The environment is seen as an image which is both a representation of a model and a particular example.

The tendency to treat landscape as a primarily visual entity creates a separation between the perceiver and the object. The space between the object and its perceiver becomes distance, which in turn suggests the parallel existence of two disparate spaces: that of the viewer and that of the object. Furthermore, this clear distinction creates a hierarchy: the here-and-now reality of the observer suggests that the space of the view is fictional.

In its panoramic form, landscape refers back to the first meaning of one of its synonyms, scenery. The word comes from the Greek *skene* – the stage area that was originally set against the background of a landscape, and later a stage building. The close connections with "scene" and "scenario" still echo in its obsolete meaning "a moving exhibition of feeling". Tuan's emotional observation that scenery now

can seldom command such a response describes the separation of the viewer and the object: "(t)he scenic spot along the highway presents us with picture-window glimpses of nature which, sublime as it often is, rarely moves us to any response more strenuous than the taking of a snapshot" (Tuan 1990: 133). It is interesting to note that the term "scenery" in theatre seems to have strangely taken on some connotations from its use in nature. It suggests a decorative background, a still picture that does not live or act together with the performance. In Western theatre history, theatre architecture has produced a fabulous container of seeing. Although there are numerous other practices (street theatre, folk theatre, Elizabethan theatre etc.), from the Renaissance onward traditional stage space has been conveyed as a picture framed by a proscenium arch. Scenography in such spaces has relied on linear perspective by using painted sets placed on multiple planes, which originally formed three types of scenes: urban, rural and interior. The separation of stage and auditorium was amplified by the gradual introduction of an elevated stage floor and the use of different lighting.

To some extent, this scenographic solution exemplifies the model of linear perspective by visually reproducing the mental image of receding pictures placed behind one another. This type of scenography, which lasted well into the 20th century, constructs a fictional extension of audience space, which from certain central seats follows the lines of the auditorium hall and can be taken as a true illusion, while its contents can conflict with the character of the auditorium. The introduction of angled perspective in the Baroque era created stage illusions of a different world from that of the spectators in terms of scale and subject matter. The inevitable decision to fix a place in the auditorium from which the view in the linear perspective is seen correctly bears political, ideological and hierarchical connotations. In court theatres, it was classically the place of the ruler; ideologically, it expresses the idea of having one correct view. The two-dimensional rendering of space in linear or angled perspective and its placement on stage concentrated the acting area to the front, since a linear placement of

receding objects in stage space would not allow actors to move into the depth of the stage without shattering the illusion. Therefore, the interaction with scenery was minimal. This transformation exemplifies the manner in which the system of representation becomes a mode of seeing. That is one of the reasons why the term "scenery" (or "set design") has been suppressed by scenography, which denotes a total acting environment. The very expression "behind the scenes" reveals the unreality of a two-dimensional picture. Much in the same line, the aesthetician Anne Cauquelin (2004: 35–36) describes the idea of landscape as a visual concept: "(t)here is no outside in landscape; you cannot go around it to get behind it. It is a façade, scenery, and its depth is an illusion. It lacks an 'outside' as does a painting in its classical form." Cauquelin articulates the idea of landscape as discontinuance: it is a segment of nature, and it is bound together and visually separated. Therefore, discussed in the framework of Cartesian vision, it seems apt to suggest that perhaps the term landscape has also acquired some theatrical connotations as a prospect, a picturesque background and a vista. However, to some extent, the idea of landscape as a view is inevitable. Landscapes can be visually appealing or appalling; in both cases, they provoke visual aesthetic interest, which is often the first means of relating to a landscape.

An interesting approach to visuality is proposed in cultural geography. The visual or pictorial turn of the 1980s started to regard landscape as a way of seeing in which nature is a medium and culture an agent. The pictorial turn was initiated in response to the linguistic paradigm which disregarded the visual side of landscape for the application of linguistic models. Most European landscapes are a result of human interaction with nature; even decisions about what is preserved in the current state (nature reserves for instance) intervene with natural processes. Therefore it is possible to regard a landscape itself as a representation of ideals and experiences. Landscape becomes a mental construct, or as Daniels and Cosgrove state: "landscape is a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolizing surroundings. This is not to say that landscapes are immaterial.

They may be represented in a variety of materials and on many surfaces – in paint on canvas, in writing on paper, in earth, stone, water and vegetation on ground. A landscape park is more palpable, but no more real, nor less imaginary than a landscape painting or poem" (Daniels, Cosgrove 2007: 1). It follows that landscape itself is a representation, which makes all other representations, whether in film, theatre or other arts, secondary (Mitchell 1994: 14). It is recognized in the arts that representation depicts the physical landscape as well as its cultural connections, its emphasis, and distortions that the landscape withholds. The same holds true for physical landscapes.

The understanding of landscape as a representation of a symbolic ordering projects the understanding of the same physical landscape, as well as history, to the interpretation of primarily visual signs. It suggests a certain distance between the perceiver and the object. The cultural anthropologist Tim Ingold (2000: 20–21) criticizes this view for its closed structure. Landscape as a cultural image demands a certain knowledge to recognize the landscape in the first place, and therefore the access is limited. In such a view, knowledge, understanding and the ability to "read" the landscape become as important as the actual environment itself: one has to know its history, its erasures and additions, issues related to memory and even imagination to be able to interpret the results. One actually needs to know the code in order to break it. The predominance of visual signs that carry a meaning poses the threat of treating landscape as a vehicle, a multi-sensory medium, which can lead to the disregard of landscape in its own value. To some extent, this critique coincides with the phenomenological attitude of appreciating phenomena in their own right. In the background, the idea of encoding-decoding hints at the age-old practice of seeing nature as the embodiment of religious, mythological or moral values. However, vision should not be treated apart from other sources of information. At best, this could lead to a synthesized approach to landscape that does not give predominance to the visual impact on the observer, which indeed is often the first impact.

1.1.3 Participatory landscape

The idea of the panoramic landscape rests on the distance between the viewer and the object; the space that separates them is conceived as distance. The view is seen from a particular point in space outside the immediacy of the landscape. Berleant (1991: 63) suggests that this approach exemplifies Newtonian space. Ultimately, the viewer and object exist in different places, which can easily create a hierarchy of places. The position of the perceiver is regarded as real, which makes the space of the "scene" fictional, even if the landscape is real and physical and heralds the predominance of the viewer.

As its logical counterpart, Berleant proposes the concept of participatory landscape, which he originally introduced to describe painting (Berleant 1991: 69–70). Participatory landscape addresses the perceiver's bodily perception and engages other senses besides vision. Berleant's concept is based on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of perception, which grants the phenomenal human body prime significance in perception. According to Merleau-Ponty, the body carries out multiple functions: it places one in the physical and sensory world, and its dual capacity to perceive and be perceived guarantees a point of stability and continuance in the mobile world; in short, it makes perception of the world possible (Merleau-Ponty 1993, 2005). Since a number of concepts in this dissertation (e.g. place, aesthetic engagement) are intimately connected to the understanding of the phenomenal body, the following chapter gives an overview of the phenomenal body in place.

Firstly, the body works as the original viewpoint. The system of co-ordinates is absolute only in relation to the living, moving, sensing and remembering body, since all three (actually four) spatial planes implicitly intersect in it. In addition, all planes are perceived as dual: right and left, above and below, front and back. The exchangeability of the planes indicates a relative point of origin, which in the subject-centred space is the body. The philosopher Edward Casey points out that the upright posture in which we stand and move is the most important somatic

axis (Casey 2000: 98). To some extent, this is also mirrored in the use of language, where such adverbs as up and down, and right and left have acquired evaluative functions. Also, on the symbolic level, above and below, as well as right and left, have different (yet often cross-cultural) meanings. The relativity of the directions and dimensions depends on the ability to turn and move. The body makes the perception of the three-dimensionality of space possible. The moving body is part of the visible world and only as such can it operate in the four-dimensional environment among other phenomena. The phenomenal body's ability to perceive itself as perceiving, to see and be seen, sense and be sensed, to move and feel itself move, results in a constant negotiation, a dialogue with the outside environment, which guarantees the embodied implacement in the world (Merleau-Ponty 1993: 20–22, 41, 50). Movement, even imagined and/or projected movement, guarantees the multidimensional dynamicity of the world.

The self-awareness of the lived-moving body, the experience of moving and feeling-itself-move, creates a leeway of potentiality that extends beyond the body proper. It is the realm of possible action, which Casey attributes to the by-body, the body by which actions can be realized. (Casey 2000: 53) This potentiality is especially appealing for environmental experience in art, since it helps to build a bridge to the ability to perceive fiction and experience it as real.

A distant view on canvas can issue an invitation to the viewer by engaging her bodily perception. The easiest means is by the sense of movement. Such compositional aids as a staircase, road or river address the experience of movement in the lived body. "A road beckons to the viewer in the same way that a spoken word commands our attention and a question compels an answer", Berleant has poetically written (Berleant 1991: 68). A road takes the viewer into the distance, makes her follow the path deeper into the picture. Vermeer's "The Artist in His Studio" invites the perceiver to peek over the artist's shoulder. The figure of the painting artist – or more precisely the sense of peeking – becomes a bridge that the viewer builds between herself and the still image. These engaging

elements activate imagination, which is based on the lived body's experience of moving, multi-sensory engagement, perceiving and being perceived. The landscape that surrounds the path can thereby become organized into sequences, experienced as the changing centres of attention that the road takes us to. As a result, Berleant notes the emergence of engagement with the picture – instead of looking at discrete elements, such as trees or mountains, one looks at the landscape as a field of action: "participatory landscape requires that we look *into* the space, that we enter it, so to speak, and become a part of it"[4] (Berleant 1991: 69). The difference between the actuality of the perceiver and the fictionality of the view dissolves since the perceiver transgresses the distance between the two spaces. In this context, it is no longer important whether we are dealing with a two-dimensional representation of a landscape or a landscape. The engagement of one's bodily perception, which can be multi-sensory and does not rest on vision alone, is pivotal. (Berleant 1991: 73, 75) In the case of physical environments, the experience can be more active and encompassing, but it is a matter of degree, not nature. The perceiver is a part of the landscape, which becomes her multi-sensory environment that engages more senses than visual perception alone.

1.1.4 What is landscape?

Previous chapters mapped the various ways of looking at landscape and discussed the problems of defining landscape as a hermeneutic concept. The definition of landscape can vary from discipline to discipline. In general, it can be understood as a territorial unit which has clear boundaries that separate it from other units and within these limits shows similar traits. Depending on the field of research, these similar elements can be geographical, biological, historical or aesthetic. It is crucial whether the researcher, the perceiver, places herself inside or outside the landscape. To some extent, a pure view from the outside is impossible if landscape as a concept depends on the perceiver's experience. Landscape is not

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only a visual concept; the limits of the landscape are equally determined by the viewer's knowledge and interest, which makes landscape a hermeneutic concept. In addition to the perceiver's position, it depends on the horizon, the conceptual, physical and experiential limits of landscape. The question of the hermeneutic character of landscape cannot be underestimated in the context of the current dissertation, which focuses on the perception of landscape in a specific situation determined by a theatrical performance (including scenography), the audience and the relationship between the two.

In order to understand the perception of fictional and real landscape in a multi-sensory surrounding, the open-air environment that envelops audience and performers, this dissertation has adopted the idea of participatory landscape. It expresses a shift from the vision-dominated perception that landscape and theatre both have traditionally shared (alternative ways of perception have gained prominence in fields of landscape research, as well as in performance studies since the 1960s). While landscape can be a view, the dominance of vision leads to the separation of the perceiver and the object, in which the actuality of the perceiver, her here-and-now reality, makes landscape fictional. Alternatively, landscape is a multi-sensory environment which engages the perceiver's bodily perception in its entirety. Within the framework of phenomenological environmental aesthetics, Arnold Berleant proposes two complementary concepts: panoramic and participatory landscape. The first denotes visually constituted landscape, and the second a multi-sensory one which engages bodily perception. The current study focuses on the participatory landscape, which addresses imagination and active multi-sensory perception without the necessity of physical movement. This helps to clarify the problems of perceiving theatre performances in landscape. The discussion will return to the specific questions of the performance environment in the chapters 2.1 Performing (in) a landscape and 4.2 Nowhere in Vargamäe. To outline the close connections between landscape and performance, the following chapters will narrow the question to landscape as a lived environment that is imbued with narratives.

1.2
Lived landscape

LANDSCAPE IS ALWAYS temporal. On the one hand, the perception and experience of landscape are time-bound. On the other hand, landscape itself is a product of time. Landscape has been metaphorically compared to a palimpsest in which elements of different periods are visible at the same time. Part of this phenomenon owes it existence to "natural time", and part is caused by human engagement. Landscapes almost always consist of elements that date back to different periods. Furthermore, it is easy to recognize their temporal nature. Trees grow and fall. Earth's surface and stones have almost become symbols of eternity and take the perceiver into times immemorial. Tilled fields are old and new at the same time: they may have been in the same place for decades, but are still created anew each year. Plants, which have a shorter life cycle than trees, constantly remind the viewer of time. Not only may one witness growing, blooming and withering in the various plants in the same meadow, the knowledge that buds turn into flowers, and berries follow blossoms, keeps time in mind. Elementary botanical knowledge and previous experience makes it possible to see different times in one time, one period embedded in another. Time is present through seasons, especially in the delicate moment of passing from one to the next. The first flowers that make their way through snow are interpreted as signs of spring, and the first yellow leaves signal fall. This is also true of the soundscape: in

Estonia, the abrupt silence that follows the ceaseless polyphony of birds singing is a sign of approaching autumn, followed by cries of migrating storks, while the first calls of parus in winter awaken dreams of spring.

Signs of human interaction are equally constant reminders of time. It is impossible to speak of an ahistorical landscape, although some layers may be more prominent than others, thus creating the illusion of a singular or relatively new landscape. Although it is easy to associate a sense of nostalgia with landscapes, since past places are seen from a present point of view, not all landscapes are immediately perceived as historical ones. The modern cityscape, which falls outside of the scope of the current study, is an excellent example of an environment that hides its origins. In fact, the practice of rebuilding can change the face of a city, but at the same time retain the structure of streets and building lots, which is less obvious. The Old Town of Tallinn, for example, is a result of constant rebuilding: new styles have been compiled layer by layer on top of previous ones without fully erasing the past. Thus, without specific knowledge it is easy to regard the Old Town of Tallinn, which as a living environment consists of elements from the Middle Ages to the 21th century, as a homogeneous structure. The contrast with modern architecture in medieval cities articulates the temporal dimension. In landscape, contemporary mobile phone masts can appear side by side with old stone fences, and new bridges are built on old roads. Paths and roads themselves are reminders of people who walked through the same landscape yesterday, a month ago or last century. As Christopher Tilley (1994: 31) observes, walking on a path is a paradigmatic act of walking in someone's footsteps. But landscapes exist here and now and thus the past related to them is always to be interpreted from the present. The first signs of ageing that can be easily read in man-made objects and constructions awaken feelings of nostalgia, the growth of which the geographer David Lowenthal (1975) observes in contemporary society. The feeling of the life that was once led is an invitation to imagine, and this accentuates the human dimension in the landscape.

In this view, landscape becomes a storage of physical and non-physical memory, not only an outcome of lives lived, but the bearer of stories and memories. "Landscape is a pattern of historic memory, consisting of both visible and invisible traces left by the millennia-long human culture in all its variability. Humans are not only born into their surroundings, but also create and recreate that surrounding" (Palang et al 2004: 159). Thus values and ideas that affect the landscape form a part of the stories woven into the very same landscape.

1.2.1 Landscape and living

Temporality is at the core of landscape, in its natural as well as man-made elements, which are interconnected. Thus it is easy to imagine, reconstruct or recall its past. In short, it is impossible to disregard the past that every landscape embodies and puts forth in its existence. However, landscape is not a continuous, smoothly flowing story, but a series of fragments: disruptions, erasures and additions which can be observed on several levels, including the interaction of people and landscape on practical and cultural levels. The word "cultural" is problematic, since in its widest sense practical economic interaction, e.g. providing an everyday livelihood, is also a matter of culture. Although the dissertation adopts a holistic view of landscape that includes material and non-material elements, as well as the processes that affect them, it is necessary to differentiate between connections that serve practical needs and shape landscape for these purposes, and connections that help to establish the identity of people, and contribute to cultural memory, their implacement or, in Heideggerian terms, "being in the world".

In the popular view, it is human agency that marks the distinction between natural and cultural landscapes (Sinijärv 2001, Palang 2001). This approach signals the opposition between nature and human life, nature and culture. Instead, it is useful to regard natural and cultural landscapes as layers that are always

present, in which the cultural landscape is not imposed on the (original) elements of nature, but in which both are constituted interactively and interdependently in the process of living in the landscape. Different practical needs and forms of livelihood demand certain conditions; a particular way of living in (and/or off) the land is closely linked to the possibilities offered by the environment, and its results, in turn, affect the environment in question. Traditions, values, ideals, socio-economic changes and power-relations all change the landscape. Landscape is the manifestation of a certain kind of historical pattern of memory in a physical form that consists of visible and invisible traces that are continuously stored on top of one another in a circular self-referential fashion. It is recognized in the arts that representation depicts the physical landscape, as well as its cultural connections, emphasis and distortions that the landscape contains and the artist supports. Representation is always a question of choice against a tradition, whether the negation, approval or renewal. Yi-Fu Tuan (1990: 79) claims that a world-view in its broadest sense is a selective reflection of the conditions and rhythms of the habitat, its salient elements, whether social, physical or cultural. And this abstract image is, in turn, projected back on the physical landscape, while the changes in the physical surroundings affect the abstraction. It is a circular self-referential process, which ultimately can blur the boundaries between mindscape and landscape, or the representation and the represented, as the geographer Kenneth Olwig (2004: 42) calls it. Thus landscape is the embodiment of living in the widest sense.

Landscape consists of visible and invisible patterns, elements and layers. Its past, the processes of its development and the logic behind it form a network of relationships that can be metaphorically compared to a map, where trails wind on a temporal scale. On a subjective level, the paths take the form of stories[5]. Perhaps the simplest and most eloquent statement suggests that a landscape can be called

5 Stories and narratives are used as non-specific terms to cover the entire field of narrative content, from non-fiction to fiction, from personal memories, historical tales and folklore to films and performances. In the particular context, it should be noted that within the framework of social constructionism any cultural formation can be discussed as sets of narratives.

cultural (i.e. meaningful to a group of people) as long as there is a story to be told about it. When the myths and stories become scarce and are gradually forgotten, so is the landscape. (Palang and Paal 2002: 180) Landscape memory depends on the physical site, as well as people that reciprocally support each other. The invisible elements, whether personal memories, family stories, legends, myths or historical events, are only partly protected by the physical form of the landscape, and partly by people.

Significant elements in a landscape are landmarks in many ways. Firstly, they can be central to recognizing a territorial unit as a landscape, its focal points or the cornerstones of its identity. Secondly, these outstanding elements gather stories, and serve as landmarks to events. On a very personal and subjective level, a particular bend in the road reminds me of my first bicycle accident, and a tree tells me the story of my great-grandmother taking shelter from an air raid. These stories are often passed on from generation to generation and become family legends. In *Truth and Justice*[6], an outstanding series of novels in Estonian literature that follows the life of a family from the 1870s to the 1930s, generations recall the feud involving the ditches dug on the borders of the farm; every visit to the borders is a part of an age-old chronicle of the fight. The author, Anton Hansen Tammsaare, calls the phenomenon of handing down memories having "memories of memories". The process is two-faceted: recalling the stories and memories also recalls the places where they happened. As Casey (1987) states, memories tend to have a spatial context .

On a more general level, the stories are related to folklore or cultural knowledge. On a folkloric map, Estonia is not a country, but the footsteps of the fictional hero Kalevipoeg. A number of boulders, lakes and rivers are the results of this giant's everyday labour: fields that he ploughed, stones he threw, and places he rested in. A rich group of site-specific legends, for example, is connected to the area of Neeruti in northern Estonia, where Kalevipoeg's actions resulted in such landscape elements as a saddle-shaped hill or a kidney-shaped lake. The Rakvere

6 Productions based on *Truth and Justice* will be discussed in 4.2 Nowhere in Vargamäe.

Theatre made use of the connotations by staging the absurd comedy *Kalevipoeg* on the Neeruti Saddle Hill in 2003. In contemporary society, sites of cultural knowledge are often equipped with signs, plaques or monuments, e.g. birthplaces of authors, composers, outstanding political or social figures. Battlefields become sites of public commemoration, marked with monuments. Culture adds landmarks and equally adds stories to existing landmarks and landscapes.

Both personal and cultural memories can contribute to the formation of personal and social identities of groups or individuals. Landscape can be used to exemplify and express the common history of a certain group of people and it is not only appreciated for its aesthetic qualities, but also for its contribution to identity – including the labour invested in the land and battles fought for it, personal and shared. In the realm of national landscapes (or any type of landscape that a certain society finds comfort in), landscape tells the story of the group's existence.

Performance in landscape can take the form of keeping the landscape alive by telling its story or even teaching and popularizing its history. Depending on the context, it can be the re-articulation or an (artificial) attempt at resuscitation of the identity of the people. Even outside the context of performing, the stories embedded in the particular landscape performance can still draw attention to the history of the landscape, which is also a narrative. On a larger scale, the idea of landscapes that contribute to the identity of a group of people is strongly connected to the re-articulation of certain environments in the arts and media.

This knowledge, stories about a landscape, can also be mediated in various ways. Thus it is possible to have an experience of an environment without actually ever being there physically. An observant reader can make her way through Paris from the knowledge of the places rendered in *Triumphal Arch*, appreciate the beauty of English moors and know their coldness and chilly wind from *Wuthering Heights* or a popular BBC television series such as *Heartbeat* or *The Royal*. Art and mass media can create strong images of places the reader,

viewer or listener has not been to or that might not even exist. For example *Wuthering Heights* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* evoke images of a landscape now long past. Depending on the author's focus, these mediated places reflect the original landscapes to a greater or lesser degree, but inevitably contain meanings and associations transcribed by their authors. When experienced, these environments and landscapes become personal, sometimes even intimate. The projection of these places upon previous spatial experiences of each individual reader (listener or viewer) – upon her mindscape – creates unique and subjective place experiences. Mindscape is not only formed by personal experiences, but also by shared cultural knowledge. Images from films, mass media, scenes from theatre performances, vivid descriptions or the ambience of locations in literature become a part of each individual perceiver's subjective mindscape, where they are interpreted according to the individual's earlier experiences of environments and are consequently integrated into the mental landscape. Mediated experiences can vary in character and intensity from the recognition of the existence of a site to establishing a sense of topophilia, affection for a place. The human geographer Sirpa Tani (1995: 34–35) proposes to call this process of experiencing mediated places "spatial transcending". Another question, which falls outside the concrete scope of this study, is the question of environments that are built to respond to fictional landscapes conveyed in literature and films. In extreme cases, these can take the form of theme parks (Disneylands, Viking villages etc.). On a smaller scale, preserving certain landscapes can be decided based on the shared image of a landscape which may very well no longer exist. The geographer Helen Sooväli draws attention to the modifications of the landscapes on the island of Saaremaa, which are regarded as an indispensable part of Estonian national landscapes. Saaremaa, one of the important tourist destinations in Estonia, is advertised via images of open mosaic landscapes, coastal cliffs with juniper bushes and fields lined with stone fences. The particular imagery is related to the representations of Saaremaa in Estonian landscape painting and photography that started a

trend in the first decades of the 20th century. However, the open meadows and fields are the result of a struggle for survival in harsh natural and socio-economic conditions: the lack of agricultural land, the consequent exhaustion of the soil and socio-economic isolation led to the over-cultivation of existing fields and a search for arable land. Thus the admired images are marks of age-old poverty. Currently these landscapes have become exceptions and exist in advertisements and coffee-table books rather than in reality. The importance of agriculture has declined drastically, especially since the 1990s, and a substantial portion of the tilled fields have turned into woodlands. (Sooväli 2004: 110–111) However, the admiration for these landscapes, which are mainly fictional, and the desire to replicate them in the original environment still exist. To some extent, museums that preserve total environments, e.g. the homesteads of the author Anton Hansen Tammsaare (1878–1940) in central Estonia and of the politician and writer Carl Robert Jakobson (1841–1882) in south-western Estonia, also preserve and build fictional landscapes that date back to the lifetime of these outstanding figures, but would not otherwise retain their appearance because of political, social, economic and technological changes.

The attachment to mnemonic structures keeps a landscape in a certain condition, because it prevents the environment from altering too much. Otherwise, it would cease to respond to its invisible layers. The interconnectedness of places and stories is reminiscent of historical *ars memorativa*, the practice of joining things in memory with places in a familiar environment. Places, landscape elements (or streets and houses in an urban context), serve as reminders, a map of memory. The real landscape equally serves as a map of recollections to walk through. Stories and landscape exist in a reciprocal, mutually supporting relationship. Historically, most of the population on Vormsi Island in Estonia was of Swedish origin. As World War II rolled over Estonia, the majority of the inhabitants took the opportunity to migrate to Sweden. They left behind farms and fields, entire villages – a landscape shaped by a centuries-long tradition of

living. After the war, the island was resettled with people who took over the lived landscape without any knowledge or feeling of the narratives that connected the diverse landscape elements, the logic of fields and farmhouses, village streets and roads. To express their understanding, new houses were built, new paths and streets traced the identity of new settlers, until the island became the embodiment of their living. However, the emigrants had preserved memories and stories of their island and passed them on to their children. When Estonia regained its independence and launched a land reform, many returned to the home island, only to find that the stories no longer matched the physical landscape. (Palang 2001) In dealing with such cases, the knowledge of a landscape's history is perhaps even more important than the presence of the physical elements of the landscape, since it makes it possible to recognise their non-presence as a sign of its own. The invisibility of certain elements makes them even more prominent. However, this requires an understanding of the landscape's history, the issues of erasures and additions, memory and fantasy. For example, the remnants of collective farms that haunt contemporary landscapes in eastern Europe are not necessarily comprehensible to foreigners or younger generations that did not live under the Soviet regime. Such layers create time barriers that are not transparent in the landscape. (Palang et al 2004: 155–156) Regardless of the attitude towards vast fields or collapsing sheds, they are an integral part of the landscape. Furthermore, they embody the main way of interacting with a landscape for half a century. A landscape today is the result of layers of past actions and can expose visible remnants of many different periods, which hardly ever erase all the elements of past formations, either in their physical or mental modes. Landscape is a sum of erasures, additions, accretions and redundancies. It is, in fact, a sum because not all elements can be removed at the same time (Palang et al 2004: 159–160).

It is easiest to observe the connection between landscape and stories in the case of long-term inhabitation. It is not surprising that such authors as Tuan and Ingold speak of dwelling, of lived landscape as a home. Indeed, home acts as the

locus of memories, a shelter that hosts and protects the intimate functions of living. Thus it is relatively easy to express and understand emotions connected to home, the feeling of belonging. A home place is not limited to a building. Gaston Bachelard (1999) speaks of nooks of the house, corners and cupboards as safe havens, homes within homes. By the same power, a home extends outwards, out to the landscape, which can equally be a dwelling place. Familiarity decreases as one moves further from home, resulting in concentric zones around the centre of the home, whether located in the house or elsewhere (Tuan 2005: 86–92, 145–147). However, it should be noted that, although Tuan, Ingold and Lehari tend to treat home as an arche- or prototype of dwelling and taking refuge, the stories connected to one's home can be varied in character. Even outside the oppressive and restrictive dimension of the home, it can also be a place of work instead of rest (Creswell 2004: 25). The same holds true for home landscapes or landscapes as home, which can be the embodiment of gaining a living and participating in a social network. In agricultural societies, where farming was historically the primary mode of making a living, the home environment was also a place of work. In contemporary society, work and living environments have become separated. Therefore, especially for urbanites, the dimension of physical labour is less acute in the perception of landscape, although landscape may very well be the view that opens from the office window. All in all, home is an intensive locale for emotions, positive or negative, a place densely populated with stories.

The relationship between the perceiver and the landscape can be viewed as an ongoing dialogue that should be discussed from within, i.e. as an interactive process. Landscape is therefore not merely a composition of individual entities, but a construction created and understood through relationships between objects and subjects. (Ingold 2000: 189, 191) The perceiver's ability to see the landscape depends on the scope to which she recognizes or has built relationships between the objects and subjects. Here, landscape is defined by the relationships one has with it, and not by vision or regional characteristics. As constituents that gather

the individual objects together into a landscape, these relationships also establish the limits of the landscape. Landscape ends where the recognizable relationships become too scarce or too weak for the perceiver to follow.

1.3 Perceiving a landscape

LANDSCAPE IS AN embodiment of living, a result of living and thinking not only in, but also together with, landscapes. People structure and organize landscape – a spatio-temporal phenomenon – with stories. "Just as landscapes are constructed out of the imbricated actions and experiences of people, so people are constructed in and dispersed through their habituated landscapes: each individual, significantly, has a particular set of possibilities presenting an account of their own landscape: stories." (Pearson 2006: 12) These stories can be a reason for conserving the landscape in its present form to preserve the landmarks, which are believed to have personal, regional or global cultural value. Therefore, walking in a landscape is an act of remembering and retelling; landscape sustains and preserves stories, just as the stories preserve the landscape.

However, I would like to argue that the narrative dimension of landscape is not only available for people who are familiar with it or only by the virtue of prior knowledge. The problem is especially acute in site-specific theatre performances that not only use the existing landscape as an integral part of their scenography, but rely on the connotations present in the landscape. Visitors with different backgrounds can have very diverse knowledge about a place, which leads to serious consequences in the reception (Võsu 2004: 200). Locals may find something oversimplified and tedious, while outsiders can fail to establish links

between various fragments. Yet, in some sense, theatre is an easy case, since it has the capacity to perform the stories. Some can be included in the production as narrations or enactments, but the visual, auditory, olfactory and, to some extent, even tactile environment is experienced in its fullness outside the guiding dimension of the performance. It is possible to associate different stories with a landscape, especially based on previous experiences with similar environments, or to interpret certain lines and passages in a text (regardless of their original intent) as hints for the understanding of certain landscape elements. To a great extent, the reception of a performance is a conscious exercise of perception that involves elements of previous experience, as well as imagination.

Perhaps the easiest way of describing the relationship between landscape and narratives is through the metaphor of encoding. Landscape is then seen as a set of autonomous layers, a spatio-temporal composition. During different times, various meanings have been assigned to landscape elements. While the idea of encoding-decoding, writing and reading works well on a general metaphorical level and helps to clarify the process, it can lead to a narrow understanding of landscape. In the process of deciphering the meanings of a landscape, one actually needs to know the key to locate them in the landscape. According to Ingold, the cipher is more often than not present in the story, which means that one needs to know the story in order to recognize it in the landscape, which builds a hierarchical relationship between stories and their physical embodiment. As an alternative, Ingold suggests that landscape should be regarded as a network of clues. While ciphers are centrifugal, leading towards the uncovering of one meaning, clues are centripetal, leading towards the understanding of an environment as a network of interrelated meanings. (Ingold 2000: 21–22) The reading of clues thus is a matter of educating perceptive skills, learning to notice and see, which in turn leads to the discovery of the next associations. Perception, in this view, is a skill that can be learned and practised like any other skill that is needed to make one's way in an environment.

To elaborate his argument, Ingold uses the example of Australian Aborigines, who see their landscape as a concrete outcome of their ancestor's deeds during an era called the Dreaming. The birth of various landscape forms is directly connected to their actions. The activities of the ancestors, their wandering, hunting and sleeping not only left an imprint on the landscape surface, but also metamorphosed into forms as they went along, so the ancestor and the movement are ever present. (Ingold 2000: 21, 53) Although the idea of continuous movement is captivating, it does not perhaps differ greatly from other location myths that tell the story of a place's coming into being. The uniqueness is in the way the landscape and the history of the group are taught. Firstly, landscape and the acts are regarded as a formative whole, not actions conducted upon a landscape. Secondly, people who need to learn about the landscape or history (newcomers, initiates) are told the stories on site, by showing, retelling and acting out events. This is a form of reinforcing the identity of a group by using landscape. It is not possible to separate the story from the site. Thirdly, as Ingold observes, people repeat ancestral trails so that the trails become theirs, connected to their feelings and their footprints, thereby tying their stories and identities to the landscape. On the most important level, the act of being told the story of a waterhole or having it enacted on site, perceiving the water hole and then lifting one's eyes from the ground just like her ancestor did, by experiencing the same land, eventually becomes her story of perceiving, her story of meeting her ancestors in the landscape. Therefore, it is not surprising that stories are often told in first person. (ibid.: 53) But the most important aspect here is that the person learns to recognize certain elements in the landscape, to experience and connect them into a network of meanings, which expands the more one learns to see and notice. Ingold concludes, "Our knowledgeability consists, rather, in the capacity to situate such information, and understand its meaning, within the context of a direct perceptual engagement with our environments" (ibid.: 21). This is the education of attention (*sensu* Gibson).

Skilled perception is admired in indigenous seafarers, who are able to navigate seas without consulting maps or using complex technical instruments. The sea is a special case, because it lacks landmarks in the ordinary sense, especially further away from the coastline, where the mass of water stretches in all directions to the horizon. In northern latitudes, where the impact of the polar day makes summer nights short and white, even navigation by stars becomes complicated. The Micronesians, in their familiar waters, observed currents, the colour and salinity of water, flotsam, the size and character of ocean swells and a number of other factors. (Casey 1993: 27) The Inuit, who have to travel in an all-white environment of snow, can tell their way by paying attention to the structure of the snow, the smell of the wind, salt in the air and an entire complex of non-visual features. The fact that the Aivilik Inuit language includes at least twelve distinct terms for various winds illustrates the primacy of acoustic-olfactory space. The Bushmen of the Kalahari desert have developed a significant visual acuity and tell the size, sex, build and mood of an animal that has left a subtle trail on sand, as well as when it was left. (Tuan 1990: 11, 77–78) These examples show outstanding skills of perception that have developed to suit the needs of a livelihood under certain conditions, in certain characteristic landscapes. The methods of the described way-finding depend on the skills of perception, which have to be adjusted and modified according to each situation and each piece of information. Primarily, this involves the education of attention, which widens the scope of understanding, as well as relating to the world. This type of knowledge cannot be taught outside the given environment, nor can it be fully learned without practising it.

The examples from the practices of indigenous peoples are very vivid. However, the principle of perception as a skill also holds true for contemporary societies and people. Firstly, it is not limited to long inhabitation in a place. Participation in the landscape may be temporary and extend beyond traditional forms that first come to mind (e.g. agriculture or foraging). Narrating, thinking, performing and attending to a performance are also active forms of engagement that guide

attention while being in a landscape as parts of it. The language that we speak reflects the environment on a practical level (words needed to describe the environment, such as the richness of snow- and wind-related terms in Aivilik) as well as conceptually. As Tuan (1990: 77–79) states, an environment directly affects a world-view. Secondly, the principle of educating attention, which is very well articulated in the examples of adjusting to living conditions, is still there. In the urban context, it is remarkable, for example, how quickly the mind works in a traffic jam. As drivers, we consult a map in our heads, trying to locate the possible source of menace and looking for detours. Here the choice of routes is both geographical and experiential: which is the shortest way, which the safest, which most likely to get blocked next? Going into unfamiliar surroundings, one adapts previous knowledge and experiences to new information gathered on site. The richness of information depends greatly on skills of perception.

Naturally, particular ways of living and engaging with the environment affect the development and use of perceptive skills – a leisurely walk in a forest and hunting focus attention differently. To some degree, Ingold adopts the notion of perception put forth by Gibson in ecological psychology. Perception is understood as the intentional movement of the whole being (the sensuously mindful body which engages all senses) in its environment. It is an active process, in which information is constantly collected, negotiated and adjusted to new situations and sensations. It is a continuous process in which old and new information is linked together. Perception in this sense is contextual and depends on the ongoing activity, which directs the focus. (Ingold 2000: 166) As suggested in the initial chapter on defining landscape, landscape depends on what one has learned to look for. Everyday practices, habits, professions polish skills of perception. Picking berries, leisurely strolling, playing sports, watching a theatre performance in a landscape all engage perception and attention differently. Attention is differently structured when the activity is performed alone or in a group. "Knowledge of the world is gained by moving about in it, exploring, attending to it, ever alert

to the signs by which it is revealed. Learning to see, then, is a matter not of acquiring schemata for mentally *constructing* the environment but of acquiring skills for direct perceptual *engagement* with its constituents, human and non-human, animate and inanimate" (ibid.: 55). Perceiving a performance in landscape is the education of attention, of learning perception as a skill on two levels: the possibility of learning about the landscape on a factual level (history, legends, geographical or physical peculiarities etc.), but also the ability to pay attention to certain phenomena, which makes their perception in future possible. The scope of skills can range from practical to conceptual or mythological (e.g. the way a voice travels in certain conditions; the acts of a mythical hero may lead to the image of every valley as someone's bed). Landscape in this understanding is characterized by transparency and depth. This means that one can see into the landscape, and the further one looks, the further one sees. By regarding landscape as a network of centripetal clues, which can be understood by attending to them, conscious perception leads towards the cumulative ability to recognize and perceive more clues, to interpret landscape and participate in its narrative dimension.

Seen as a form of sensory engagement, the realm of perception is not limited to practical needs or long-term dwelling. Landscape is available through awareness and engagement. Perception can open a landscape to a skilled and attuned viewer, which explains to some degree the attraction of new environments for hikers, as well as the richness of experience present in environmental theatre performances. Another way of describing the intimate relationship between people and landscapes is the concept of place, the system of subjectively (and often emotionally) experienced centres of surrounding space. Places contribute to the identity of people (home place) and narratives lift places out of an abstract background.

1.3.1 Place

Place is the personal and meaningful centre of human space, the meaning of which comes from experience, knowledge, perception and engagement with the environment (Lehari 1997: 47–48). This concept is often used in the critique of Cartesian space. Place is then seen as an alternative tool that makes better sense of phenomenal human spatial experience. As Tuan (1990: 163) claims, space becomes place when it acquires definition and meaning. It is not an abstract relationship to surrounding space, but a matter of experience. Instead of a homogeneous grid that is accessible to all perceivers at all times in the same way, place articulates and also explains the subjective experience of being in the world. (Creswell 2004) It echoes in such idioms as "marching in place", "having a place of one's own", "that's a nice place to be", and "getting in place". One can be placed, including placement at a dinner table, which is no matter of accident, but an act of showing people their place. Then it is easy to feel out of place, of being lost on all scales.

Although in dictionaries place appears in a triad of synonyms, place, site and location, given the connotative value acquired in metaphors and idioms, place, location and site are not interchangeable synonyms. On closer inspection, all have slightly different meanings, among which "place" has been turned into a term in its own right. Location can be one of the defining factors of a place: it is situated somewhere and can be described by geographical co-ordinates. Location does not suffice to describe place, but can act as one of the conditions. As Pauli Tapani Karjalainen (2003: 3), a researcher of place, points out, location and place are different means of giving information about a physical point that serve different purposes: place as measured (location) and place as lived. In Estonian, *koht* has been chosen for the term, which relates it to a group of words, including *kohtuma* (meet), *kohalolu* (presence), and *kohatu* (placeless or inappropriate). The relationship to its close synonym *paik* becomes vivid in the adjectives *kohalik* (local) and *paikne* (sedentary), the first of which refers to identity, and the second

to habitual dwelling. In Finnish, *paikka*, which has a different connotation from Estonian *paik*, is used to denote place.

The idea that a place is situated in a particular location does involve problems. A ship that serves as a home during a long journey can be a place, although its physical position in terms of geographical co-ordinates is constantly changing. A nomad camp travels from one location to another and their home moves with them. A pole marks the centre of the world for a group of Australian natives, the Achilpa, who erect it in each of their camps. Thus they take the centre of their subjective world with them everywhere they go. (Eliade 1987: 33) A site (especially in phrases such as construction site or building site) can easily be seen as an empty place to be filled in by something (Casey 1997). However, it is also the site of events or action, a field of potentiality.

For several authors who are discussed at length in this dissertation (Casey, Ingold, Tuan, Karjalainen), place is the means by which human beings inhabit the world. Place arises from experience; it is the meeting place between bodily sensory experience and the rational mind, past and present experience, thought and feeling, the human being and the outside world. Such a concept of place as it is shared in phenomenological environmental aesthetics, human geography and literary studies is deeply influenced, whether explicitly or implicitly, by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of perception.

1.3.1.1 BODY IN PLACE

As human beings cannot possibly exist without space, the body is part of the inescapable reality of always being situated somewhere. According to Merleau-Ponty, the body places us in the world. Space is a proof that it is possible to be somewhere and place is its particularization that is connected to experiencing. (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 42). Thus environment, place and body perform interconnected functions and cannot be regarded separately.

The perceiving body places us in the world, as a part of it literally grants a unique viewpoint. The phenomenal body is an animated, sensing, self-moving and self-aware living body that Casey (1993, 1997) also refers to as "lived body". In addition to his reference to the notion of "lived space" and "lived landscape", he also stresses the continuous dimension of experience. The lived body is a remembering and synthesizing body that not only remembers, but in itself embodies previous experiences.

The body is the zero-point of the surrounding space on multiple levels – it is the zero-point of space since all three planes implicitly intersect in the body and experience (Merleau-Ponty 1993: 50, 54). Such phenomena as dimension, direction and polarity are all related to this bodily point of origin in the network of co-ordinates. In addition, all planes are perceived as doubled: right and left, above and below, front and back, all of which depend on the relative position of the perceiver. They indicate a dynamic point of origin, which is stable only in regard to itself, the body in the subject-centred space. This "(s)omatic and psychological asymmetry is projected into space, which acquires the meaning and value of back and front" (Tuan 1990: 27), right and left, up and down, where they often take on an evaluative connotation.

The immediate bodily placement in space grants a stable "here", a moving and movable place of origin, which enables us to see and perceive the world from a certain location. Therefore, movement is seldom experienced as a series of discreet points of space like dots in a line, but rather as the line itself. Casey argues that, as such, the moving lived body can itself carry the function of place, since it is the constant source of embodied placement. (Casey 1993: 52–53) The ability to see oneself, to see one's body in a place as one of the objects in space, not only increases solidarity with one's own body, but also grounds the understanding of other "heres", other viewpoints. Movement is the prime factor in the perception of the four-dimensional world; the origin of space is related to movement. Even imagined movement makes the world multidimensional by making the

experience of different viewpoints possible. It is productive of space, not via objective displacement of the body, but through the experience of movement. The perception of distance rests on the experience of movement, which helps to estimate how far away an object is and how big it is. Space, in a certain sense, is freedom, the freedom to move, to have space to act. The ability to think abstractly, to imagine abstract space, is provided by the ability to move. Moving as perceiving includes the ability to form concepts and envision (Tuan 1990: 52, 2005: 68). Personal sources of information feed the conceptual understanding of space. Practical skill and the power to develop concepts enhance spatial abilities. (Casey 1993: 52, 72–73) Spatial knowledge is acquired through the exercise of spatial ability, as well as perceptually. Merleau-Ponty elaborates, "our bodily experience of movement is not a particular case of knowledge; it provides us with a way of access to the world and the object, with a 'prakotgnosia', which has to be recognized as original and perhaps primary" (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 140, 387). Perception, experience and movement are constantly intertwining. They inform and influence one another. In addition, the body connects perception and place to the temporal axis. Remembering previous experiences of the same place or other places, and remembering the previous steps that lead to a place, are important for orientation, on the physical and mental level. Memory of previous places is essential in experiencing places. Even upon entering the same place a second time, it is perceived differently, because our knowledge, including bodily experience, differs from the previous time. Lived body, time and place are intimately connected.

Being in place is a pre-requisite and an integral part of existence. Aristotle suggests in *Physics* that there is no being without place, that place is the primary requirement for things to exist (Aristotle 208b, 209a). The minimum is the human body, which is embodied in a place. "We cannot be implaced without being embodied. Conversely, to be embodied is to be capable of implacement"[7] (Casey 1997: 233). Human existence is both implaced and embodied. We come to know

7 Author's italics removed

the worlds as places and through places. As human beings, we receive and make a world through places.

It would also be misleading to see place and space only as oppositions. Space can be the "relative location of objects or places", as well as the distance that lies between them. Or alternatively it is something that connects places together if addressed as a network of places (Casey 1993: 12). Place and space are directly linked to one another; place provides the personal subjective dimension needed for the understanding of space, while space integrates it into the larger (conceptual) picture.

In various disciplines, place is often used in the critique of the abstractness of space. However, there is a danger that the concept of place will acquire the same abstractness and universality that space is accused of having. When used as a general description of a total being-in-the-world, it can easily lose all its particularity and become as universal as space. (Creswell 2004: 20) To adopt the view that place is automatically constituted by the body and therefore we are in place at all times is limiting. It is possible to be in place and feel out of place. Not all places are of the same value and not all places mean the same thing. In its generality, outside the distinct character of experience, it is threatened by ambiguity. To stretch the concept to the other extreme – in the farthest particularity it speaks of the subjective world only and resists any attempts at generalization. In principle, it still makes a different description of the ties between space and human experience possible.

The geographer Tim Creswell ties the problems together, "place is how we make the world meaningful and the way we experience the world" (Creswell 2004: 12). The idea that place is a way of experiencing the world, a relationship, makes it particularly complex, because now it not only stands for an object (a site of inhabitation, or an object of art or research), but also a means of perception.

Place in this sense is an anchoring point that makes it possible to attach information to the surrounding environment. Place is a pause in movement.

Therefore, it is connected to intimate knowledge, as a pause grants the opportunity to get to know something. It is the starting place, destination or resting place in between and, by calling one place a starting place and another a destination, space acquires direction and measure. (Tuan 2005: 138, 180) Place, although here characterized as a pause, is granted by the ability to move. Therefore path and place are reciprocally supportive concepts – a stop on the path becomes a place, while moving from a place creates a path. Both path and place help to structure landscape, and form cognitive maps, constituents of a network of meaning and experience.

1.3.2 Placescape

Place opens from the perceiver's standing point, but is by no means a point itself. It allows movement within its bounds. Place remains the same as long as received knowledge does not change beyond recognition and can be experienced in a similar way; otherwise, the perceiver would already be in a different place. Place is bounded, framed by the perceiver's personal and subjective experience. In a certain sense, landscape possesses the same qualities. It is bounded by a horizon, whether a visual or metaphorical horizon of knowledge (the ability to distinguish certain features that can be grouped together). The visual horizon is a consensual line, which depends on the position of the perceiver, horizontally and vertically. The presence of the perceiver and her subjective viewpoint are vital. Place and landscape both define the inside and the outside, while the limits guarantee the intactness of the inside. In a formalist view, landscape and place come surprisingly close.

Landscape is a potential network of places. As Casey writes, "(a) landscape seems to exceed the usual parameters of place by continuing without apparent end; nothing contains it, while it contains everything, including discrete places, in its environing embrace" (Casey 1997: 25). He seems to disregard the idea of landscape itself as a place, since his concept of place is tied very closely to the idea

of body and implacement. When Casey defines place in Aristotelian terms, as the innermost boundary of what it contains, the body-as-place is the uncontested ever-present place one has, the original place. Landscape starts at the innermost boundary and with its horizon draws the outermost boundary of places to be seen, thus creating a common field for places, a place for places to be. (Casey 1993: 25, 28–29, 1987: 204)

To draw a parallel with theatre, perceiving a landscape suggests being in or identifying a unifying frame (landscape) that can, but does not necessarily, contain other frames (e.g. places and landscape elements). A stage, as such, is a framed space which is set apart from everyday reality. The visual variations of the border range from a circle of spectators to the elaborate proscenium arch that accentuates the stage opening in classical theatres. Environmental scenography is the practice of incorporating the spectators (spatially, visually, auditorially, gesturally etc.) into the same frame with the performers to indicate that they share the same fictional environment of the production (Aronson 1981: 1–5). Similar to Casey's observations about landscape, it places the viewer inside the frame, constituting a shared stage of action. The frame guarantees the integrity of the inside and provides focus. Thus landscape can be experienced as a placescape that connects and frames places. As Lehari (1997: 47–48) points out, places can range from local to global, there is no limit in size and, therefore, landscape can be perceived as a place in its own right.

Casey is particularly keen on body-as-place, the constitutive power of body to be implaced and to create places. To some extent, especially in *Getting Back to Place*, he seems to disregard the physical dimension of place as a part of space. Although within the framework he establishes places are experienced by being there, in its extremity it may suggest that bodily presence is all that is needed for place. Given the definition of place as a meaningful centre of embodied and implaced life, being located somewhere does not automatically constitute a place. Although it provides a location, the centre of a subjective environment, it does not

necessarily participate in the interaction with previous experiences, emotions and thoughts. To recall the description of place in 1.3.1 Place, it is a dialogue between landscape and perceiver and can be recalled, remembered, represented and revisited not only for the experience of having been there, but as an experience of meeting that place in a particular time. Place is not only situated in space, but also in time. Similar to landscape, it is a temporal concept.

Landscape as placescape is important in understanding landscape as an embodiment of living. In his four precepts for understanding landscape, Ingold (2000: 53–54) largely draws on landscape as a network of places. First, landscape is a network of places connected with paths rather than a uniform surface. Secondly, landscape contains and congeals past activities, which are not meanings "pinned upon it". Thirdly, landscapes furnish its inhabitant with points of origin, a network of meaningful places that contribute to her identity. Fourthly, this network fosters social interaction. Altogether, landscape can be characterized by the limits the meaningful places reach, the outermost boundary is the limit of "having a place". "Therefore to perceive a landscape is to carry out an act of remembrance, and remembering is not so much a matter of calling up an external image, stored in the mind, as of engaging perceptually with environment that is itself pregnant with its past." (Ingold 2000: 188) The knowledge in the landscape, the narratives it carries, the understandings and events it embodies can be experienced by finding and making place(s) in the landscape. It should be stressed that implacement is not the same as being located in a point of space. It means attending to the place, being physically and mentally present.

Here, moving between places, way-finding, resembles story-telling rather than using a map, since people move within the context of previous or imagined journeys (Ingold 2000: 227). A path is the embodiment of past movements, not only one's own, but also one's predecessors'. Paths and places in their richness can be experienced by the power of a virtual body, as Merleau-Ponty calls it. The virtual body opens up the potentiality of places by enabling imagination to take

us to places we have not been to. Virtual movement takes the body to potential places of action. If it is possible to imagine a place as a habitat for a phenomenal body, it is possible to experience it (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 106, 154, 250–254). This is paralleled by Casey's concept of by-body, which extends beyond the body proper (the identifier of "here") and outlines an area of potential action; it is the body *by* which actions can be realized (Casey 1993: 52–53). By establishing the body as an indicator of temporal axis, the potentiality of places extends not only in space, but also in time. For example, spatial transcending, discussed in 1.2 Lived landscape, considers the experience of fictional places mediated in arts, which often travel in time.

Having a meaningful relationship to a landscape, the nature of which can range from the familiarity of home to the awe and fear provoked by unknown territories, is possible through the experience of place. Landscape is available in places and can itself be perceived as a place. Embodied human existence takes place in places. Theatre performances, which portray human lives, create places on multiple levels: the places (or placelessness) of characters that speak of their relation to the environment, the places of performers and the place experience of the audience. It is easy to recognize landscape's potential contribution to theatre in terms of its narrative character. Performing as an act of guiding perception potentially has the capacity to widen the scope of the audience's perception and develop it as a skill, but can also lead to experiences of the landscape which do not necessarily support the performance in question.

Juhan (Ivo Uukkivi) in the performance of *Bogship*, 2005.

2. PERFORMING (IN) A LANDSCAPE

2.1 Performing (in) a landscape

IN THE HISTORY of theatre in Europe, the tradition of performing outdoors has run parallel to performing inside. Early Greek rituals, which are commonly regarded as the beginning of Western theatre practice, were performed in landscapes, which were later redesigned as growingly elaborate places of performance. Folk rituals all over Europe and various forms of street theatre (wandering troupes, commedia dell'arte etc.) regarded the open air as their home. Perhaps the dichotomy between theatre in the open air and specially built places of performance is characteristic of present-day European theatre because it is easy and even somewhat appealing to seek a contrast between technically equipped and safe performance houses and the open air, where theatre makers and audiences are vulnerable to weather conditions, natural lighting changes, noise and even unexpected visits from wildlife. Hooks cannot be attached to the sky and there is no machinery below the ground. Although the history of open air theatre forms an uninterrupted tradition (partly charted in Arnold Aronson's influential *The History and Theory of Environmental Scenography*), the development of theatre architecture and technology and the changing roles of theatre in society, which have affected the position and function of specialized theatre buildings on physical and mental maps, have led to the prominence of interior performances over exterior ones. Therefore, open-air theatre is an exception in

current European theatre practice, especially in repertory theatres. If theatre is taken as a form of play, then due to its relatively uncontrollable environment and technical shortcomings (e.g. power, lighting and sound equipment, seating, auxiliary rooms for technical staff and actors, and transport all have to be specially provided) theatre in the open air, especially in landscapes, is dark play which highlights risks and unawareness (see the chapter 4.1 Play environment). Leaving aside the technical problems, performing outside of theatre houses is a specific environmental matter. Compared to theatre buildings, which provide a limited number of places of performance, the location of the performance is an integral part of artistic decisions, which in fact precedes all necessary scenographic decisions. The relationship between performance and audience areas, matters of arriving at a site and moving about in it are made separately in each case. In addition, scenographic decisions not only include the use of physical landscape, but also the incorporation (or disregarding) of the entire landscape, including its fictional dimension. The reasons for performing outside traditional stages are diverse: protests, artistic challenges, publicity tricks, contributions to the local community, a return to the original site of events, attempts to enhance the performance with an aesthetically appealing environment etc. Landscape itself can be the reason for creating a production. In any case, the choice of location and the subsequent use of a landscape, which can be regarded as a "lived" one, is not an act of automatic repetition. It contributes to the making of meaning.

Sites that are used for a specific production but have not been built or re-built for the purpose of performing are commonly referred to as "found spaces". A distinction can be made with spaces which have been significantly altered to make room for a performance: "converted space" (Whitmore 1997: 117) or "transformed space" (Aronson 1981: 165, 185). The well-established use of the word "space" in this context is interesting. In the discussion of "space" and "place", it can be seen as a reference to the emptiness of the space: it is a field of possible action that accommodates the performance. Emptiness can be interpreted as a positive factor,

as it can provide more freedom than an Italian stage: the relationship between audience and performance areas is a matter of decision, exits and entrances are potentially more versatile, and the composition of the scenography does not depend on rules prescribed by the presence of an elevated platform framed by a proscenium arch. And, most definitely, the connotations present in found space are richer than those of a traditional stage, which is built to minimize unwanted meanings. The places portrayed the previous night and the events shown leave no mark on the stage. It is possible to perform Shakespeare's *Othello* one night, followed by Webber's *Cats* the next and a stage adaptation of *Little Red Riding Hood* the following morning. A stage is a unique place, although there are other places that have developed a similar way of erasing its past, including exhibition halls, fair centres and, to a certain degree, even museums. One of the reasons why theatre creators look for other places to perform in is the desire to get out of a space where meanings and connotations are minimized and highly controlled. Successful performances noted for integrating the environment into the performance, such as R. Murray Schafer's *And the Wolf Shall Inherit the Moon* on a wasteland, and Brith Gof's *Gododdin* in a car factory, are attempts to create performances in collaboration with the meanings and stories found in space. In this view, it is the stage and not the found environment that can be called a space, a uniform field available for everyone. The theatre stage, Italian or a black box, is a site cleared for performing, which does not mean that spectators' memories of previous performances cannot surface. However, this type of ghosting is present on a subjective level and does not necessarily turn the stage into a layered spatio-temporal history of fictional places. Different stages have different proportions and architectural features which affect designing and performing. Therefore, each stage can be regarded as a meaningful place for people involved with it, but for each performance it operates as a *tabula rasa*. To emphasize the richness of possible connotations and meanings as discussed in previous chapters, it is perhaps correct to say that it is meanings that are found,

not space. The artist Liisa Piironen interprets the term used in arts, *l'objet trouvé* (found object, ready-made), as an object found for interpretation (Piironen 1998: 50). Found space is not a homogeneous field that can be described by its universal cartographic co-ordinates. The connotations embedded in the environment form one of the reasons for choosing a particular site. Thus, it is not used as an empty abstract space that exists outside the dimensions of living. In the context of this dissertation, it is sensible to consider an alternative term, "found environment", which stresses the subjective and embedded character of the site. A found environment is a landscape full of traces of living. The environment is for something or someone, whether audience, performers or performance – a meeting of two (or more). "Found place" as a term is almost an oxymoron, because in a sense all places are found; they become meaningful only when experienced. This is a matter of encounter and contact and cannot be predetermined. Regardless, the term "found space" is well established and despite the connotations it might acquire when contrasted to different schools of thought, as a widely accepted term it denotes an interior or exterior found for performing, which provides room for different approaches to the particular site.

Historically, the search for found environments has a long tradition. In his seminal research on environmental theatre, Arnold Aronson shows that the desire to perform in places that are rich with meanings and that make it possible to address the viewer on multiple scales is anything but new. Folk plays, rituals and dances, liturgical dramas and religious processions have historically made use of the connotations embedded in the local environment. (Aronson 1981) For the discussion of the city as a place for performance, the theatre researcher Marvin Carlson (1989: 17) uses Living Theatre's *6 Public Acts* in Ann Arbor (1976), where the worshipping of the golden calf, for example, took place at a bank, and a blood ritual was performed at the war memorial. The annual Passion performance in Helsinki traditionally places the crucifixion scene in the vicinity of academic, executive and religious powers: on the Senat square surrounded

by the cathedral, university and city office. Even if not actively used, the spatial hints are still present. The function of the premises, and the stories and meanings attributed to the place, may be known to the audience, who are free to interpret them. In addition, performers are perceived as parts of four-dimensional space; their words, gestures and mis-en-scenes are interpreted in their spatial context. It is not possible to perform outside of space. The human lived body activates the sense of the human lived environment. However, theatre creators and performers can choose to discard the meanings or use them partly. Wandering troupes have always had the liberty to stop their wagons anywhere, and jugglers have unrolled their carpets at any free spot. From one viewpoint, a performance is capable of creating an independent world of its own. In the case of a found environment, the presence of existing meanings and potential connotations, which may form one reason behind the choice, can also cause problems in clearing the environment: hiding unwanted connotations.

Landscape is a special case of a found environment. Similar to any other found environment, landscape is embedded with meanings and has a history. However, due to the co-existence of natural and man-made elements, its vastness compared to interiors and the perceiver's role in defining the limits of the landscape, the connotative potential of landscape is greater. The temporal nature of landscape keeps its past visible at all times, heightened by the passing of seasons. The presence of elements that date back to different periods contributes to the perception of landscape as a sum of lives lived there. The signs of human interaction that expose the first signs of ageing, and the poetry of ruins and patina easily evoke feelings of nostalgia. Traces of a life that was once led issue an invitation to imagine. It is impossible to erase a landscape or restore it to its entire connotative depth.

In the framework of human involvement with the environment, landscape has a strong narrative dimension. As a way of structuring landscape, of thinking about it, narrative is a form of interaction with the environment. Ingold (2000: 56)

elaborates: "(t)elling a story is not like weaving a tapestry to *cover up* the world or, as in an overworn anthropological metaphor, to 'clothe it with meaning'. /…/ Far from dressing up a plain reality with layers of metaphor, or representing it, map-like, in the imagination, songs, stories and designs serve to conduct the attention of performers *into* the world, deeper and deeper, as one proceeds from outward appearances to an ever more intense poetic involvement." Narratives, matters of subjective and personal or shared cultural knowledge, affect the landscape by helping to decide upon its values and matters of preservation. Narrative in its broadest sense is a structural element in landscape. And similar to learning to be physically orientated in a landscape by training perception, connecting clues and adjusting knowledge to each particular situation, one also learns to perceive the narrative and lived landscape. Physical orientation relies on the interpretation of an interdependent network of clues, such as the direction of the sun, the growth of moss, the dampness of the soil, the smell of the air and the width of a path. These are skills that are learned and exercised on site, as they depend on the ability to perceive clues which lead to the discovery of others. Performance can be seen as the conscious act of showing, of guiding the spectator further into the story and the landscape as the performance proceeds. And "to show something to somebody is to cause it to be seen or otherwise experienced – whether by touch, smell or hearing – by that other person. It is, as it were, to lift a veil off some aspect or component of the environment so that it can be apprehended directly" (Ingold 1990: 21–22). Ingold's attention to showing as an important source of learning to perceive has an innate similarity to theatre. His example of the Australian Aboriginal tradition of (re)telling and (re)enacting the stories of the formation of their land in the original environment (discussed in the chapter 1.2 Lived landscape) is performative in multiple senses. Given that the story is enacted in first person and aimed at an audience, it acquires meaning when understood and experienced by other perceivers, which makes it a performance in the sense of theatre. The audience participate in it, witness the events and see

the environment as it is being created by the ancestors, through their eyes. The process of witnessing something to be done again as a practice of belonging to a place and to a group is a performance of the participants' identities and of the land. Performance can teach the ability to find knowledge otherwise unattainable.

It is important to note that perception is guided by the nature of the activity. Hunting, picking berries, strolling and listening to a story in (and of) a landscape tune perception differently. It is the activity that focuses the audience's and narrator's perception, while the narrator also receives information from the audience and, in turn, is in a position to guide their perception. Performance affords opportunities to "consider and explicate landscape" (Pearson 2006: 3) in the combination of nature, culture and imagination in a manifold space. Thus it serves the important function of taking people into the landscape and drawing attention to the cultural and natural history of the environment. Furthermore, attending a performance can be a part of the education of perception, which enhances the ability to interact with the environment: the further one looks, the further one sees.

Leaving aside the age-old and idealistic question of bridging the gap between people and their environments, especially the "natural environment", performing in a landscape poses a number of problems from the artistic point of view. If a performance is an act of guiding perception, then the choice of connotations and meanings that are drawn from the landscape becomes one of the important decisions, both in terms of scenography and direction. The close connection between narratives and landscape broadens the idea of scenography as environment that participates in storytelling, which exceeds the limits of narration and can be seen as an act of way-finding. Thus scenography has a guiding effect. At the same time, this connection makes scenography more dependent on other means employed in the performance, as text and mise-en-scene affect the perception of landscape and can activate multiple readings. At its best, it can support the scenography, but it also bring out layers of meaning from

the landscape that are in collision with the performance. The richness and the immediacy of landscape make it a very appealing performance environment, but also a complex one.

2.1.1. The story of Soontagana

Bogship (*Soolaev*)[8] is a performance about the history of the now desolate Soontagana village in south-western Estonia. The play, written by Triin Sinissaar, is site-specific in the sense that it was written to suit a particular landscape and was inspired by historical records and local legends. Although performed only in Soontagana, the text itself is independent and can be easily performed outside the original site of the events. However, the play is performed in the very place that it is about, and it portrays different times in the same place. It raises several interesting questions.

The history of this remote village, which is now abandoned, is remarkable. In the 12th century, the Baltic Sea reached as far as Soontagana, nowadays about 25 km from the seashore. According to a legend used in the play, the first inhabitants were the foreign survivors of a shipwreck. These early settlers built a village, which gradually developed into a significant port and trading site and became the centre of the entire region, Soontagana County. They soon established themselves as the local nobility. By the 10th century, a stronghold had been built. The first written records, from the 13th century, describe the area, called *Terra Maritima*, as the mightiest south-western district. As a target of the Christian Crusades, Estonia and Livonia were attacked by German and Danish knights, which led to a period of hectic warfare that lasted (with pauses) from the 12th to 14th centuries. As a result, Estonia and Livonia were Christianised and fell under foreign rule. Soontagana played an important role in the war. The chronicler Henrik of Livonia, the author of *Heinrici Cronicon Lyvoniae*, who travelled with the crusaders, mentions Soontagana on several occasions.

8 Director: Raivo Trass, scenographer: Kristiina Münd, producer: SA Loomine, 2005

As the sea receded, the village became surrounded by a bog, which is reflected in the name Soontagana (behind the bog). According to a legend, the ship that led the ancestors to Soontagana is still intact and hidden in the bog. Therefore, it is particularly dangerous to walk in the bog, especially for people who are not local. The ship draws them near and, as they approach, they are drowned. To some extent, the legend repeats the motif of protecting locals from foreign invaders. In the play, these facts – noble status, leadership in the fight against foreign powers, and a long and clear family line that dates back to pre-Christian times – form the cornerstones that define the identity of the family, whose descendants in fact lived in the village until the 1960s.

Sinissaar connects the motif of the ancestral ship in the bog to a curse laid on the village by an elder's daughter. The connection is fictional. In the play, the chronicler Henrik falls in love with the elder's daughter Elo and leaves her. Elo, furious (and pregnant), curses all men who marry into the family. None of them will live long enough to hurt her daughters, but still all her children will experience her pain. This is the curse that lures all the men into the bog to see the ship and drowns them.

In the play, the main character Grete, along with her boyfriend and daughter, returns to her childhood home in Soontagana to celebrate her 30th birthday. Her mother and grandmother are preparing for the celebrations. The main conflict revolves around the decision Grete has to make: either to take over the farm and take care of her family, her ancestors' traditions, skills and curses, which would lead to a life of solitude, or to leave with her love and help to make his dreams come true.

Although the play starts with a scene introducing characters from the past, Henrik and Elo, contemporary time is established as the main time of events; the fictional here-and-now of the viewers coincides with their real here-and-now. It is summer in Soontagana at the beginning of the 21st century. The central artistic means in the play is the concurrent use of time. Characters from different periods

Elo (Hele Kõre) and Henrik (Indrek Sammul).

of time exist together. It is the place that connects them, and all times are one in that particular place. Elo interacts with Grete (21st century), as well as with Henrik (12th–13th centuries). In addition, Elo knows the other two ghosts (as do Grete and her family): the prophet Järva Jaan (Jaan of Järveküla) and Hirmus Ants (Ants the Terrible), who similarly share the feeling of topophilia towards Soontagana. Järva-Jaan roamed south-western Estonia at the end of the 19th century. According to the records of his time, this barefooted prophet foresaw the use of electricity and cars, the fall of the Czarist empire and Estonian independence. The other legendary character is the partisan Hirmus Ants. During World War II, a large number of Estonian men fled to the forest to escape Soviet mobilisation and fought as partisans. Although the resistance movement of the "forest brothers" covered the entire country, co-operation between groups never reached that level. At its peak, there were about 15,000 forest brothers (men and women) lurking in the woods. Hirmus Ants was captured and shot in 1949, but is remembered in

legends in which he tricks the Soviet authorities. All characters lived in or were involved with the same place, but in different times. Now, in the performance, all time is here – in one place. The characters from the past are aware of this, they are aware of people born after their times and can befriend them in life and death. The main character, Grete, as well as all the other locals, are able to see ghosts and interact with them, while Grete's boyfriend remains blind. The ghosts are regarded as a natural part of their lives. Although the "ghosts of the forefathers" recognize the passing of time, they seem to be concerned with the events of their times: Elo mourns her father and her lover, the prophet Järva-Jaan predicts the future and Ants is still in hiding.

Costumes are the main aid in identifying the original context of the characters; most of the props are used by contemporary characters, which strengthens the contemporary here-and-now reality. Elo, for instance, wears an accurate reconstruction of 12th-century female garments and jewellery, and Ants is dressed in typical baggy trousers and leather boots, which can be easily recognized from photos of the World War II period. The difference in speech (grammar and vocabulary) is minimal and not stressed (e.g. the Livonian Henrik speaks fluent Estonian). There are no differences between the characters in the style of acting, and the general approach is realistic.

Besides the understanding that place supercedes time, which can be derived from the co-existence of distinctly local characters, only the contemporary characters are concerned with the surrounding landscape. In the text, the topics, which range from the threat of selling the land and the landscape as a source of identity and livelihood to the boyfriend's wide-eyed fascination with beauty and the family's mythical and long connection to the landscape, encompass a wide scope of attitudes, from practical to aesthetic. However, the characters from the past each express a specific relationship with their unique environment. Elo's landscape is mythical; she lives in a world of powerful words and stories that affect the future. Since the ship in the bog is vital to her curse, she is responsible

for keeping the myth alive and perhaps even keeping the ship alive, as the question of its fictionality/reality remains open. Ants expresses a practical relationship: the forest and bog are places for hiding. The environment, which is perceived as hostile by Grete's boyfriend, is a safe haven for Ants, a home that protects him from foreign powers. Järva-Jaan, enthralled by his visions, describes, although abstractly, the landscapes of his tomorrow and the viewers' present, characterized by electricity posts, phone lines and wide roads for quick cars. The question of whether the characters are aware of the changes in the landscape remains unaddressed in the play and the production. It is equally possible that they all inhabit their individual historically determined places, which are not (and cannot be) shared, or that they live in a common spatio-temporal environment, which would logically be placed in the present. The one issue that sets the contemporary characters apart from the rest is their clear concern with history. The recognition of their roots and consequent worries about the future of the land help to determine the audience's position in the present – between the narrated past and unknown future of the landscape.

These solutions accentuate and tighten the connection with the location, which shows visible aspects of different periods: the mound from the 10th century stronghold, the remnants of old farmsteads (the layout of the house and garden, old well), village streets partly lined with stone fences, the bog, the forest, and the meadows with recently cut grass. By linking the clearly visible landscape elements that date back to the times of the various characters to the individual characters (e.g. Elo and the stronghold, Järva-Jaan and the farm and fences, and Hirmus Ants and the destruction of private farming represented by the ruins), the performance stresses the layered structure of the landscape. This illustrates the idea of landscape as a palimpsest that exposes aspects of different periods, which do not erase one another.

Physical scenographic intervention is minimal. In the Estonian summer, the sun sets around 10 pm, which makes the use of specialized lighting almost

unnecessary. Thus performances often start at 7 pm, as is customary in theatre houses throughout the year. The use of natural light affects the perception of the environment as "natural" and continuous with everyday experience. The framing effect that artificial lighting can create is not present and can contribute to the overall minimalist approach to scenography in landscape.

To return to the idea of landscape as a palimpsest: the layers that are strengthened are those of Elo and Henrik, Järva-Jaan and Grete. First act takes place in Grete's childhood home, represented by a traditional farmhouse built from real logs, using real windows and doors. The house itself is palimpsest, presenting elements from small windows and old logs that date back to 19th century (or earlier) to fibre cement roof slates that are characteristic of the Soviet

Mother (Ene Järvis) and Grete (Katariina Lauk) at the farm.

period. For the frontally placed audience, the façade of the farmhouse creates the illusion of a real house supported by a full auxiliary building placed at 90 degrees from the main house. The props include a few, characteristic elements to convey a typical green in front of the house: a bench, an outdoor fireplace, a table and a woodpile, which together present a familiar "at Grandma's" sight to Estonian audiences, among whom 2nd–3rd generation urbanites are scarce. Scenography uses forest as a backdrop; the darkness forms a contrast with the light-grey time-worn logs. The clean and clear forest line runs parallel to the house, thereby accentuating the frontal seating arrangement. The acting area is in a flat field in the former village, on the path to the stronghold. The audience, about 200 people, sit on wooden benches in rows placed on a very gentle natural slope reclining towards the acting area. No platform has been erected for the performance, which suits the approach, where interventions are hidden. However, visibility may be an issue in the back rows. At sold out performances, some rows are placed directly on the lawn in front of the benches.

The performance takes place in the summer, which coincides with the fictional time of the performance. The temporal position, during the Estonian holiday time, which traditionally includes lingering in the countryside and letting children spend summer holidays at grandparents' homes (or with other relatives or friends who live in the country) tightens the identification of the farm as a typical place in the countryside. The use of aged material not only hides the scenographic interference, but also accentuates the layered structure of the landscape, where the new meets the old. The skilful composition, which considers the original layout of the farms, integrates the few new elements into the original landscape. The original physical landscape, embedded with meanings of its own, is presented as a true site of events that never took place. Not only was the village abandoned in the 1960s, the original Soontak farmhouse was not situated at that particular location.

The second act takes place a few hundred metres away, on the site of the former stronghold. The move to the second performance area takes place during the

Grete summons Elo on the mound.

intermission (usually approximately 30 minutes in open-air performances) and is not meant to be a part of the performance. The audience takes an unpaved path to the mound, which can be seen from the previous location. The seating arrangement is similar to that of the first act. The stronghold is presented as a place of festivities, where special events, including Grete's 30th birthday, are celebrated. The connection is constructed scenographically by including a scene of the ritual decoration during which a flag pole is erected, flags and ribbons attached. According to the play text, the stronghold has been restored after Grete's drawings, and Grete is surprised by the scale of the restoration. Although the second act takes place on the site of the former stronghold, it is visually represented in an existing wooden watch tower near the mound. This can be interpreted as an act of accepting the latest additions to the landscape as

The stronghold was constructed for the film *Men at Arms* shot on the Soontagana mound.

its integral parts. However, it is challenging to perceive one tower as an entire restored stronghold. The mound is a protected area and the erection of large constructions was not allowed (Põllu 2012), although a large wooden stronghold had been built for the film *Men at Arms*[9] shot on the same site in summer 2004. The construction was still standing in late autumn 2004. Instead the scenography used natural elements and non-permanent constructions: a circle of stones, poles and flags. A substantial part of the physical scenography is created as a part of the performance when the village women gather to decorate the stronghold for Grete's birthday party. Even though the ritual of decoration is not based on any particular folkloric practice, it helps to establish a mythical connection with

9 The film (*Malev*) is an absurd comedy that reverses the traditional interpretation of Estonian history. As the film's official slogan "Henrik of Livonia lied!" indicates, it deals with the struggle against foreign crusaders in a parodical manner. The film is not directly connected to the history of Soontagana, apart from the fact that the action takes place in an important stronghold in Estonia surrounded by bogs.

the past. The suggestion that women have followed the tradition for centuries is strengthened by showing the ritual to Grete's daughter. The decoration is a generalization using such folkloric elements as the colour red, typical of folk costumes (also present in the character's costumes), tying ribbons to trees or poles, making a fire, and using circular movement and circular patterns. The decoration is not typical of any particular time and can be easily perceived as a ritual handed down by the elder's daughter Elo (who is actually summoned as a part of it) and slowly modified by each generation of women. The timelessness connected to the history of Soontagana helps to evoke a mythical landscape, in which all times are present. In this view, landscape can be regarded as more than a visual background or even as the provider of supplementary information that supports the events performed there. It is a character played by an actor – the present landscape in its physical appearance, slightly modified by the scenography. The present landscape is written as a modified fictional history, but the fictional lives still have to fit into the present given landscape. The performance of historical, mythical or purely fictional events offers a (re)presentation of the landscape, where it is the landscape that is portrayed in relation to lives lived there. *Bogship* demonstrates the current landscape as the outcome of the fictional events of the play. It calls for a distinct spatial logic since the physical traces of the past are provided with new associations that have to correspond to their present physical state. On a large scale, the landscape is shown to be still inhabited; the village is conveyed as a living structure. The scenography retains the marks of desolation, thereby suggesting that the village has become smaller (which coincides with general tendencies of urbanization in Estonia), but it still provides a functioning farmhouse. On a primary level, this shows the impact of the lives of the people, their everyday activities and exceptional natural or man-made events in the landscape. Grete's mother grows rape, the stronghold has been rebuilt, and there is a huge storm on Grete's first night there. It is an artistic decision whether to convey these events but, regardless, it is a matter of deciding whether the impact on the landscape

is large enough to provoke a conflict with the present one and if it should be disregarded or attended to. The field is spoken of but regarded as something out of sight, the stronghold is partly rebuilt, and the storm, the event itself as well as its outcome, is not shown. At the same time, the storm plays an important role in the plot by delaying Grete's leaving the village, which prevents her boyfriend from attending a life-changing job interview. Even though mentioned several times in the text, fallen trees, broken phone lines and blocked roads are not visually present. Within the general coherence of the text, the scenography and the landscape, the decision not to mark visually one of the events in the fictional landscape makes the perception of the scenographic landscape unstable and articulates the fictionality of the performance. The heightened sense of fictionality is surprising in the context, in which the lives of the characters from the past are shown to have a direct influence on the landscape (building farms, keeping the bog intact, reconstructing strongholds, and tilling fields). In this sense, the past is treated as fictionally real and the present as artistic, as fictionally fictional. It is possible that the decision not to show the effects of the storm was influenced by practical conditions (e.g. its location in the middle of the first act, which is challenging in terms of making a major change). The idea that contemporary lives do not leave a mark on the landscape is not supported in other scenes, although this would open up new interpretations (e.g. estrangement from traditional environments). This discontinuity in *Bogship* demonstrates the importance of a coherent relationship between the physical landscape and fictional landscape of the text (in addition to the expected coherence of plot and characters). It is also the role of the scenography to guarantee this coherence and either provide or, together with directorial decisions, explain the collision between the textual logic and the present physical landscape.

Bogship addresses the landscape as a source of memory, which can be viewed from two perspectives. Firstly, the landscape is the site and source of memory of the people who lived there. The text articulates a tradition of dwelling, of

The audience faces the farmhouse in the first act of *Bogship*.

rootedness in the landscape, where memories are passed on from one generation to another until they become legends, such as the myth of the ship in the bog. By introducing characters from the past and re-enacting moments from their lives, the landscape is shown as the original site of events. The landscape provides a stage on which the remembered scenes unfold; it is reminiscent of past things that let memories surface. Characters from the past are well aware of the passing of time and even interfere with the present time, but still relive moments from their past. This solution is introduced in the first scene, in which Elo mourns her father, and it soon reappears and interacts with Grete's immediate family. Casey

(1987: 189) calls landscapes "*congealed* scenes for remembered contents". In a certain sense, this seems to suggest that landscape is a frozen scene, a set of trails or bookmarks that waits for the rememberer. This indicates that not only do people remember things or events in places, but landscape itself stores memories. An act of remembering creates places, and memories re-appear in a spatial context, thus creating double places. Perceiving a landscape suggests being in or identifying a unifying frame (the landscape) that contains smaller frames (places). Places, meaningful centres of experienced space, are memory's place-holders. The landscape is a network of condensed scenes that can be recalled from places. The varying character of landscape literally "gives us pause", and helps to create places. Landscape elements offer a dissimilar experience that makes the creation and sustenance of various kinds of memories possible. Variegation allows us to attach memories to visual objects (Casey 1987: 198–199). On the one hand, landscape provides continuity on a common ground; on the other hand, it offers outstanding landmarks. *Bogship* utilizes a bog, a mound, village streets and fences, and fills in some of the blanks by scenographic means, thereby providing new landmarks, the most outstanding of which is the farmhouse.

The landscape of *Bogship* is constantly present, and can be perceived as a field of memory which reveals the scenes rather than being something that is itself recalled. The sudden emergence of scenes that are being relived (primarily by Elo and Henrik) indicates that the landscape is the recaller of events, scenes past. This pattern of repetition suggested by the ghost's constant re-living of scenes suggests that the new scenes in contemporary time may equally be re-lived, re-enacted over and over again. Grete and her family may not be released from the landscape, and their deeds and thoughts may be summoned again. Perhaps this is also true for the audience. In *Bogship*, everyone leaves a mark: a trail of movement, of thoughts, feelings and actions on the landscape by which it can be summoned again. The journalist Piret Tali (2005) compares the experience to a pilgrimage that starts with finding one's way to Soontagana, literally off the map,

driving along long winding unpaved roads, followed by a hike through the bog, "It is as if this place – a place without electricity and uninhabited since 1966 – did not even exist. Stepping out of the darkness and coldness of the bog, carrying a rucksack and a tent, the knoll greets you with a sunny meadow, a watch tower and the ruins of old stone fences – like the lost city of Atlantis that has surfaced for just one moment".

The primacy of landscape in *Bogship* is notable. In addition to showing the landscape as a storage of memory and drawing attention to the present landscape as the result of fictional events, which brings out the issue of coherency in the text as well as in the scenography, the performance articulates the spatio-temporal layered structure of landscape. The inevitability of the present landscape is brought out by its availability to the viewers outside the performance time: the 30-minute intermission during which the audience moves from one site to the other, a 2.3-km hike from the parking lot along the only road in the bog (although this particular part is similar to a forest due to irrigation), the tradition of arriving almost an hour early to explore new sites, and the possibility of camping in Soontagana.

The landscape becomes more than a setting, as it is impossible to disregard the unfolding of the landscape as its own portrait in time. It reverses the process, which can metaphorically be compared to painting, which hides its process of creation. By visualizing and enacting a selection of historical events, the landscape is opened up and exposes its process of creation. It is a form of time-travel in which the audience is able to peek behind the visible elements of the landscape and see some of the events that contributed to the landscape's coming into being. At the same time, it is impossible to ignore the constant availability of the landscape as itself. In *Bogship*, the minimal scenographic intervention brings about an interchangeability of meaning, and a free association of time to elements. The stone fence, the forest, and even the logs of the farmhouse can be simultaneously perceived as a part of the 12th and 21st centuries. The potential presence of the

contemporary landscape at all times in all scenes makes it the performance of the landscape itself as it constantly pushes itself forward. The landscape inserts itself into the performance; it is constantly seen in its totality, unfolding in the performance, and re-enforcing its presence in each scene.

2.1.2 The problem of landscape

The case of *Bogship* is relatively simple: it fictionally turns back time in one landscape, (re)constructs alternative, yet conceivable events that have indirectly influenced the landscape and presents a fictional here-and-now situation that diverges from the real history of the landscape, but does not require changing the landscape radically to meet the new history. To some extent, the strong connection between the landscape and the past corresponds to the mimetic reading of historical fictional texts to gather information on the landscape.

According to the distinction proposed by Karjalainen (1999: 9–10), mimetic reading focuses on the correlation between the actual physical environment and the environment described in the text, with the aim of reconstructing the original landscape. Even though the landscape is a part of the fictional world of a literary work and may have been modified by the author, the assumption remains that there exists an original landscape and that it is possible to discern the artistic means of describing it and to establish a connection between the fictional and the real. The same model can be applied to painting and other arts. Performance in a landscape is a particular case, because the two collide in the physical body. Landscape as a placescape consists of stories, in a performance context of acts of (re)presenting these stories. Stories always form a fictional layer of the landscape, even if based on factual information, especially in a performance that establishes a clear fictional world. Annette Arlander (1998: 58) proposes that not only are the connotations available in an environment fictional, but through the process of

being experienced the environment itself becomes partly fictional, as it becomes part of the perceiver's mindscape. The experience of place is an act of retelling and reliving stories, even by oneself. Thus landscape as a cultural placescape exists in a cumulative narrative form and can never be traced to an original fixed, or even entirely real, form.

It is also possible to view the performance as a hermeneutic reading, which focuses on the relationship between landscape and characters, which is "a transition from the objective landscape to a subjective one, from the outer to an inner reality, or phenomenologically, to a dialogue between the inner and outer worlds" (Karjalainen 1999: 9–10). In *Bogship*, the hermeneutic landscape is present in the controversial relationship Grete has towards her home, which ranges from love to resentment.

The landscape is shown as a source of memory, the site of congealed scenes, which are ever present and the outcome of everyday actions. Thereby, the landscape's coming into being runs parallel to the lives of the characters; it becomes the performance of the landscape itself. Although this aspect of performing a landscape can be discussed from multiple points of view (e.g. the concept of performance in the social sciences[10]), the current discussion concentrates on theatrical performance, "on activities with an aesthetic or rhetorical quotient" (Pearson 2006: 3). According to Pearson, performance in a landscape works horizontally and vertically, across landscape and time, explicating and investigating human interaction with landscape.

However, performance is not limited to the reiteration of site-specific events. Not all performances are reconstructions of the stories connected to the landscape or constructions to suit the landscape, nor is scenography limited to this function. Site-specificity does not cover the entire spectrum of performing in landscape.

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10 Kathleen Irwin's *The Ambit of Performativity* (2009), for example, connects the various concepts of performance and suggests that sites are themselves performative. Her concept extends beyond the usual discussion of site-related cultural and/or personal narratives, memories and emotions that participate in the performance. Irwin suggests that the liminal situation of an artistic performance acts as a catalyst and frames the innate spatial performativity of the site.

The case of *Bogship* demonstrates that performing in a landscape presents landscape as a performance of itself, a portrait. This is not achieved only by articulating its historical dimension, but also by the fact that the immediately present and surrounding totality inserts itself into the performance, which raises the question of whether it applies to performances that are not site-specific in the narrow sense, i.e. they do not just tell the story of the landscape. Even if landscape participates in the performance as an entirely fictional surrounding (somewhere else in some other time), the landscape is still portrayed in relation to lives lived, which means, since the bodies of the physical and fictional landscapes coincide, it is the performance of the physical landscape as well. The landscape is shown as a placescape that consists of narratives. Even though the narratives are fictional in regard to the landscape, a concentrated perception of the placescape is still activated. According to Ingold (2000: 197), active engagement with landscape is itself the performance of its past, the performance of the landscape as it is being discovered *in medias res*.

Let me restate the scope of the study: the scenographic use of landscape. Scenography, quite like landscape itself, is not only physical. Landscape is a collage of clues, reasons, stories and patterns that have affected it and are responsible for its current visual appearance. Scenography is not only the collection of elements visible on stage at a particular time, but also the spatio-temporal composition of the entire performance. It is possible to recycle a table from the last production of *Macbeth*, combine it with two chairs from a supermarket and create something unique that has the quality of an artwork. And it is possible to recycle the same physical elements over and over again. The essence of any particular scenography lies in the invisible ties that connect the diverse elements together. It is the story, idea, concept, aesthetic framework. Like landscape scenography consists of visible and non-visible elements, stories, hints, recollections, which are partly manifest in the physical body of the scenography, but are still available via skilled perception, which is guided by performance.

In the Estonian context it is quite rare to alter landscape if it is used as a found environment. Modifications, interventions and accentuations are common, but it is rare, if possible at all, to cover up the entire landscape. Landscape in its surrounding totality cannot be erased or replaced. In the course of bringing examples from Estonian theatre, the tendency to make maximum use the landscape should be noted. It means that landscape elements as well as the entire landscape are assigned new meanings and functions, but are seldom physically changed. Scenographies are created in their invisible, or more accurately non-interfering, dimension. *The Cherry Orchard* (Vanalinnastuudio Theatre 2001) borrowed the body of a smallish tea-house in the Palmse manor complex for Ranyevskaya's childhood home. The audience was seated outside, facing the tea-house. Almost no action took place in the house. Apart from a few pieces of furniture placed on the tiny terrace and on the lawn in front of the building (a cupboard, chairs and table), and locating the imaginary cherry orchard geographically behind the audience, the tea-house and the surrounding park were presented as they were. The manor ensemble, consisting of an impressive main house (completed in 1730) and several auxiliary building scattered around an English park, was one of the first manors to be reconstructed (1975–1985) and opened to the public. It has served as a museum since 1986, and is a popular tourist destination, even among locals. It is a relatively well-known complex, and its images are reproduced in brochures and coffee-table books. When there is no visual indication of the performance area or the tea-house as something other than the Palmse manor, it may be hard for the audience, when they walk past the main building, through the park to the tea-house, to perceive the location as Ranevskaya's home, especially as the manor never vanishes from sight. Thus, by being perceived differently in a performance context, the tea-house exists simultaneously in two places. This provokes a double perception: the fictional landscape is transparent and does not cover up or cancel the perception of the present landscape. This means that knowledge of the manor (e.g. its history) or

visual clues (the colour of the grass, or the blossoming of certain flowers) can be integrated into, and compared with, the fictional environment created in the performance through guided perception, or this knowledge can be disregarded.

"Borrow" is perhaps the best word to describe such a process. During the time of the performance, the scenography borrows the bodies of the landscape elements, just as a character makes its presence known in and via the body of an actor, while both can be perceived simultaneously. Landscape can be metaphorically compared to an actor, as well as a character: both are physically available, and both have their respective pasts. If landscape is regarded as a geo-biological complex that shows the signs of time and ageing, that has a history in the sense that it is the outcome and embodiment of living, then perhaps the comparison is more than just poetic. This sets landscape apart from the perspective of dual perception described in semiotics, the perception of any stage object as a part of both a fictional and real world. In its totality, the surrounding environment as a site of action surpasses the qualities of a stage object; it is, rather, an intricate network of places in a spatio-temporal whole.

There are at least two reasons for the immediacy and totality of the landscape. Firstly, compared to theatre buildings or any other interiors, the landscape is fully available to the audience outside of the performance context, when the stage and audience areas have disappeared. Members of the audience can have previous experiences of the landscape or can return there later, when any indication of audience and acting areas has been removed. They may have hiked to Soontagana, a part of a nature protection area, or recognize the stronghold from the popular film *Men at Arms* shot there previously. The same applies to times before or after a performance and during the intermission, although on a more limited scale since some areas are usually designated for technical usage. Walking to the site from the parking lot, which in the case of *Bogship* involves a 30-minute hike, and strolling around the area during intermission give relative freedom to explore. To some extent, the movement is guided by the placement of the cafeteria, toilets and ticket

booths, thereby affecting the perception of the landscape.

Secondly, although landscape is characterized through its limits, performance contests, redefines and perhaps even blurs these limits. To repeat the idea stated earlier that landscape is limited by its horizon, which is a relative concept that depends on the perceiver, it is almost impossible to draw the line where the fictional landscape exactly ends. The active performance area, more or less defined by the movement of the actors, can be expanded by visual, gestural or auditory markers, which also means that it can contract and expand depending on the scene. But how about the ground? It is complicated and perhaps even unnecessary to determine if the ground or the sky are fictional in the performance area and lose that function in contact with the audience. If not specifically stated in the text or action, or marked scenographically, it is up to each member of audience to decide whether the bog that she hiked through is a part of the fictional world or not, or, in the case of the frontal seating arrangement in *Bogship*, whether the fictional forest behind the acting area extends to the forest behind the audience. The sky and earth are by far the most exemplary cases, because they create a strong encompassing effect.

The actors and audience are together under the same rain and sunshine, feel the same wind and walk on the same ground. Both sides see each other suffer from (or enjoy) similar conditions, which – proceeding from Merleau-Ponty – can heighten the feeling of being embedded in the environment as a part of it, and increase a sense of solidarity. The sense of being enveloped by the environment, of being included in the landscape together with the performers, gives Arnold Aronson reason to consider the scenography of open-air performances to be an instance of environmental scenography *per se*. According to Aronson, scenography is environmental if the audience and actors share the same environment. He refers to theatre as "framed space", arguing that a performance is a space and time set apart. The frame can be a circle of spectators that surround a storyteller, an elaborate proscenium arch or the total surrounding scenography that includes

the audience. The scale from a frontal relationship between audience and acting area to full integration into the frame is arranged into a number of steps. Performances in the open air form a special case, because all performances in landscape potentially have an incorporating effect on the viewer. (Aronson 1981: 1–5) This is true on the grandest scale, that of being surrounded by a landscape, but the inclusion in the frame is not absolute and does not take effect immediately. Firstly, landscape can consist of places and it is possible for the audience to feel themselves to be in a different place than the actors. Performance is a process of guiding perception visually and auditorially (the conscious employment of other senses is possible, but less frequent) and the grandest scale can be left out, which does not make it void, but the uniting effect may very well not be perceived as a part of the performance. This returns us to the original point of double perception. Theatre borrows landscapes for short periods of time, never cancelling the possibility of perceiving landscape as real and fictional at the same time. The place does not have to be altered physically to be perceived as something else. Borrowing does not indicate change and is a temporary act; it does not leave a permanent mark on the landscape. Constructions are dismantled and it is easy to forget that the landscape stood for another place and time just a while ago, even though the fact that performances have taken place can add to the landscape.

Framing does not fully answer the question of double perception, since framing is itself included in the guiding system. I propose that this can be explained through the concept of play. The act of borrowing is similar to children's play, where objects are transformed by the mere power of gesture or word. Within a split second, a pencil becomes a sword, a handkerchief a lonely sail-boat, and stairs a supermarket counter. Play operates as a parallel world; it is not a dream that blurs the boundaries of conscious life. Children know that a pencil is not a sword, that a carpet does not fly and that their mother is not Snow White. However, it is possible to fight dragons with this sword, fly on the carpet and cry for Snow White. The object, place or person does not cease to exist in the

real world. It is temporarily transferred into the realm of play, it becomes part of a structure, where layers of fiction and reality are interconnected, inform one another and can be quickly exchanged. In *Homo Ludens*, one of the first modern works to consider play as a serious scholarly matter, Huizinga famously describes a child who is playing with a toy train. His father wants to give him a kiss, but the boy protests: if the wagons see the kiss, they will no longer believe that the locomotive is real. This shows the intricacy of fiction and fact in play, which are both present simultaneously, but for the time of the play fiction becomes the force that guides the association of meaning. Therefore, play is largely a matter of temporal agreements. Regardless of the awareness of the play situation, it evokes real feelings and emotions, which is also one of the most admired and magnificent qualities of the arts, including theatre: the capacity to weep and rejoice over events that the viewer knows to be make-believe, conveyed by people who she knows to be other people, in places that are shown as somewhere else (or as "some time else"), but experienced as multi-sensory real environments.

"Play" should by no means be seen as a derogative word or as something that suggests childish activities. Indeed, the word "ludicrous", denoting ridiculous, is derived from the Latin *ludus*, play. Children are exemplary players and the principles that distinguish play from other activities are similar regardless of age: play is free activity, temporally and spatially limited, and bound by rules; fictional and everyday realities exist in parallel, but do not exclude one another.

The idea of theatre as play is certainly not new. However, the study of scenography as a specific play environment is a move into less charted territories. Performance is a short-term event that uses the physical body of the landscape to stand for a fictional environment. It may or may not use the actual history and meanings of the landscape. In both cases, landscape becomes fictionalized. Landscape is available through skilled perception, which performance fosters. The fictional environment, however, can be experienced with all the senses and can have a strong impact on the viewer. Compared to the traditional

stage, the experience of the all-surrounding environment, where the limits of fictionality cannot be clearly determined, is potentially even stronger. It follows that landscape is more active than an architectural theatre environment. A performance can heighten the feeling of being implaced and and being a part of an environment which one knows to be fictional. This double perception, which is available only through participation in play, redefines scenography in the open air.

3. PLAY

3.1 Play

PLAY IS a very personal concept that can affect the player on an intimate level, through her thoughts, feelings and actions, through her mind and body. Even though scholars disagree as to whether all play can be considered playing in its truest sense, it is most likely that everybody has played in her life: played in childhood, played with children, with toys, played sports or board games, played with words or images, and perhaps played with other people. In a hermeneutic approach, the subjective dimension of play, every researcher's personal history as a player affects the understanding of the concept. Play acquires different nuances when emphasis is placed on, for example, competing, socializing or dreaming. Before proceeding to a discussion of scenography as a play environment, it is useful to study the concept of play, since it has, historically, acquired various connotations. Generally, play is associated with childhood, which is well illustrated in the theories of play. The tendency to use examples from childhood is rather common and not only in education and child psychology. This is quite understandable as every reader and writer has been a child. In the adult world, many similar activities are present, but they are often labelled entertainment, leisure or recreation (e.g. sports, board games, gambling and computer games). In the Western tradition, play is often regarded as being in opposition to work and, as a result, it acquires a negative connotation: playing is unproductive, not serious

and perhaps even immoral. As a result, there is a tendency to locate play in the world of children. It is quite common to recognize play as a necessary tool for learning social and sensory-motor skills in childhood, while similar activities that involve one or more features of play (e.g. stylization, repetition, immersion and imaginary worlds)[11] are overlooked in the adult world (see Sutton-Smith 1997).

Leaving aside the dismissive attitude towards play, the richness of play in contemporary European culture, hidden or open, is notable. In a certain sense, everyday experience is imbued with play and games. The ability to play is attributed to such non-human phenomena as colours, light or waves. Animals play. Playing is natural to infants and children. In certain cases, it is used in a professional or semi-professional sense: actors play roles or parts, musicians play their instruments and athletes play sports, while audiences appreciate and enjoy the quality of all of this playing. Investors play in stock-markets. Sex may involve play, aptly expressed in such words as fore- and after-play, playmate and playboy. The words *play* and *game* play a role in numerous idioms and metaphors, many of which show similar traits. At a glance, metaphorical usages fall into four categories; the division does not aim at a universal matrix, but rather points out the connotative field. A large number of expressions relate to pretence and/or deceit: "to put on a game face", "play games with someone", "play innocent", "play the fool", "play cat and mouse", "play hard to get", "foul play", "confidence game", and "play a role". Several metaphors are connected to joking (e.g. "play a joke on someone", and "play the fool"), strategy (e.g. "game plan", "play one's cards right", and "have a new ball in the game") and even danger and high stakes (e.g. "play with fire", "play with death", "play with someone's life", and "the game is worth the candles"). Metaphor itself is an act of playing with language.

On the largest scale, all human activity can be regarded as a form of play. Plato describes humans as the gods' playthings, whose aim is to repeat the gods' activities to the best of their ability (Laws, I–II). Keeping in mind that playthings have little bearing on their fate, the parallel between play and life rests on

11 However, the rise of computer games has indeed introduced the notion of playing to everyday language. At the same time that they have become so common, computer games may limit the understanding of playing.

indetermination, chance and luck. Indeed, such expressions as "game of fate" and "game of destiny", or such popular quotes as "does God play dice?" refer to life as a game of chance in someone else's master plan. In philosophy, Pascal's wager on the existence of God (first published in the collection of fragments *Pensées*, 1670) is a game on two levels. Firstly, the wager itself is a game. Secondly, the wager expects God to play by the rules. The argumentation rests on the finite nature of earthly life and the infinite nature of the afterlife. If one were to live the earthly life in hedonism and excess and were proven wrong, she would have traded eternal bliss for a short period of enjoyment. In this view, it makes more sense to bet on the existence of God and to live life by divine laws. In turn, God would have to fulfil the promise and grant her a worthy life after her death. In such cases, play expresses its dangerous side in society. If one agrees to live by the laws of God, God is expected to do the same, which in turn makes both of them subject to the same game and, in a certain sense, even partners. (Bates 1999: 39)

The idea of having no certainty as to whether life is a game, or which parts of it are fictional and which not, is tragic in the original sense. In Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, the tragic essence of Greek drama is understood as the tension between characters' unawareness of the whole situation and the audience's knowledge of all circumstances. Innocent ignorance is tragic. Nietzsche's solution is to accept illusion, as illusion with no attempt to construct reality behind it refers to a widespread problem in using play as a metaphor for human life. Play constructs a parallel fictional world that is separate from everyday factual reality. Therefore, if one were to see life as a game, it would indicate that there was a parallel, but more real life somewhere else. Leaving aside the religious aspects, this may lead to an endless loop, where any form of play assumes a parallel reality, which, in turn, may prove to be a game. Play in this context resembles the critique of Baudrillard's simulacra, which can similarly be seen to assume the existence of a more real reality.

Play and game are manifold concepts that have rich idiomatic and metaphoric usages and are, at the same time, used in professional terminology in various fields.

All of this makes play and game heavily laden concepts that are challenging to study. Furthermore, play and game have slightly different connotations.

3.1.1 Play and game

Several languages make no distinction between "play" and "game", e.g. *igra* in Russian, *Spiel* in German, *mäng* in Estonian, and *jeu* in French. The Merriam Webster Online Dictionary divides the definition of "game" into three main categories: (1) activity engaged in for diversion or amusement; (2) a procedure or strategy for gaining an end; and (3) a physical or mental competition conducted according to rules with the participants in direct opposition to each other. "Game" as a verb refers to gambling or cheating. So, by definition, the word "game" stresses rules and the competitive aspect. Play, in turn, is defined as a free activity that is characterized by immersion and engagement. As a verb and a noun, it primarily denotes the conduct, course or action of a game. It is easy to say that a game is something that is played. Tempting as it may be to view a game as a set of rules executed in play, it is oversimplifying to regard playing as a mere performance of rules. Playing is a creative activity that elaborates, concretises, and contests rules. There are differences between the ways in which the rules of basketball are interpreted in the NBA and in a school yard. Variations depend on skill, age and culture, as well as the physical environment, e.g. the size of the field, or the number of baskets. Games tend to be passed on orally (Hirn 1918: 8). The oral tradition characteristically shows great variations on a theme, whether in games, songs, legends, folk tales or the like. In the Estonian singing tradition, Hiiemäe points out that every song is adapted to the unique situation it is sung in, which makes the particular singing of a song superior to the song (in Krull 2006). Similarly, every occasion of playing a game sets different rules that are superior to the rules of the game. In ludology, the study of playing computer games, a clear distinction is made between *ludus* - the game, and *sessio* – the play situation. The

first is universal, and the second unique (Frasca 2001). Therefore, playing in itself is a rule-making process.

This study focuses on play and playing, the process of creating and sharing fictional meaning, especially in the context of engaging with fictional and real environments. It leaves aside games that do not engage the player physically and/or mentally in interaction with her immediate environment (e.g. computer games and video games). The main focus is on theatre, where the term takes yet another turn. Play denotes the written dramatic text conceived by the dramatist or playwright and used in the performance. At the same time, it is quite possible to speak of the work of actors as playing. The theatrical connotation of play dates back to the 14th century, and its appearance in such terms as "playhouse" and "player" indicates a wider meaning.

3.1.2 Play as a field of study

The following chapter provides a brief overview of classic play theories in modern European thought. The aim is to outline the interpretations of play as a concept in order to understand its current ambiguity, which ranges from something not serious or even ludicrous to the backbone of modern society. This ambiguity has strong historical traditions. In addition, it is a term in various fields, all of which interpret the phenomenon slightly differently in practical and philosophical applications. However, most of these interpretations have common roots, which have also influenced the use of "play" in everyday language. The aim is to demonstrate the complexity of defining the field and the influence of social and cultural values.

Presently, there is no comprehensive play theory that covers all play activities (Saar 1997: 14). Various disciplines that study play have different foci, backgrounds and applications. Therefore, it is complicated even to outline a history of play studies. Play is an important concept in pedagogy, anthropology, ethnology, psychology, psychoanalysis, culture studies, theatre and performance

studies, aesthetics, art research, philosophy, mathematics and various other disciplines. Any definition of play depends largely on the particular frame of reference that is used and on the writer's own viewpoint (Hakkarainen 2000: 184–185). The latter cannot be underestimated, because playing has an individual history in every reader's and writer's life. Play history is not reserved only for sports and keeping records; it is very personal and affects each person's implicit definition of play.[12] Play is also an activity that can be best discussed from within, i.e. as a hermeneutic concept that depends on the player and the particular game.

In general, the origins of modern play studies can be traced to the late 19th century. A group of four theories, commonly referred to as the classic theories, emerged. Partly influenced by Darwinian evolution theory, the primary concern of these studies is to investigate why people play.

1. Surplus energy theory. The philosopher Herbert Spencer's theory stresses the biological determinism in human play. While some species remain concerned with basic survival, highly developed species have excess energy, which is channelled into play. Play is the release of surplus energy. In children, it often takes the form of imitation, which Spencer describes as the dramatization of adult life. It also serves to satisfy instincts that cannot be met. Spencer classifies play into four groups: sensory-motor, aesthetic, imitational and rule-bound. He further develops the aesthetic aspect into a positivist theory of the origins of art. Art as play releases surplus energy and, at the same time, guarantees a disinterested attitude.
2. Relaxation theory. The German thinkers Heymann Steinthal and Moritz Lazarus propose that play is entertainment that gives necessary relaxation and pause to gather new strength.
3. Pre-exercise theory. In play, children imitate adult activities and learn about their future roles and duties. Also, they develop their sensory-motor skills,

12 In the course of this study, I have had to revise my own understanding of play. At one point, I realized that in childhood I used to regard competitive games and action games as play proper, while daydreaming and various mind games that formed a more substantial part of my play activities were just an ordinary part of life. Play is not only a complex concept due to its history and metaphorical capacity, but can also be easily misinterpreted for personal reasons.

undergo different emotions etc. In this view, play is integral to human development, because in the process of experimenting children learn to know their own bodies, as well as the surrounding environment and objects. Imitation is also an important aspect of social interaction between different generations. The German psychologist Karl Groos makes room for play in all age groups; for adults it is a form of relaxation from duty and obligation that makes imaginary worlds and dreams attainable.

4. Recapitulation theory. Playing is a biological instinct through which the child repeats the history of mankind: ontogenesis repeats phylogenesis. Games involving chasing, hunting and construction all refer to the livelihoods of our ancestors. The theory is used to explain why children all over the world play similar games.

All of the mentioned theories cover human play without an attempt to localize it in any specific field. The main aim is to discover the reasons behind human play, but characteristically they all put the main focus on children. The traces still echo in various contemporary theories and applications (origins of art, play as a part of educational processes, and play as a release of energy and tensions).

The first to distance himself from biological and Darwinian influences was the Dutch scholar Johan Huizinga, who claims in his *Homo Ludens. The play element in culture* (1938) that play is a free act of will. From this axiom, Huizinga sets out to prove that human culture is rooted in play. This is not only true for the arts; Huizinga understands culture as a broad term that covers all aspects of civilized life. Huizinga (2004: 10–11, 16) stresses the importance of the aesthetic function of play, which is not consistent with biological explanations. Although he does not define the aesthetic quality, it rests on the intensity, totality and feeling of fun in play experience.

Play is a civilizing force that precedes human culture. Huizinga argues that competition, *agon*, is the backbone of all human life. The transition from real competition to the symbolic *agon* of play marks the transition to culture

(Huizinga 2004: 187). Play leads to the performance, the re-enactment and representation of agonal, competitive, forces. Symbolic actions take the place of real fights, real competitions, and offer a new form of interaction. He writes, "(play) creates order, is order. Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection. Play demands order absolute and supreme" (Huizinga 2004: 19). The absolute power of consensual rules gives life structure and establishes regulated behaviour. Play – as Huizinga sees it – happens between two or more parties. Therefore, it establishes a controllable point of contact in a society, a rule-based dialogue. For example, the various ways of making legal decisions and passing judgement are a matter of bringing opponents together to establish who is right. The forms can range from singing and mocking contests to the rituals of the contemporary Western court. According to Huizinga, play is the common denominator that joins the practices together. As culture develops and becomes more elaborate, it starts to hide the agonal nature of society. However, play is the ultimate force that establishes order in a society and thereby is the primary civilizing force.

His aim – to show the crucial contribution of play to human culture – limits the field to socio-cultural phenomena (Huizinga 2004: 16). He addresses play as a form of social interaction within a culture, which puts play into a close relationship with its immediate cultural context (time, place, social relations). His examples, however, are drawn from a variety of cultural and temporal contexts (various periods in ancient Greece and Rome, contemporary Holland, ancient China, the Kwakiutl Indians, Melanesian cultures, medieval England, Inuits and Finns, to name a few), without clarifying the framework of the examples. Different cultures have various attitudes towards the value of play in society. Huizinga provides no indication of whether the examples are characteristic or exceptional in the given culture. In a certain sense, Huizinga regards play as a universal phenomenon that exists above or beyond culture.

Huizinga's impact on the subsequent analysis of play is profound, especially in

opening the subject to scholarly discussion. The French sociologist Roger Caillois, despite his critical attitude, salutes *Homo Ludens* for paving the path to the study of play and showing it as a serious element of culture that is present in all aspects of human life. With his focus on concrete play activities, Caillois proposes his own original socio-cultural theory in his *Man, Play and Games* (1958).

Caillois argues that during different developmental stages of a society different games have prominence, ranging from the primitive to the sophisticated. If it is true that play holds a mirror up to society, it is possible to derive a sociology from the games the particular society favours. Instead of the evolution of culture, Caillois proposes an evolution of playing that reflects the development of a society. He categorizes play into four classes: *mimicry* (the creation of imaginary worlds), *ilinx* ("losing oneself in play", an experience similar to vertigo), *alea* (games of chance) and *agon* (competition). The first two categories form *paideia* (free play) and the latter *ludus* (regulated play, which involves skills and/or knowledge). The progress from mimicry to agon marks the development of human culture; agon manifests the human power of will and the striving towards achievement at its best. It is interesting to note that there is an overall tendency to rate rule-bound games higher than improvisational games of make-believe (Piironen 1998). This is the order in which children generally learn to play: from the manipulation of objects to make-believe and finally to games with rules. This tendency might indicate a hidden tendency to compare the development of a society to the development of an individual.

Huizinga and Caillois offer an approach which may be called a morphology of play, since they are both largely concerned with the formal criteria of play and less with its content. This focus means that they share an idealistic view of play as progress. Play is a process of rationalization, of gaining control, of success and achievement in competition. The literary scholar Catherine Bates criticizes the authors for placing themselves at the far end of progress. She writes, "This tradition tells a noble tale. Play shows man at his best. In its creation of worlds it

makes him even god-like – the master of ceremonies and unchallenged king of his self-made-world" (Bates 1999: iii). Thus Huizinga and Caillois justify the order play has created, but do not ask whose ideology it carries or what it promotes.

The question of ideologies is a complex one. Play is a social phenomenon and its studies are inclined to express one ideology or another. In an attempt to systematize the various approaches in diverse fields, the American play theorist Brian Sutton-Smith groups theories together according to their popular rhetorics or "cultural ways of thought". He understands the rhetorics to be "a persuasive discourse, or an implicit narrative, wittingly or unwittingly adopted by the members of a particular affiliation to persuade others of the veracity and worthwhileness of their beliefs" (Sutton-Smith 1997: 8). Sutton-Smith's work can be described as a metatypology that expresses the link between play and the world, the place of play in human worlds. The rhetorics are the following (ibid.: 9–11):

Play as progress carries the notion that play is essential for development, for acquiring and practising new skills, and for coping with psychological issues. Karl Groos's theory of preparation is a classic example. Although not listed in Sutton-Smith's examples, Huizinga's and Caillois's general attitudes towards play can be easily fitted into this category. Play is a civilizing process not only on the subjective level, but on the social level.

Play as fate relies on the belief that human life is controlled by destiny (whether biological, neuro-chemical or divine); within the theories mentioned in this dissertation, it is present in Schechner's dark play, as well as in Pascal's wager. The idea of submission to fate differs radically from theories of leisure that stress play as the exercise of free will.

Rhetorics of power articulate the agonal dimension of play: that of contests, sports, warfare and the symbolic representation of conflicts and their resolutions (Huizinga, Caillois, Turner, Spariosu). Play as an expression and re-fortification of identity finds its expression in communal celebrations and festivals (Turner, Schechner, Gadamer). Play as the imaginary celebrates the manifestation of

creativity in play. Art, quite naturally, is a classic example (Schiller). Art is also an example of the rhetoric of identity, which focuses on the experience of the players (Gadamer). The identity in question is not necessarily a communal one. It centres on the aesthetic experience of the player, whether in hobbies, extreme sports or arts.

Play is constantly at risk of being ideologized and idealized. Historical theories inevitably reflect dominant ideas in society and cannot be adopted without considering these implications. As a metaphor, play is always on the verge of dissolving since the meanings are so diverse, ranging from childishness to matters of life and death, from freedom to duty. Thus it is still valid to ask what play is, especially in the phenomenological and hermeneutical contexts.

3.1.3 Characteristics of play

Given the large field play occupies, it is evident that it is impossible to define play overall. The problem is perhaps most vividly illustrated by Wittgenstein's decision to use "game", to show the impossibility of defining, in *Philosophical Investigations*. He argues that the attempt to build a definition to encompass all phenomena known as games would provide contradictory information. Defining characteristics of one game will inevitably rule out another one. Competitiveness, which describes chess or basketball, does not apply to playing house, and fun may not be the defining element of theatre. Regardless, Wittgenstein observes that there is a family resemblance and one is able to recognize certain phenomena as games.

In a sense, play resists rigid classification and definition. It is hard to pin it down to one certain area and even more difficult to characterise it. Victor Turner (1983: 233–234) wittily uses another play metaphor: play is the joker in the neuro-anthropological deck that fits nowhere in particular. Any attempt to give a comprehensive definition (or characterization) will result in nonsense, and

for several reasons: the field is diverse; play is a closed process, which cannot be examined from the outside; and it is dual by its nature, as it balances between the fictional and the real. Even though one should be able to recognize play based on personal experience, there is often doubt. The ambiguity of play is closely connected to the impossibility of telling the difference between play behaviour and ordinary behaviour without really participating in play. Also, within play the border between play and non-play remains open and it can slip from one category to another. Everyday reality and play reality exist in parallel and do not exclude one another. Sutton-Smith (1997: 2) points out the aspects of play that are characteristically ambiguous and make it difficult to define play:

- the ambiguity of reference (is that a pretend gun sound or are you choking?);
- the ambiguity of the referent (is that an object or a toy?);
- the ambiguity of intent (do you mean it or is it pretend?);
- the ambiguity of sense (is this serious or is this nonsense?);
- the ambiguity of transition (you said you were only playing);
- the ambiguity of contradiction (a man playing at being a woman);
- the ambiguity of meaning (is it play or play-fighting?).

As a result, several researchers suggest that it is more fruitful to describe its features rather than seek an all-embracing definition of play. The commonly noted characteristics, in random order, include: free activity, the outcome and process are not pre-defined, subject to rules, temporal and spatial limits, the parallel existence of play reality and everyday reality that does not exclude either, and a goal in itself (Saar 1997: 34–35). Several of these originate from Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*: free activity, set outside ordinary life, spatially and temporally limited, repeatable, establishes order, and provides tension and relaxation (Huizinga 2004: 23). In the following, I will take a closer look at the characteristics that are relevant for looking at landscape as a play environment: the relationship between fiction and fact, and spatial and temporal limits.

3.1.4 Fictional and real

Play constructs a parallel fictional world that does not exclude the existence of everyday reality. It is governed by its own set of rules, which in turn makes the created world – that of fiction – real for the player. Rules give play a closed form, separating it from the flux of everyday life. Rules give meaning to symbolic gestures (e.g. man past the line, ball in the net) and make room for certain activities that would otherwise seem out of place (e.g. hopping like a rabbit, speaking made-up languages). For those activities, rules offer a protected area, a sanctuary. "This is play, not ordinary life" is a rule, which may not always be explicitly stated, but without which play cannot begin. Children often start their games with "let us now play that…" In play that has taken a symbolic cultural form, it can be the opening of a curtain, singing an anthem or lighting a fire. These signs equally carry the meaning "this is play". The anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1972: 179) refers to the process as metacommunication. All other rules are based on the first one, which separates fiction from fact. Caillois writes, "the fiction, the sentiment of *as if* replaces and performs the same function as do rules" (Caillois 2001: 8). In a sense, "as if" is the absolute first rule, the statement "this is play".[13] While rules guarantee the integrity of play, it is the play world alone that gives meaning to the rules. Rules have no bearing or meaning in the outside world. As Caillois puts it, "the game has no other but an intrinsic meaning. That is why its rules are imperative and absolute, beyond discussion. There is no reason for their being as they are, rather than otherwise" (Caillois 2001: 7). Thus the absoluteness of the rules depends on their relativity – their realization in each occasion of being played. The player is at all times aware of the played character of the situation, which never overshadows the everyday life outside. To some extent, the freedom of play is the freedom of fiction. The phrase "as if" describes it best; it

13 Caillois argues that fiction is present only in games of make believe. Games with rules do not create a separate reality. This division is debatable for two reasons. Firstly, "as if" can be seen as the first rule that demarcates the play situation (including play-space and play-time). Therefore, fiction is partly rule bound. Secondly, the outcome of rule-bound games (e.g. flying a kite, hide-and-seek or golf) is decided based on a symbolic gesture that has meaning only in the fictional context: man past the line, or ball in the hole.

suggests the presence of two worlds, where things are taken in a certain way, but are not fixed permanently.

In theatre, the "magic if" is used to describe the construction of hypothetical cause-effect relationships. It was originally introduced in Stanislavsky's acting technique to trace the logic behind the character's actions. Asking "What would I do if I were in Lady Macbeth's shoes?" and considering the circumstances of Lady Macbeth given in the text (the situation, the facts she knows and does not know, the relationships with other characters, personality, attitudes, desires etc.) help to bridge the gap between the acts and feelings of the written character and those of the performer. The motives and objectives of the character drive the physical actions of the actor and lead to a performance that the audience can believe in. In play, "as if" is almost like magic. In play, one does not fight dragons with a sword, but "as if" fights dragons with a pencil used "as if" it were a sword; one does not fly on a magic carpet, but "as if" flies on the carpet "as if" it were magic. The player is aware of the play situation, and does not operate in the ordinary world, but in the fictional one. At the same time, the relationship to the physical world is open: events, characters, objects and environments from the everyday context can be introduced into play and similarly excluded from it. Theatre performances employ both ifs.

On the largest scale, every object, person, event and environment that is part of play is fictional. It is easy to follow in theatre: it is customary to treat the stage world as a fictional one that does not directly coincide with the one of the audience. When someone yells "fire! fire!" on stage, the audience does not rush out. When Othello strangles Desdemona, the audience does not go to help. This knowledge is partly vested in space, the clear separation between the audience area and stage in traditional theatre. Even when an actor plays herself, as Judith Malina famously did in the Living Theatre's *Paradise Now* (1968), the special spatio-temporal frame and the identification of the event as a performance make it possible to see her as a fictional character called Judith Malina, who appears in

the body of Judith Malina. Joseph Margolis argues that if a fictional place bears the name of an actual city (Montreal) and even shares several similarities with the actual Canadian city named Montreal, the town is still a fictional place of action (in Sarapik 2006: 45). In *Bogship*, performed in the remote Soontagana village in western Estonia, the fictional events take place in the village of Soontagana. Even if the actual place is used as a setting for the staging, the plot, characters, the use of time in the story and the entire theatrical situation (e.g. the audience area and lighting) mark it off as a fictional place. Fictionality leaves the boundary between the actual and factual world open; the border is porous and not entirely fixed. As Aristotle states in *Poetics*, the work of a poet differs from the art of the historian: the historian speaks of past events, and the poet of things that may have happened or may yet happen (Aristotle 1451b1). Even though the play may be written in past tense, the act of performance (or reading) and its endless repeatability keep it eternally open.

If the world created can be described as fictional, then what should its counterpart be called? Everyday reality, which in one sense is the opposite of play and yet present in all play? Play creates a parallel world that temporarily cancels the actions and meanings of everyday life, but it operates in the same physical world – it uses environments and objects that are a part of this outside world. The player, her experiences, thoughts and imaginings are connected to the everyday world through her body and senses; the duality of fictional and physical is present at all times. In principle, this keeps the process open and, if the rules allow, new objects can be introduced (and excluded) at any time.

The world outside play cannot be called real or factual, because play establishes meaning within its autonomous circle of play. In play, fiction is real. In his theory of fictional worlds, Thomas Pavel sees fiction as a marginal entity in the ontological landscape (the mindscape of a community), which can be used for play and educational purposes. In the case of play, the simultaneous presence of multiple entities (a book as a brick and a book as a book) structures the

understanding of the world into two categories: fictionally real and really real. In addition, it is possible to evoke things in play that do not have an actual counterpart in the really real life, e.g. a talking cat. (in Epner 2006: 69) To a certain extent, the *really real* is physical reality, because fiction in play has no immediate unavoidable need for materialization. In terms of the environment and its objects, this is plausible. But everyday life is not only the material layer; fiction can establish an alternative version of values, meanings and ideas. And play itself can be an everyday activity. Depending on the context, the everyday, ordinary and physical will be used as the counterpart of fiction.

The fictional and physical, and the fictional and everyday are not opposites, but counterparts, partners, in the truest sense. The uniqueness of play comes from the simultaneous presence of both levels, which complement one another. The relationship between the two levels is dynamic and subject to change, because it depends on the agreement of the players. The meaning and functions of events, objects, people and environments can change abruptly. The same object can stand for many things and the change takes place in a split second. A pencil can transform from a sword to a lamp post to a horse to a pencil. In the performance of *Kingdom of Vargamäe*,[14] the transformations of the ploughed ridge into a river and later into a border, a swamp and a ditch are abrupt. This becomes clear through action, occasional gestures and brief mentions of the word ("river" and "border") in the dialogue. The dynamicity of meanings is available only through participating in the process. These fictional, assigned functions can be regarded as temporal agreements that are valid for the time of play, each time accepted by the other players. In a sense, objects, people and environments are processes that are played rather than things that are manipulated. However, the relationship between fiction and outside reality is open. Epner describes play in theatre as a range of possible transitions between the two levels. "More importantly the double structure of theatre is not a stable, but rather an oscillating or vibrating phenomenon. The stage world has several states laden with more or less

14 *Kingdom of Vargamäe*, a production based on the first and fifth novels of *Truth and Justice*, by A H Tammsaare, premiered at the birthplace of the author in 2006, followed by *Republic of Wargamäe* two years later. Both productions will be discussed in 4.2 Nowhere in Vargamäe.

fictionality within this structure, and therefore it is appropriate to describe it as a range of constant transitions, rather than a dichotomy. The forces of gravity in the structure are applied towards the end points of the range (pure presence or total illusion), which are never accomplished, although theatre utopias have constantly striven for it – it would flatten the double structure, which would mean its destruction." (Epner 2006: 69) Potentially, play is always dynamic and in movement.

In the relationship between fiction and everyday reality, there is one notion that clearly affects the everyday. The experiences a player goes through and her emotions are actual and real, even though she knows that the situation that causes them is fictional. This sets the question of true and false in play differently. As the art researcher Virve Sarapik writes, "A work of fiction cannot lie by itself, by its fictional nature, because it does not make any claims. For example, it does not maintain that imaginary events, people or objects exist in reality" (Sarapik 2006: 44), which does not mean that it is not possible to lie in a game, but it can be done primarily in regard to the autonomous fictional world. Even if one takes fiction for real, it does not lose its impact when the fictional nature is recognized. Leonid Stolovich traces the evolution of the question of deception in Kant's aesthetics and concludes that play establishes a certain type of semblance[15], which the mind plays with and does not take for real. Simple deceptive semblance loses its power once its nature is revealed, but illusion[16] is a playful semblance that retains its effect and continues to please the player. (Stolovich 1990: 143–144) Art is the creator of a fiction that leaves a lasting impact. Sadness and joy are real emotions that are remembered in real memories; the experience play creates reaches beyond the world of "as if". As a result, art has the capacity to broaden the scope of experience by using fiction.

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15 *Schein*, the concept that Kant uses in German, is a problematic and fascinating word. The meanings range from "glow" and "light" to "appearance", "pretence" and "revelation". In the times of Kant and Schiller, *schöner Schein* (beautiful semblance) was used as a synonym for art. It vividly illustrates the dual nature of art, which includes both illusion and revelation.

16 Illusion is etymologically connected to the Latin *illudo* (I play), and *in ludere* (in play).

3.1.5 Space and time as boundaries

Many authors (e.g. Saar, Huizinga, Caillois, Gadamer and Schechner) refer to spatial and temporal limits as characteristics that distinguish play from other activities. The question of the play environment as a particular landscape of engagement will be discussed in 4.1 Play environment. Huizinga claims that play is spatially and temporally limited. A court of law, an arena, a stage, a magic circle and a gambling table all create a well defined play space that is set off from ordinary life. To a certain extent, Huizinga uses the binding function of space to establish the connection between judicial procedures, sports and theatre (Huizinga 2004: 19). In fact, space limits play; it creates an impermeable circle of play that cannot be transgressed. In a way, space makes the superiority of play rules that do not coincide with everyday life visible. Entering and exiting the play world are clearly marked.

The same applies to time: play has a beginning and an end. Sometimes it is marked by events or spatial signs, e.g. standing up, dimming the lights or hoisting a flag. Sometimes temporal limits are determined before: a football game is divided into four quarters, today's performance lasts two hours, or parents will allow children to play hopscotch until lunch. Subdivisions, times of day and concrete hours all can mark the beginning and the end of a play session. Essentially, play is limited by two temporal agreements: "let's play!" (which signifies the application of new rules) and "the play is over!" (return to everyday world). No matter how abrupt the ending may be (e.g. a mother suddenly calls children to lunch, or the power goes off in the theatre), the play ends with the mutual agreement of the players. Agreements become rules only if accepted by all players. Not all agreements are explicitly stated, so the process of negotiating the rules is characteristic of all play (Hakkarainen 1991: 45). Even if the rules of the game are put on paper, each situation of playing sets its own rules, which are superior to the rules of the game. These rules are absolute, but only in each play situation.

All this supports Huizinga's view that space and time give play a clear structure and make the event a repeatable game (Huizinga 2004: 19). Play not only creates, but requires a magic circle that closes the player in, and the everyday world out. Play starts with a conscious act of entering the circle and ends with the exit. Space and time are interconnected; space makes play-time visible. This is clear in special play spaces. The matter of time and space is slightly more complicated. In the discussion of space and time, Huizinga uses very clear cases – an arena, a temple and a court of law, which are specially designed play spaces. In general, space and time are not central to his argument and are not discussed in many of the examples.

While generally all games have a beginning and an end, there are several instances where this is unclear. Children often pick up a game after a pause and it goes on from the same point. The break can last for days or weeks. And the game can continue in such sequences for a considerably long period. Although they fall out of the scope of this study, multi-user online games continue regardless of whether a particular player plays or not. Stopping the play does not stop the game; it either exists latently or still goes on. The film *Jumanji* turns into a scary scenario: one of the characters gets trapped in the game and cannot return to the outside world because her partner has quit. The game continues regardless of the action of one particular player. *KA Mountain and GUARDenia Terrace* (1972), staged by Robert Wilson, lasted non-stop for a week; audience members were expected to come and join or leave the performance at any time within the week. The successive performance of the four parts of Tammsaare's quintology *Truth and Justice* in Vargamäe (2009) lasted 21 hours altogether. It consisted of four performances by three theatres, each focused on one sequence of the quintology (starting with the second novel, since the last performance, *Kingdom of Vargamäe* contained references to the first novel). However, the Vargamäe Marathon followed the temporal structure of the quintology, beginning with the protagonist's youth and ending with his return to his childhood home as a grown

man. Tickets were sold separately, and audience members could choose which parts to see, knowing that the play would still be going on in their absence and that by the time they joined it events would have evolved and characters grown older. It is important to differentiate between the two categories play and game, or play and play session. Even though a game can theoretically be infinite, a play session is a finished action.

In addition to blurring temporal limits, spatial demarcation can be invisible. In the simple game of hide-and-seek, it is often impossible for an outsider to decide whether the players have agreed on a spatial limit (e.g. "let's not hide in other rooms" or "let's not go beyond those trees"). Adopting the idea of ambiguity proposed by Sutton-Smith (1997: 2), the elimination of clearly visible borders can blur the transition to the play world, and make it harder to grasp the context of actions and objects (the ambiguity of intent and reference), since limitless play can permeate any place. Pervasive playing deliberately aims at blurring the borders between the fictional world and the real world. This particular practice of play is mainly characterized by its attempt to blur the social, temporal and/or spatial borders of play (Montola 2005). For example, the role-play "Killer. The Game of Assassination" has no spatial or temporal limits. The player who has received instructions to "assassinate" someone not only disguises her identity, but aims to fulfil her task as discreetly as possible. The assassin can be anyone, anywhere, at any time. The symbolic "kill" can take place in a grocery store or on the way to work. To minimize the influence on working life, safe zones can be created, where play cannot proceed. The idea of safe zones reverses the concept of spatial limits by claiming all of the world for play and identifying smaller sectors that are not included. In pervasive games, usually any specific knowledge about spatio-temporal limits is suppressed.

Space can be used to mark the limits of play, to carry the meta-communicative message "this is play". Entrance into the magic circle means that one has to act according to the rules laid down in play and regard fictional reality as superior to

that of everyday life. At the same time, space as one of the heralds of ongoing play can be suppressed, thereby making play invisible to others.

Play is a complex concept that can fully be understood only by participating in it, by being involved in the process of confirming and making agreements that define each play situation differently. Characteristics pointed out by play researchers – the parallel existence of fictional and real elements, spatial and temporal limits, the presence of rules etc. – are not universal, but depend on each play session. This, in turn, affects the experience of the play environment, which is perceived differently in each case. The unique relationship between the fictional and real, and the question of spatial limits are at the heart of discussing theatre performances; play can offer a fresh view of scenography as a play environment and as a work of art.

3.2 Art and play

THE CONSCIOUS CREATION of fiction and the connection of play to activities that are judged by process and non-material values contribute to the association of art with play. The survey of play theories in 3.1.2 Play as a field of study dealt with the Darwinian idea of play as a form of channelling excess energy and a way of addressing one's dreams and desires, which lead to the creation of artworks. In everyday use, the pairing of art and play suggests the creation of an independent realm, which exists by its own rules outside practical everyday life and has no bearing on it. The change of styles and emergence of new art movements can be explained as the change of rules in a game. The question of the productive and practical value of art surfaces in placing the goal of play in the process of playing. Although a work of art has cultural, social and economic value, the pleasure of an art experience can be seen as being embedded in the process of perceiving. However, this tendency to regard art as play can easily lead to the exclusion of art from everyday life as irrelevant and unimportant. Art and play should not be seen as being identical, nor are they completely analogous. However, there are tendencies to look for thematic or theoretical similarities, common roots or ontological parallels. The tendency to pair art and play stems from many roots and has historically taken many turns. Plato sees dance and music as noble forms of play that help to please the gods. Kant discusses play as a way of explaining the

illusionary character of art, which does not aim to fool the perceiver, but to grant her a true and disinterested experience (Stolovich 1992: 143-145, 178). The art experience is the free play of cognitive powers. Schiller enters into dialogue with Kant's idea of art as play, but extends it to develop a unique bond between beauty and play, suggesting that play is the only right attitude towards apprehending beauty. This carries forward the idea of disinterestedness, but also proposes a way of balancing rational thought and the senses. Limiting the discussion to classic aesthetics, Leonid Stolovich (1992) proposes four points of contact and comparison: art and play share common roots; the pleasure of art is essentially similar to the pleasure of a game; process is more important than goals; and the real and the fictional exist simultaneously. The following chapter will provide a short overview of the main theories of classic aesthetics, focusing on hermeneutics. Since the dissertation concentrates on the aesthetic functioning of landscape as a play environment, the discussion of play and aesthetic appreciation is essential in forming a framework for understanding the shift in the aesthetic environmental experience of a play environment that is created together by all participants in the course of play.

The origins of art, which form one of the most popular connections between art and play, can be addressed on two levels: individual and cultural. As observed in 3.1.2 Play as a field of study, classic theories state that art originates from the need to release energy and can be identified with play. Ernst Grosse, the author of the first specialized theory of the origins of art in play, proposes that the difference between art and play is in the setting of goals. Play still retains an element of practical behaviour, although the pleasure of play is connected to the enjoyment of the process. Metaphorically, he compares practical behaviour to a straight line, play to a wave and art to a circle (Stolovich 1992: 147–148). The idea of tracing the creation of art back to its origins on an individual level has proven intriguing. Psychological and psychoanalytical theories that study the link between the formation of mental images in early childhood and their use in creative processes

remain outside the scope of this study. Liisa Piironen (1998: 41, 57, 58) suggests that the importance of play in childhood is also fundamental to understanding art. It does not follow that involvement in play automatically leads to the comprehension of contemporary art; full enjoyment of art requires guidance and training. However, the logic behind the transferring of meaning in conceptual art, the use of the expressive body or the physical pleasure of materials (e.g. soil, earth or bodily fluids) in land art and processual arts is at the core of children's play.

Kant and Schiller address play as a characteristic feature of all aesthetic experience. Kant localizes play in the subject. In *Critique of Judgement*, the judgement of taste is a free play of cognitive powers: in the appreciation of beauty, the play of imagination and intellect and, in the sublime, imagination and ratio. Free play is used to describe harmony, i.e. a state of freedom where all involved agents have an equal say. The play of cognitive powers is essential not only to aesthetic judgement, but also to any expression of aesthetic ideas. Schiller's *Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* continues this line of thought. Schiller sees modern man as torn between two higher drives: the formal (*Formtrieb*) and the sensuous (*Sinnliche Trieb*). Play is not only a mediating or stabilizing platform, but also a drive of its own. The matter of play as a separate drive (*Spieltrieb*) is problematic, because it is easy to interpret it as a correct relation between sense and matter (see Sonderegger 1998, 2000, Scheibler 2001). The object of the formal drive is the organization of matter and time into form and the object of sensuous drive is temporal and material life. Tiina Tikkanen (1987: 12) points out that Schiller uses a parallel expression for sensuous drive – material drive (*Stofftrieb*). In her opinion, the expression "material drive" suggests a subtle, but vital difference. Senses take in the world, but matter is what they are drawn to. Here the analogy with formal drive is more lucid: just as form attracts and activates the drive for form, matter attracts senses. There is an innate opposition between the two forces and yet man is unable to comprehend the world successfully without both of the drives. In this context, the play drive can be interpreted as the drive for harmony

and freedom, which overcomes the conflicting forces. The object of play – living form – is to be understood as the aim of human life. It is not the correct or harmonious relationship between the two drives, but a separate entity, which is also the ultimate manifestation of beauty. As a result, play is the correct attitude towards beauty and art, or perhaps the only possible mode of engagement, where none of the drives (lower or higher) take precedence. Play is the free playing ground for the senses. It should be noted that Schiller's concern with freedom lays special emphasis on human freedom and frames the entire *Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man*.

These best-known play theories in classic aesthetics are linked together and yet do not form a continuous development of a theme. Schiller's *Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* is directly in dialogue with Kant's analysis in *The Critique of Judgement*. However, Kant's usage of play in the formation of aesthetic appreciation is not the only link. Spencer's suggestion that art originates in play, while play is the release of surplus energy, is influenced by Schiller's philosophy. Later Gadamer returns to Kant in the critique of the subjectivization of aesthetics, and proposes his own account of art and play: the structure of an artwork as play. Even though all of the mentioned concepts of play are partly linked, they cannot be regarded as developments from the same root or elaborations of the same idea. Characteristically, all remain on a general level with no specialization in a particular field or form of art. It becomes evident in the examples used by Huizinga, Caillois, Schiller and Gadamer that it is easier to observe the direct link to play in literature, music, dance and theatre: the act of performing a piece and its relationship to a work of art (e.g. a play, performance or novel) offer an enlightening analogy with play and games. The varying nuances that affect the experience of each particular recital, performance or reading also have a bearing on the understanding of the symphony, novel, play or staging, without altering its essence.

Theatre is a form of play on multiple levels. In addition to the dichotomy of game and play (production and performance) and its role in aesthetics, the

origins of theatre are also rooted in rituals. While ritual, as a very specific form of play, remains outside the scope of this study, historically the origins of European theatre are connected to the rites and rituals[17] of ancient Greece. The point of departure from ritual to theatre is marked by the subtle, yet decisive shift in the attitude of the participants. Instead of clear and undivided participation in the ritual, which is integral to belonging to a community, the ritual is presented to an audience. However, it is a change in the degree of involvement. Turner notes that the transformation into theatre is an open process that can revert. (Turner 1990: 10–11, Schechner 2006: 77) Active participation in rituals, which does not always need to be physical, has transformed into the various roles that the audience can take in current theatre: witnesses, accomplices, neutral or emphatic observers. Indeed, ritual-like or ritualized aesthetic performances (to use Turner's term) have been used to re-build or re-articulate the close ties in a community, e.g. in the theatre practice of Grotowski or in such cultural performances as the Olympic Games or early Soviet mass spectacles. Ritual can be seen as a safer and more organized form of play. The theatre director Richard Schechner, whose understanding of ritual is influenced by Victor Turner, understands ritual as a performative process that is used to overcome critical events or processes that create a rupture in the traditional flow of life. Some of these are regular, such as transformations from one state to another (in social status, hierarchy etc.), while some involve the unexpected breaking of rules. Play, to the contrary, is the dangerous essence of ritual that can openly contest taboos, take risks, and redefine the rules and customs of a society. (Schechner 2006: 53, Turner 1992: 26) This can be observed in localized and controlled carnevalesque acts of reversal, e.g. the election of the Lord of Misrule in Elizabethan Christmas traditions, and mock sermons of medieval Europe, epitomized in Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World*. From another perspective, ritual accommodates the danger of play – the danger being its openness, the always potential suppression of the meta-message "this is

17 Ritual is understood as a system of social performative practices, where the act of performing sacred or profane material is not a means of expression, but an act of making it true (performing it *sensu* Austin). Schechner (2006) poetically describes ritual as collective memory inscribed in action.

play" and the existence of multiple realities.

The prominent and intriguing presentation of play in cultural theory has led to the application of these theories to specific fields of art. While Caillois and, especially, Huizinga have achieved a noteworthy position in cultural theory, which is indeed well-earned for the novelty of their approaches, their theories cannot be applied to all fields without modification. Both authors use play on a meta-level, and this cannot be translated directly onto the level of the particular. Without adequate modification, their internal focus on the morphology of play can result in general matrices that do not shed light on the nature of particular forms of art. Sonderegger (1998: 532–533) sharply criticizes their non-modified application to the arts and sees the classification as unsuitable to aesthetics. Huizinga's stress on the agonal (competitive) character of play is problematic in the arts and may lead to the artificial creation of oppositions. However, the interest raised by Huizinga and Caillois has placed play into a particularly interesting place in the contemporary field of aesthetics, and has legitimated the rediscovery of the roots of the concept in the aesthetics of Schiller and Kant.

Considering the ontological and morphological connections between art and play, the aesthetician Ruth Sonderegger lists a number of possible connections: play as the content of artwork, play as form, style as play, play as fiction, and play with the perceiver. The first group – style, form and content – she disregards on the basis of reductability to a general structure. Sonderegger writes, "Games on the level of content take on a totally different status if the artwork itself is understood as play unity; when this is the case, those games are no longer to be understood as isolated events but rather as a reflection of the structure of the artwork as a whole and, as such, as part of that structure" (Sonderegger 1998: 532). The theories examined in this dissertation see the role of the perceiver in the existence of the artwork as central. The viewer, reader or listener belongs to the structure of the work. Therefore, within certain limitations, it is possible to incorporate play with the viewer into play as the structure of the artwork. The

last point of connection, fiction as play, is not inherent only to art. Fiction is at work in various theories that cannot factually be proven: the origin of the world or language (ibid.: 533). Hans Vaihinger, in his *Philosophy of the "As If"* (2001, first published in 1924), extensively discusses the role of fiction in the sciences, including physics and mathematics. However, the question of fictionality and its effect on experience (the acceptance of fictional events and related emotions) is at the heart of art.

3.2.1 Work of art as play

One of the points of departure for Gadamer's aesthetics of play is the critique of traditional aesthetics, what he calls aesthetic consciousness. Gadamer continues Heidegger's critique of the subjectivization of aesthetics, where aesthetic experience is tied to individual taste and man's state of feeling. This critique is connected to the (mis)interpretations of Kant's disinterestedness, which for Gadamer is not a state of disengagement or indifference, in which all essential relations to the object are suspended. On the contrary, it is a state of engagement, where one suspends all outside construction of the object. The work of art[18] is no longer experienced based on the perceiver's subjective feelings. In this context, it is not entirely correct to refer to the work of art as an object; rather, it is an event in which the perceivers take part, an event of revealing the truth.

For Gadamer, subjectivization is precisely the matter of narrowing the aesthetic experience to the subject's cognitive faculties. In his understanding, the aesthetic experience (*Erlebnis*) in the model of aesthetic consciousness is an abstraction that denies continuance between the life-world of the perceiver and of the artwork. Consequently, art becomes a matter of subjective experience, both in terms

18 In the context of play, which is often treated as being in opposition to everyday duties, the expression "work of art" to denote an *oeuvre* gains an ironic undertone. However, it also expresses the dilemma of professional play, where a practised field of work (theatre, music, sports etc.) can be regarded as play. While the lack of alternative or more compact terms in English is interesting, so is the connection between work and art in the commonly used French and Latin loans *oeuvre* and *opus* (work).

of creation and reception. Thus art can make no legitimate ontological claims. Instead, he proposes that experience (*Erfahrung*) is to be understood as something that changes the perceiver, which – as Scheibler notes – also includes the possibility of negative experience (Scheibler 2001: 161). For Gadamer, the aesthetic experience becomes one of self-understanding. In the spirit of *aletheia*, the work of art reveals something that is there and also reveals the perceiver's position in the world; it speaks of his ontological place in the world. Gadamer's aim in *Truth and Method* is to show that the aesthetic experience is essentially an experience of truth (*Wahrheit*). The current reading leaves aside the problems of play and language that Gadamer addresses in *Truth and Method*.

At no point does Gadamer set out to define play. His understanding of play is embedded in the characteristics he uses to establish the connection between art and play, between the aesthetic experience and playing. He systematically refers to several factors: intentionality, rules and regulations, closedness, the importance of participants, communication, repeatability and the goal in itself, all of which concur with characteristics employed in this study to describe play (Gadamer 1998: 124). Gadamer uses them to describe an artwork as play, an intentional fictional event, which is comprehended by consciously participating in it. However, there are a few important elaborations. Firstly, although there is no distinction between "play" and "game" in the German language, Gadamer implicitly seems to differentiate between each particular act of playing and the compilation of rules and regulations that form an abstract game that can be realized in play. Each act of playing is a variation of the game and enforces its own rules that regulate the particular play. In accordance with the English translations of *Truth and Method* and *Relevance of the Beautiful*, as well as the general framework of this study, play is used consistently for both, and the difference is established through context.

Although Gadamer extends the question of intentionality to artistic expression, on the primary level it means that play is intended to be nothing more and nothing less than play and it is intended to be played. It demands that participants

agree to the rules of the game, including the particular level of fictionality. In a play fight, a bite is not a real bite, yet it seems like one and is intended to provoke a reaction. Children play as if the carpet were magic, and a performer acts as if she were Hamlet. "As if" is the clause that binds together fictionality and reality and, at the same time, keeps them from fusing into one another. Therefore "as if" not only expresses ever-present fictionality, but is also a perfect example of intentionality. The aim is not to deceive but to "suspend disbelief". Although characteristic of art, the intentionality of play is expressed in gestures and acts that are "as if". Schechner points out the complexity of the gestures: a play bite, for instance, is a non-bite, and at the same time it is not a non-bite, since it symbolizes a bite and is intended to provoke an adequate (yet playful "as if") response (Schechner 2006: 103–105). As shown in the chapter 4.1.1 Fictional and real, "as if" is part of the rules and regulations that govern the actions of the players and which count only in the closed realm of the particular play.

Another paradox lies in the particular relationship between intentionality and processuality. Since play is not driven by any outside goals, except the intention to play, it is impossible to fix one point as its end, completion or moment of perfection. The goals are set within the play process, which means that "the end pursued is certainly a nonpurposive activity, but this activity is itself intended" (Gadamer 1998: 23). It follows that the substance of play is self-presentation (Gadamer 1989: 103). To put it simply: play is intended to be played, which means that every instance of play is its self-presentation, regardless of its possible expressions and interpretations in particular situations.

An artwork is intended on two levels: by the author and by its viewer. Firstly, it is intended to be a representation which makes a reference to something (an object, feeling, concept) outside the work. The ontological character of art is hermeneutical: all presentation is interpretation. And within the context of intentionality, all presentation in play is potentially for someone and, therefore, it is also a representation. Gadamer makes it very clear that even within the mimetic

model the representation is just as much intended to be an individual object, a separate entity, whether a painting, novel or symphony. However, the work of art is not a mediator in the classic sense – a bearer of an author's message – and it does not refer back to its creation. Gadamer stresses that the meaning of the work is embedded in its being; it does not stand for something else, but is intended to exist in such a form. (Gadamer 1989: 108, Gadamer 1998: 126, 38) The substance of art or its mode of being is pure manifestation – self-presentation. It is characterized by the "as if": the work is not the transferring unit for a meaning; the meaning is constructed actively by the perceiver through her active encounter with the work. In a sense, a work of art is always something it is not: "(i)t is something that openly manifests and displays itself when it is constituted in the viewer" (Gadamer 1998: 126). The inherent "as if" character helps to reveal the intentionality of the object and reveals its existence as play.

Play is the artwork's mode of being: the intended "as if" nature is present on all levels, from creation to interpretation; it exists in self-presentation and requires participation. Art exists in being played, through the perceiver, who recognizes it as play. The identification of an artwork and the ability to appreciate it according to its unique being suggests that the spectator accepts the rules of a game. The player has no other access to play than by playing it. This fact stresses the autonomy of art as play; it forms a closed world that establishes a truth in its own right. It cannot be compared to outside reality; art as play forms an autonomous circle of meaning (Gadamer 1998: 128). At the same time, it follows that the player does not construct the meaning independently of the work. An artwork establishes a language of its own and challenges the perceiver to make contact with it.

To conclude, Gadamer sees the perceiver as an essential part of the structure of the work of art. The perceiver not only becomes a participant through attending to the work and the fact that she has no access to play outside participation. Play itself requires a participant; the viewer belongs to the structure of the work of art. This makes the shift from viewer to player

inevitable: a work of art exists in being played and the player completes the process of self-presentation. The viewer belongs to the work as do the interpretations: different readings of a book, performances of a symphony or a theatre production, and even improvisatory pieces. However, play does not manifest itself in players. Gadamer recognizes the absorbing quality of play, as well as the importance of players, but the particular player is arbitrary. "Play is structure – this means that despite its dependence on being played it is a meaningful whole which can be repeatedly presented as such and the significance of which can be understood. But the structure is also play, because – despite this theoretical unity – it achieves its full being only each time it is played" (Gadamer 1989: 116–117). In Scheibler's reading of Gadamer, play is transformed into a structure, through which it gains its hermeneutical identity and becomes a work. Transformation into structure also means transformation into the true – the presentation of the world one lives in and the recognition of selves in that world (Scheibler 2001: 165, 167). In the Heideggerian sense, it is truth as *aletheia*, a revelatory event. To a certain extent, the structure consists of rules that make it possible to understand the meaning of the artwork and its elements. According to Haapala, the context of the work of art as structure is different. He writes, "(f)or Gadamer it is the event of game playing, for Heidegger the happening of the truth. For one, it is an objective event of some psychological importance, for the other it is an ontological, fundamental principle, the importance of which is impossible to estimate in psychological terms." (Haapala 1995: 225–226) It should be noted that for Heidegger every work of art is a structure, since it establishes a context that gives independent meaning to all elements that are introduced to the world of the work.

The actual being of a work of art cannot be detached from its presentation, since the identity and unity of structure emerge in the presentation. Every time it reaches presence – is being played – it remains self-identical. An artwork's ontological mode of being is absolute presence, which is manifested in every

occasion of being played, of being self-present. (Gadamer 1989: 128, Gadamer 1998: 25) At the same, it remains self-identical. The interpretations of a symphony, the varying nuances of the performance of a play or the different understandings of an artwork do not affect its hermeneutic identity.

In art as play, particular emphasis is placed on the viewer as player in the construction of meaning, as well as in participation. Although the participant constructs meaning, it does not follow that the work of art means whatever the participant wants it to mean. For Gadamer, interpretation and construction of meaning are not actions, but events. Participating in a play demands the suspension of disbelief, the willingness to accept the rules in which its "as if" intentionality sets play above the players. This is an important distinction in regard to the general aim of overcoming subjectivization: players are not subjects of play, and play is not aimed at their subjective reflection. (Scheibler 2001: 164) Play gains primacy over the consciousness of the player. Thus understanding an artwork is something that happens to the player, not necessarily something she does. Therefore aesthetic experience can be seen as a multi-phased process of engagement. In an aesthetic experience (as play) one commits to the experience as such and does not differentiate between the performance of the work and the identity of the work. The analyses of form, content and their realization are secondary procedures that may grow out of the initial perception that Gadamer calls aesthetic non-differentiation. For Gadamer, non-differentiation, in which sensory data is recognized and taken in, is the characteristic feature of aesthetic experience as play. The question of aesthetic differentiation and non-differentiation is related to his critique of aesthetic consciousness. As discussed above, subjectivized aesthetic experience denies the continuance with the life world and becomes an abstraction. The second abstraction is a similar denial in the artwork, which alienates art from reality. In the spirit of aesthetic differentiation, a work of art is seen as a beautiful appearance that has no relevance to everyday life or experience.

In Gadamer's model, the importance of constructing meaning is related to the process in which it is done, and perhaps the process itself takes primacy. The aesthetic experience is not the transmitting of a message, nor is it merely the act tracing a meaning on the basis of an object. Meaning is created by participating in a process, where the participant is integral and irreplaceable. Experience, here, is connected to recognition, and not only the identification of the work, but the perceiver's recognition of something in herself. Therefore, Gadamer argues that experience of the aesthetic is a mode of self-understanding (Gadamer 1989: 92) which requires an element of self-transcendence. This is achieved through an encounter with something other than the self.

The aesthetic experience constituted as play not only puts one in touch with the particular artwork, but with the world. It provides an ontological understanding of the world which addresses the entire being. It engages previous knowledge and experiences and thus every new experience of art is different, but equally valid. A similar matter was observed in the discussion of place experience, in which every experience is new since it is projected on the previous experiences of the same place. Each situation is unique due to the current state of the perceiver (e.g. age and mood) and the object (e.g. environment, light and temperature). Both object and subject are dynamic and so is the process of relating, while the work of art retains its identity. Popular claims regarding the unique and unrepeatable nature of art are true in the sense that in being experienced all works of art (and places) are new, and new layers of meaning are added constantly. Reoccurring experience of the same artwork is not a mechanical repetition. Theatre in this context can be seen as a conscious act of renewing places by presenting them in another context, including (re)presentation as a work of art.

At the same time, previous experiences and knowledge are reorganized in the light of new ones. On a grander scale, art as play keeps drawing parallels to the world: it does not mirror it or lead into a fictional separation, but reveals the true experience of being in the world, of participation on the widest scale.

3.2.2 Aesthetic engagement

The aesthetic experience in play is characterized by full participation, in which the perceiver's contribution to an artwork is essential to the artwork. Thus it creates a framework in which the perceiver participates in the artwork. The distance traditionally required between the perceiver and the artwork is lacking or is limited. Arnold Berleant proposes the concept of the aesthetics of engagement to describe the embodied and implaced aesthetic experience of environment. Aesthetic engagement is immediate multi-sensory experience of the environment, in which the perceiver is an integral part of it.

This concept rests on three cornerstones. Firstly, the perceiver is in the landscape as a part of it; the experience is impossible from a distance. "Perceiving environment from within, as it were, looking not *at* it, but *in* it, nature becomes something quite different; it is transformed into a realm in which we live as participants, not observers. /---/ The aesthetic mark of all such times is not disinterested contemplation but total engagement, a sensory immersion in the natural world that reaches the still uncommon experience of unity." (Berleant 1992: 170) Participation articulates the phenomenal relationship between body and place laid down by Merleau-Ponty, and sees experience, including aesthetic experience, as implaced and embodied. In such an approach, Berleant denounces traditional aesthetics that require a distant and contemplative attitude, since this is not possible in an environment.

Secondly, the idea of aesthetic engagement emphasizes the multi-sensory character of experience. Being in a landscape as a part of it means attending to it with all the senses, none of which are irrelevant to having an experience. The experience embedded in the entire sensing body is synaesthetic by nature and the senses inform and complement one another. He sees no fixed division between central and peripheral factors; the environment can also be received in its richness without a given hierarchy. "Aesthetic engagement includes many of the traditional features associated with that experience, such as emotion, imagination, and

pleasure centring on an object, but it surpasses that tradition in recognizing the embedded and embodied character of experience, the plurality of factors implicated, and their centre in immediate perception." (Berleant 2001).

Thus, thirdly, the experience acquires different emphases depending on the situation. Each occasion, each experience, is different because it is directly or indirectly influenced by previous experiences and depends greatly on current circumstances, ranging from natural factors (weather, season, time of day etc.) to personal ones (mood, age etc.). This idea, in turn, resembles Gadamer's hermeneutic understanding of the dynamic experience of a work of art, which is new every time; a recurring experience of the same work is not mechanical repetition.

Therefore, aesthetic engagement can be defined as a multi-sensory phenomenal aesthetic involvement with the environment, place or object, which is immediate and available only through engagement (Berleant 1992: 4). Berleant argues that every such experience of immediate multi-sensory involvement with a landscape contains an element of the aesthetic, which can differ in its intensity. As a result, he lays emphasis on the process of engagement, which takes priority over the object.

"Aesthetic experience is not the dependent correlative of an object, not subjective, not private, not even exclusively personal. Rather it is experience that is engaged and embodied" (Berleant 2001). Aesthetic experience is integrating by its character. The aesthetician Anne-Mari Forss (2007: 56) identifies here John Dewey's influence on Berleant's concept of embodiment. For Dewey, the borderline between the object and subject dissolves in the aesthetic experience and the work of art is constructed in the experience. Berleant's thinking, however, diverges from Dewey's, as well as Gadamer's, who also suggests that aesthetic experience is not an appreciative response evoked by an object and understood by the perceiver, but a dialogue. The main constituting difference lies in the function of place. Aesthetic engagement sees the relationship between the perceiver and

place as a pre-requisite for aesthetic experience. It implies that the aesthetic object is also situated in a particular place, which can be experienced with the perceiver's phenomenal body and is thus integral to the experience. The entire process takes place in being implaced.

Since the concept of aesthetic engagement has so far been used to describe the aesthetic relationship between the human being and her environment, usually landscape, its criticism is mainly related to environmental issues. Firstly, it can be seen to blur the subject-object boundary. However, it is impossible to separate the living and sensing body from its environment, since they eventually form a continuity, whether on a biological or philosophical-existential level (see Merleau-Ponty 1993, Casey 1990). For Berleant, the environment does not serve as an extension of the body as a territory given by the sensing moving body or an environment that makes human life possible. Body and environment are equal integral parts of a process. Thus it is the process of engagement that he gives prime importance, which resonates with the idea of play as a temporal process of participation. However, his internal stress lies with the body-subject, which becomes decisive in the experience: emotions, values, judgements, memories, associations. Cognitive theories criticize the phenomenological approach for its subjectivity, because it makes it possible to attribute to landscape properties that it does not possess. In some sense, this can lead to fictionalizing the landscape, projecting features that are perhaps acquired from film or literature on the particular landscape (Carlson 2000, Eaton 1998). However, when talking about play, this is not an issue. Secondly, it offers a general model which pays no attention to the specific context or mode of engagement. Although Berleant recognizes the processual and culture-specific character of the relationship between human beings and their environment, the generalization can result in pan-culturalism (Brady 2003: 107). Proceeding from Ingold, this dissertation has adopted the notion that different ways of being involved with the landscape, which can range from picking mushrooms to seeing a theatre performance,

activate perception differently. Perception and thus experience depend on what one looks for. While Berleant uses engagement as a general model of being in the world, it is valid to wonder whether aesthetic experience is influenced by the mode of engagement. He recognises the cultural and situational factors that influence aesthetic experience. Aesthetic engagement is particular – connected to time, space and the perceiver – but also cultural, because it reflects cultural and social values. Therefore, the application of aesthetic engagement to play is important in two ways. It makes possible the description of aesthetic experience in play in which the clear boundary between subject and object disappears in the sense that the object is constituted by the player. Especially in environments that are not marked visually, but accepted by participating in the making agreements, the fictional environment is mutually created by the participating players. Even though the degree of creation can vary, play contains the element of active creation, similar to creating art. But play equally serves to delimit the ambivalent concept of aesthetic engagement. Firstly, it establishes the mode of engagement: play in which the intention is directed at the process of play available through participation and which establishes goals in the fictional sphere of play. The fictionality, when recognized as a parallel layer to everyday reality, seems to meet the demands of disinterestedness[19]. Secondly, play elaborates and controls the issues of projecting fiction on everyday reality. Although in play the aesthetic experience depends on the recognition of fictional aspects, the inclusion of fictional elements is conducted by agreements and the recognition of these agreements as a parallel layer to everyday reality makes the fictional aspect of play controlled, which eliminates the threat of "imagination running wild", which phenomenal engagement is criticized for. Fiction does not replace reality. Therefore, play creates a valid niche in which imagination is essential to having an aesthetic experience and, at the same time, the fictional aspects are controlled by the players, who recognize their fictionality. While these agreements last for the time of play and are recognized as a temporary alternative to everyday reality, the

19 Notably, Kant and Schiller use play to establish disinterestedness; see the chapter 3.2 Art and play.

aesthetic experience is emotional, meaningful and lasting. To some extent, the role of imagination is more productive and highly appreciated than in any other form of engagement, because it directly influences the course and thus the experience of play.

A scene from *Republic of Wargamäe*, 2008.

4. PLAY ENVIRONMENT

4.1 Play environment

REGARDLESS OF the fact that play inevitably takes place somewhere, the play environment is not a common subject in the aesthetic field. It is almost a paradox that in theatre, which is a very space-conscious form of art, environment is not focused on when talking about play. Even the main developer of the connection between play, ritual and theatre, Richard Schechner, who bases a great deal of his theory of environmental theatre on the use of the environment, disregards the question in play. Environmental theatre was originally a theatre movement developed by Schechner and the Performance Group in the 1960s, and they attempted to activate the audience by incorporating viewers into the performance environment. Environment was a method through which to investigate the interaction between the audience and performers, and environment was also a means: primarily the means of creating the performance. Actors worked with space, exploring the performance environment that was being designed on site, and discovering its positive and negative areas. Work with space – carving out personal performance spaces involving all of the senses, and organizing the environment into shelters, hideouts, springboards and other intimate places – became a part of the Performance Group's acting technique. Environment was a living and breathing organism that actors had to befriend. Secondly, they felt that viewers should be able to explore the performance environment the same way

that actors did, which often resulted in the abandonment of designated seating arrangements. The concentration of mass created by the audience, in turn, affected the perception and environmental experience of the actors that had been created during rehearsals and formed a part of the performance. Schechner's studies of play, however, are tightly connected to the concepts of ritual and performance as twice-behaved behaviour. Given the importance of environment in environmental theatre, it is surprising that Schechner pays little or no attention to its role in play.

The question of the play environment is complicated because of its dual nature: the co-presence of physical and fictional environments, and the possibility of addressing space on very different levels of meaning. Firstly, on the widest scale, the play space is a synonym for the entire play world (e.g. liminal space in Turner's anthropology, or thirdspace in Winnicott's psychoanalysis) – the entire *other* reality that play constructs. Play space ceases to denote the physical space alone and becomes a synonym for the entire fictional construct that exist parallel to reality and can be partially embodied in real space.

Secondly, space is noted as one of the criteria that define play. Play takes place in a spatially and or temporally limited field. Thereby, space acquires a limiting function. A specially designed playing area – a stage, playground or stadium – heralds the superiority of the rules of play and makes the transition into the sphere of play visible. A change in space articulates the boundary between play and everyday reality; it draws attention to the change of rules one plays by. Space carries the metacommunicative function by signalling, "this is play". In a sense, space also keeps the world of play in its designated limits and prevents it from blending into everyday reality.

Space is also an element that can be actively played with. The environment (or its elements) can be engaged with physically or used fictionally to stand for something else. Space can be compared to a plaything, a toy. Although it is physically significantly harder to operate with space, the principle is the same. If a piece of wood becomes a boat, then the puddle it floats on can be a lake. It

doesn't even need to be said out loud: the floating of the boat can suggest the transformation of the larger context. A picnic blanket can be a cloud, which transforms the meadow into the sky. As a play element, space is subject to the same rules as all elements of play: it is fictional and parallel to real life, its meaning is tied to its process, and it is rule-bound. If space is recognized as one of the rules, then the question of play space suddenly becomes ambiguously twofold: general and particular. To clarify the ambiguity between environment as a part of the rules and environment as a play element, I will use environment to denote the particular physical and fictional space used directly in engaged play, because environment refers specifically to the relationship between the player and her environment. The play environment is partly created by the players and exists for them only through engagement. The entire scope is perceptible to the players alone.

In a traditional theatre building, the two functions defining and affording are separated. The stage and auditorium hall (and to some extent the entire playhouse) mark the entrance to the play world, which also contains various fictional environments that become embodied on stage every night. The stage itself remains a *tabula rasa*, and the emergence of different, otherwise incompatible environments on consecutive nights (e.g. Verona, the forest of Arden, St Petersburg or Jukola) does not leave any marks. Michel Foucault calls the traditional stage a heterotopia: the appearance of incompatible different places in a single real place. Heterotopias differ from the systems that they reflect and can thus be described as places that contain other places that open in a special arrangement of traditional time. Cemeteries, amusement parks and museums are classic examples of heterotopias. (Foucault 1997: 352–354) Compared to Foucault's other examples, theatre is a special case, since it permits the appearance of a multitude of places that are incompatible not only with the system, but also with each other. While cemetery-related folklore can be quite varied, the cemetery does not stage different locations as theatre does. Museums, where times past are collected and stored in a universal archive outside real time, can stage different places through exhibitions.

However, they are more or less related to the collection of the particular museum (e.g. they exhibit parts of it, or show off rooms in the original context). Even if they tell a story, the fictional locations serve the primary function and needs of a museum: to provide information. The creation of a fictional environment is an embellishment, not a necessity. In theatre, constantly alternating places form the essence of the stage as a special space. Therefore, it is in the nature of the stage that it has no memory. Not only is the physical scenography dismantled, the fictional environment leaves hardly any connotations on the stage. The previous spaces do not shine through. Therefore, fictional environments as play elements – although influenced by the physical qualities of the stage, e.g. size – exist independently of the defining functions of the stage.

It is possible to modify the rule on spatial limits – to make the play world invisible. "Dark play", invisible theatre and pervasive playing all toy with participants' different levels of knowledge and consciously remove elements that openly signal "play". One of the most notable ways is to do it spatially, by eliminating the visible boundary between fictional and physical space. Dark play combines risk and unawareness in such actions as rushing across a busy street without looking or talking made-up languages to people. Only the active participant(s), the starter(s) of the game, is (are) aware of its nature as play. The element of performance is present, but is considerably less articulate than in invisible theatre. Invisible theatre, initiated by Augusto Boal, can take place anywhere – on the streets or on a beach – and it aims to provoke bystanders to react to seemingly ordinary events that are in fact pre-staged. Pervasive games, such as "Killer. The Game of Assassination", suggest that the entire world is a playground for the players. In this case, the focus is less on bystanders (although some games, such as "Prosopopeia" and "Momentum", involve key interaction with non-players) than on the fact that the players do not know the identity of other players (anyone can be the assassin); the game can take place anywhere at any time.

In this case, the play environment does not perform the separating function

of play space, and does not mark the border between reality and play reality. Montola, in his study on pervasive play, uses the magic circle introduced by Huizinga as a metaphor, a contract that draws together the limiting, binding and metacommunicative function of space (Montola 2005). The stage, temple, game board and roulette table are designed and designated play areas, sometimes literally *play houses* that accommodate the play function. Any environment can be a play environment, regardless of its original function and aim. In theatre, the practice of found space has become widespread and literally any space can be used for performing. Theatre can take place on a mountain range, as in Robert Wilson's *KA Mountain and GUARDenia Terrace* (1972), in a museum, as in *Republic of Wargamäe*, somewhere in the forest, as in the mythical *Lemminkäinen (*SA Loomine 2005), or on a lake (e.g. the annual Bregenz festival in Austria). In the case of open-air performances, the minimal spatial indication of play is the audience area (e.g. seating and café booths), which carries the limiting function. The audience area makes the boundary between the world of play and everyday reality visible, while the acting area can be freely used as an element of play. In *Lemminkäinen*, the audience and acting areas are not indicated; there is no way of telling where the fictional environment started. These types of play enforce an additional rule: the conscious repression of the metacommunicative message. And one of the clearest, most notable ways is to do this visually, by letting play space melt into real space.

The visible and fixed boundaries of a tennis court or the visible, but dynamic borders of a circle of viewers contribute to (meta)communication. As mentioned earlier, environment can be one of the means of communicating the message. The invisibility of play space (and its limits) doesn't mean the absence of a play environment, but it is the players alone who comprehend the entire field of play and control its metamorphosis. The extent to which the environment is incorporated into fiction depends on them. And since there is necessarily no visual evidence, no physical change, it is fully understandable to the players alone.

4.1.1 Fictional and physical environment

Similar to all play, environment also exists in real and fictional modes. Players assign function and meaning to the environment used in play. In children's play, a gazebo can alternatively become a classroom, mole passageway and river. In *Kingdom of Vargamäe*, the short ditch dug in the middle of the playing field served as a river, a border between two farms or two worlds, and a ridge in a ploughed field. Meanings are open; they change quickly and do not necessarily affect the physical appearance of the environment in question. It is the players who agree on the use and thus construct a new environment. In a certain sense, the environment is assigned a role in a play. At the same time, this does not cancel the existence of the environment or objects in the real world. In some cases, the appearance is physically altered, but this is neither obligatory nor essential. Without alteration, it is almost impossible for the bystander to recognize the fictional role of the ditch in the production. The play environment is a mental construct, but not entirely. Nor is it entirely a physical one.

In the case of theatre, the definition of a fictional environment is relatively simple. In a performance, it is the environment described in the text (in descriptions, remarks and dialogue), the place of action and its changes. (Arlander 1998: 58)[20] The function of the fictional environment can be explained through the concept of *topos* used in literature. "The entire spatial continuum of the text, which reflects the world of the object, becomes a topos. This topos is always furnished with objects, because human beings always perceive space in a form of particular physical givenness. /---/ What is important, a system of spatial relations – the structure of topos – is born behind the objects and elements that surround the actions of the character. As a principle of organizing and placing characters, the structure of topos is a language for expressing other, non-spatial relationships" (Lotman 2006: 93). The fictional environment in play is the place of action that directs the use of objects and influences the behaviour of players. Playing house is different from playing school, and moving around a fictional boat is different from standing on

20 Arlander uses the term "fictional space". However, her discussion of environmental theatre and environmental scenography indicates its applicability to environment.

steady ground. To some extent, this echoes the idea of space as a social construct articulated by such thinkers as Lefebvre and de Certeau. An environment is defined by the action that is practised in it, while the environment provides designated areas for action, e.g. a room for living or bathing, or a patio for sitting.

First and foremost, the physical environment is the physical place of action occupied by the players' bodies. The physical environment is not the opposite of the fictional; it accommodates the fictional by letting the fictional appear in its place. The factual environment comes with its embedded meanings and connotations. It has a spatial as well as a mental context. *Republic of Wargamäe* and *Kingdom of Vargamäe* were performed in the homestead of the author. Even though the performance area itself was carefully focused outside the museum, it was almost impossible to view the performance without reference to the life-world of the author or previous productions in the same farmstead. Many of Tammsaare's works are compulsory reading in secondary schools, and the Tammsaare homestead is a well-established excursion destination and more recently a popular theatre venue that mainly specializes in Tammsaare's works. The visual appearance of the farm has become very familiar since it is depicted on the 25-kroon bank note. In this case, the physical environment contains cultural connotations that are accessible to a majority of theatre-goers and it forms a fictional layer of the landscape that is used by the theatre.

A view of North Tammsaare farm by Vladimir Taiger is depicted on the 25-kroon bank note.

At the same time, the fictional environment can be expressed in the physical one. A lime tree that has peacefully grown on a romantic hill on Tartu Dome Hill can become a 700-year-old tree in the forest of Sherwood. An actor lends her body to the character in a performance without cancelling the possibility of double perception: actor and character. The popular notion is that a performance is a text which has acquired a body and is transformed into a human being. Arlander (1998: 57) eloquently suggests that performance is "a text which has acquired a place and become an event". The dual nature of the fictional and the physical is present in all aspects of play. Yet it is the fictional one that directs meaning and action in play and, therefore, it also directs perception.

The creation of meaning requires constant communication between the metalevel and the level of real operations and physical objects, especially in regard to the intentionality of play operations. On both levels, players operate with images, objects and events. This elaboration and clarification of the metalevel forms an integral part of playing, especially in play situations involving many people, where one has to check the validity of agreements and rules. Even in solitary playing, the player needs to repeat, explain or confirm certain aspects (Hakkarainen 1991: 45). Communication is not only a part of planning, but characterizes the entire playing process. Play is the particular relationship between the practical and the fictional. It is a continuous dialogue between the two spheres, which is regulated by the agreements and decisions of the players alone. Play exists on both levels – neither all fiction nor all reality is play.

Players must be in agreement about the fictional environment, which makes communication one of the key elements in play. Play is essentially a "communicative activity" (Gadamer 1998: 24). To some degree, even the act of watching a play is participation, since the observer recognizes the action as play. To identify the metacommunicative message "this is play" is to become a part of play. However, it is possible to speak of different levels of participation and communication.

4.1.2 Perception and participation

To recognize something as play is to accept some of its rules. In the arts, the recognition of the parallel reality itself is an act of participation (Gadamer 1998, Walton 1990). In theatre, it is too easy to identify the action of the performers with play, to say that the game is played out on stage for an audience that bears witness to it. Indeed, a number of performances are based on fixed texts and are rehearsed. The performers, artists, directors and technical staff have created the agreements and regulations that the particular staging is based on. The audience member has minimal control over these agreements, but is nevertheless a participant. Firstly, the audience accepts the rules of the game: not interfering with the performance, not confusing stage events with those of real life, applauding at the end etc. Furthermore, all events, environments, characters and their relationships gain their meaning and have impact only if they are successfully mediated to the audience. The quality and relevance of the performance are commonly judged by its impact on the audience. A performance becomes meaningful only if it reaches the audience. The perceivers, in turn, affect the course of the performance; their laughter and other reactions can lead to improvisation, make actors speed up or slow down, or revise the emphasis of their words and actions. A performance is not a message to be communicated, but is constituted via the perceiver's experience (Gadamer 1998: 28–29). It is different each time. In fact, the most important play is that of audience and actors. This, in turn, makes the player essential to the game. Play does not exist without its players. The player belongs essentially to the structure of the play. Art as play presupposes an audience, and anyone who recognizes the play assumes the place of the intended audience. Gadamer elaborates, "(t)he way they participate in the game is no longer determined by the fact that they are absorbed in it, but by the fact that they play their role in relation and regard to the whole of the play, in which not they, but the audience is to become absorbed. A complete change takes place when play as such becomes a play. It puts the spectator in the

place of the player." (Gadamer 1989: 110) Gadamer makes two very interesting points. Firstly, play takes over; it is experienced as a reality that surpasses the viewer. In theatre, one speaks of the "suspension of disbelief", i.e. the willingness to accept the fictional reality, which is never presented in the fullness and entirety of real life, especially in an environment. Inevitably, there are contractions and omissions. A day can pass in minutes, and even in full environmental illusionism the entire living context (e.g. the immediate home, and the circles surrounding it, which range from well-known to strange and unfamiliar) cannot be put on stage without fragmentation. Suspension of disbelief is characteristic to all play; it makes possible the abandonment of everyday life for a parallel world. It allows the fictional world to gain "primacy over the consciousness of the player" (Gadamer 1989: 109). There is a slight difference between "primacy over the consciousness of the player" and "the conscious suspension of disbelief". In play, one does not have to constantly remind oneself that this is play. Schechner (2006) uses Csikszentmihalyi's popular, but quite ambiguous "flow" to describe play experience. Flow is the experience of complete absorption in an activity that engages one fully and makes one forget real time and place. When fully engaged, it is the play that plays the player. Therefore, the suspension of disbelief is an entrance, a stepping-stone into play.

Secondly, it is not a question of one or two individual players and their individual interpretations. Play as a structure foresees its viewers not as a set of individual viewers, but as a body of perceivers (regardless of their number) that completes the play. There lies one of the key similarities that connect art to playing. Both are intended activities, intended to be experienced. The intentionality works on the level of the creator of the work of art, as well as on the level of the perceiver. A theatre performance is a collective work of art that combines the joint efforts of many parties, creative and technical, often in a temporal sequence. The identification of a singular author is useless, but does not reduce the intended nature of the work of art. Leaving aside the question of

the possibility of having freedom in play, the simple act of disregarding the rules of play is an intentional act of breaking the circle of play. Participation grants access to embedded meanings and makes experience possible. In addition, as observed above, the audience forms a critical mass that affects the performance of the actors and the course of events. It most certainly affects improvisatory play, where agreements that steer the course of events have to be accepted by the body of players. Gadamer also seems to refer to the communal aspect of play, which becomes a prominent topic later in his *Relevance of the Beautiful*. He argues that the experience of play is not only related to the particular situation (object of perception), but is also an experience of self at play. The experience of the other (the players and the included object, the work of art and, to some extent, the entire twofold nature of play in fictional and real modes) articulates the experience of the perceiving self. Play refers to the world outside (the perceived and experienced world) as well as the player. Gadamer observes that especially theatre and festivals have a uniting effect, where the individual viewers experience themselves as a community, as a body of perceivers. For Gadamer, play goes beyond the experience of the perceiving self and its place in the world. It leads to the ontological experience of sharing. It is a paradox, in which the loss of self at play (the primacy of play over the consciousness of the player) re-articulates the ontological experience of being in the world, which in turn stresses the necessity of the experience of other for the experience of self.

Let us return to the relationship between the fictional and physical environments that the primacy of play helps one to encounter. The perceiver is a part of the play environment. She is a part of the play structure and completes it. In theatre, the participation of the audience is usually physically limited. All fictional elements – the environment and objects – are presented to her as open agreements that wait to be verified. The viewer has full liberty to incorporate or discard elements. In theatre, she draws her own limits on the fictional environment, which cannot be fully covered (e.g. the sky is fictional or

not), and chooses which of the presented agreements to accept (e.g. the tree is part of the fictional world or not). Thus every viewer creates her own unique play environment, which is not only influenced by the fictional agreements and available physical elements, but also by her experience and knowledge. Knowledge of the text and its places of action, familiarity with the landscape and its cultural connotations, and personal memories of the site, text and other performances all contribute to the experience. The circumstances of each presentation are not incidental to it and form an integral whole (Gadamer 1989: 134). Each case is different – each performance, each viewing.

All elements of play are temporal agreements valid for the time of play. In play, one needs to be engaged in play in order to understand it: to recognize its limits, and to appreciate the meanings of objects, events, people and their transitions, and the connotations and associations they project. Pretending to be two bears in a bar may make no sense to an outside observer; the seemingly random arrangement of small stones cannot be distinguished as the ground-plan of a city. By looking at a piece of plastic floating in the water it is hard to tell whether it is a row-boat, a surfacing submarine, a frigate or a cruise ship, how many people are on it, or whether it is operated by sails or a motor. All of these facts are established in play. Play agreements can be expanding: one act of imagining leads to another (from the type of boat to the number of people to its destination). Participation affects the aesthetic experience of the elements: the appreciation of the piece of wood as a row-boat or a cruise ship in the Caribbean.

The same holds true for play environments that are perceived as something else, which accordingly affects the aesthetic experience. The particularity of the environment lies in the fact that the player is physically in the very environment she imagines. This is especially interesting in an open-air scenographic landscape, where the perceiver is placed in the same field as the work of art. The scenographies of *Republic of Wargamäe* and *Kingdom of Vargamäe*, discussed at length in 4.2 Nowhere in Vargamäe, depend greatly on the audience's

participation, since these scenographies essentially consist of empty cleared areas, where a number of places are evoked in the course of the performance. The scenography cannot be understood outside the play. Places are created by action, not by visual showing, but still they can be experienced as elements of the fictional landscape that take place in front of the audience, and that become implaced. The change of functions and meanings does not require physical alteration, but the acceptance of agreements. As proposed above, the aesthetic experience of the play environment can be described as aesthetic engagement. Aesthetic engagement is a multi-sensory phenomenal aesthetic involvement with an environment, place or object, which is immediate and available only through engagement (Berleant 1992: 4). Berleant stresses that every such experience of immediate multi-sensory involvement with a landscape contains an element of the aesthetic, which can differ in its intensity. In this way, he emphasises the process of engagement, which takes priority over the object.

On this point, the experience of landscape by being involved with it, the participatory attitude towards a work of art and the engagement required for play come surprisingly close. All of these concepts rest on the notion of embodied and implaced experience. Leaving aside their inherent differences prescribed by their modes of being, a theatre performance in a landscape ties them all together into one act of engagement, in which scenography as a play environment is available and can be appreciated via aesthetic engagement.

4.2 Nowhere in Vargamäe

THE FOLLOWING INVESTIGATES scenographies as integral parts of play in two productions in particular landscapes. Both productions, *Kingdom of Vargamäe* and *Republic of Wargamäe* were staged in the birthplace of the author and the historical dimension of the landscape seems to be integral in choosing the found environment. However, compared to *Bogship* the layers of the landscape are addressed differently. Especially in the scenography, the approach can be described as a form of play that operates mainly on the level of agreements rather than visual showing. It articulates the structure of landscape as a network of meaningful places, which can be perceived and experienced, but are not physically indicated. Both productions are based on a well known quintology by Anton Hansen Tammsaare.

Truth and Justice is an epitomic series of novels by Anton Hansen Tammsaare. Written and published in 1926–1933 (the first part in 1926, followed by the second in 1929, the third in 1931, the fourth in 1932, and the fifth in 1933), it covers an extensive period in Estonian history, from the 1870s to the 1930s. Each novel is set in a decisive period of history, but the impact is discussed mainly on a subjective and personal level. Essentially, it is a family saga, and follows the life of two generations (extending towards the third) in rural and urban Estonia at the beginning of the 20th century, before and after gaining independence.

Tammsaare (1878–1940) is a very popular author among Estonians. In a public poll conducted in 1999 he was chosen as one of the 100 most influential Estonians. Given that *Truth and Justice* has been compulsory reading in schools for decades, it is safe to assume that a large majority of inhabitants are at least aware of the topic and characters of *Truth and Justice*. Two of the main characters, the neighbouring farmers Andres and Pearu, have acquired almost symbolic value and are often used as portraits of typical Estonians. Andres stands for the law-abiding and hard-working man, while Pearu is his more playful and deceitful counterpart. Both, however, firmly believe in their truths.

Altogether, parts of the quintology, based on different adaptations, have been staged over 55 times. In 1975 the film *Indrek*, based on the second part, premiered. In 2003 the musical *Vargamäe's Truth and Justice* was written and staged by the Estonian National Opera.

In order to understand the nature of the performances of *Republic of Wargamäe* and *Kingdom of Vargamäe* and the relations between scenography, text and landscape, the following will give a short overview of the main events in the quintology. The first novel portrays the hardship of farm life during the last decades of the 19th century, reflecting the values and ideals of a rural society. A young couple, Andres and his wife Krõõt, settle in their newly bought farm in the 1870s. The novel focuses on their struggle with the land (and for their land), and on their belief in the righteousness of God and human truth, all of which are contested by the rival farmer Pearu. In regard to the entire quintology, it is important to take note of two interconnected events as they come to haunt the entire series. When Krõõt dies, the farmhand Mari moves in with Andres. Consequently, Mari's husband Juss hangs himself.

The second volume observes the life of Andres's and Mari's first son Indrek at the turn of the century in a secondary school in a city. Education was affordable only to a select few, but Indrek's family (as a true representative of aspiring rural intelligentsia) sees it as necessary to give at least one child a proper education. It

is a classic *Bildungsroman*, in which a young man finds himself, and his principles and values. Tammsaare sketches an enchanting gallery of students and teachers from different nations, social economic backgrounds and cultures. The action is set against the period of Russification and the birth of a national movement; the inherent conflict between the two trends is perhaps best shown in the somewhat opportunistic character of the headmaster. In the light of the entire quintology, a set of seemingly minor events towards the end of the novel gains extraordinary significance. Indrek's girlfriend has a younger sister, Tiina, who is probably suffering from polio and therefore cannot use her legs. Her mother has promised her that God's angels will come and heal her. On the path to discovering his beliefs, Indrek struggles with matters of religion and denounces God in Tiina's presence. Tiina is devastated. To comfort her, Indrek promises to wait until she grows up and marry her. This is seen as a guarantee, because he would not wait unless he knew that she would be able to walk. The promise literally works as magic.

The third volume continues the *Bildungsroman*. It depicts the events of the 1905 revolution in Czarist Russia, which led to demonstrations and protests all over Estonia. Indrek moves to the capital and finds lodging at Kristi's, a girl affiliated with the revolutionaries. Indrek, still struggling to find himself, participates in a demonstration, which ends with a massacre – the protesters are shot without warning. Kristi is sent to America by her parents, but jumps off the ship and dies, possible because of her love for Indrek. Simultaneously, events unfold at Indrek's childhood home. Tammsaare shows the aftermath of revolution both in the city and in the country, where the protest against oppression and Russification backfire into acts of vandalism against the German-Baltic nobility. Much in the mood of the period, Indrek's younger sister and brother set up a mock state, the Republic of Vargamäe. The militia gets hold of the republic's documents and, in the light of ongoing political events, take them for real. Indrek's brother and father are sentenced to a beating, and his brother is shot during an escape attempt. A

motif from the first volume of the quintology comes back in a haunting fashion. Mari, Indrek's mother, is on her deathbed and feels pains in her chest. In the first part, Indrek and his siblings are playing in a field and throwing stones. The one Indrek casts hits his mother in the chest. Since it is the very spot that now troubles her, she sees the throwing of the stone as an almost biblical symbolic act. Juss's suicide is a recurring theme that colours the entire quintology. Mari asks Indrek for a fatal dose of medicine, which Indrek gives her.

The fourth volume is often referred to as the most socio-critical of the novels. Set on the eve of the 1930s financial crisis, it describes Indrek's marriage to Karin, the daughter of a wealthy local businessman. Karin is bored and is seduced by the excitement of the emerging "high society". Indrek, devastated by her unfaithfulness and seeming shallowness, shoots and wounds Karin when she brings up the forbidden subject of Indrek's role in his mother's death. At the trial, Indrek is put on probation. Emotionally shattered by these events, as well as her father's bankruptcy, Karin throws herself under a tram.

In the fifth part, Indrek returns to his childhood home after the death of his wife and hopes to make peace with himself. He refers to this return as "voluntary hard labour", which echoes motifs from Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. He continues his father's idealistic fight against the land and for the land. Such classic motifs as the return of the prodigal son and redemption can be easily identified. Indrek's and Karin's former maid and the nanny of their children, Tiina, follows him to the farm. Tammsaare ties another theme from the past to the present. Tiina is the same girl Indrek had promised to marry, but whom he never recognized in the fourth part.

Despite its concrete local subject-matter, the novel also deals with many of the crucial issues of contemporary life and philosophical subject matters, e.g. a person's struggle for existence, and the impact of urbanization, religion, politics and ethics.

4.2.1 Vargamäe

Tammsaare named his fictional farm Vargamäe. The name itself contains a controversial connotation: it literally means Thief's Hill. It is ironic and meaningful given the righteousness of Andres and his aspiration to live his life by the rules of God and man. The name identifies a location, makes it stand out from uniform space and thus signifies an experience. Casey (1993: 23) suggests that, through the act of naming, people not only organize space into places, but by that name they themselves belong to places. Until the mid-20th century, it was quite customary in Estonia to call a person by the name of the farm and the first name, not by the given and family names. Thus Andres in the novel is not known as Andres Paas (again a name with meaning, *paas* is limestone, one of the main building materials in Estonia), but Vargamäe Andres: Andres of the Thief's Hill or Andres of the Hill in short, since Vargamäe is divided into a valley and hill. Pearu's farm is in the valley, so he is Oru Pearu (Pearu of the Valley), which immediately builds a clear spatial opposition. Such oppositions are metaphorical in character and the basis of this attribution of meaning is connected to a phenomenal lived body, which not only defines such spatial directions as left and right, but also provides the basis for value and meaning. The scale of positive and negative associations projected on high and low are connected to the active and vigorous state of the upright phenomenal body, which is contrasted to the passive and immobile body that is lying down (Lakoff and Johnson 2011: 47). Although the names are not given primary importance, they offer a glimpse into the landscape of relationships constructed by Tammsaare. It is interesting to note that the name Tammsaare itself is originally a place name, which Anton Hansen started using as a writer, thereby symbolically surrendering his identity to his birthplace.

There is no place called Vargamäe on the map of Estonia, yet it is a very concrete physical place. The first three volumes of *Truth and Justice* contain a great deal of autobiographical material (Tammsaare's early life on a farm, secondary

school in Tartu, and years in Tallinn as a journalist). Tammsaare's neighbours, especially from his childhood, are often regarded as the prototypes of *Truth and Justice*. His childhood home is identified with the site of events in that the farm is now called Vargamäe after the novel, while the writer adopted the name of the farm for his pseudonym. Officially, the homestead is the North-Tammsaare farm in the village of Vetepere, Järva County, in central Estonia.

The description of the local landscape in the novels, especially as a place in which actions unfold, shows strong similarities with the landscape in Vetepere: the surrounding bog and to marshlands, the rivers and system of irrigation, the road across the bog, a sight that Andres and Krõõt see on their arrival, the location of the houses on the farm etc. The museum consciously pays attention to its environment as an original place of action, e.g. the official name of the museum is the "A.H. Tammsaare Museum in Vargamäe", informally referred to as Vargamäe or the Vargamäe museum. In 2010 a fir tree was planted to play the part of the tree where Juss hung himself[21]. The museum's official blog (Tammsaare Muuseum 2010) comments that the question "Where is Juss's tree?" is very frequently asked, which shows the scope of the association of the fictional novel with the author's actual private childhood home. The farm landscape is consciously turned into a fictional one, which is Tammsaare's, but even more his fictional characters'. One of the additional reasons may lie in the public image of the educated author who sits behind a desk and whom it is hard picture on a farm, while it is the normal living environment of his characters. Vargamäe is a popular destination for school excursions.

In 1958, 17 years after the author's death, the farm became a museum, which has kept the house as well as the surrounding landscape intact: the structure of the pathways, meadows, fields, buildings and forest date back to family ownership. In the context of the present Estonian landscape, the farm is thus somewhat anachronistic, a glimpse into the past, since most landscapes underwent periods of Soviet collectivization and then re-privatization in the 1990s, and both of these

21 In my personal experience, the guides have been eager to stress the connection by, for example, talking about the road as the one that Krõõt and Andres took, by letting the visitors climb over the high door-sill to explain the daily hardships of Krõõt (and not Tammsaare's family).

Carefully preserved fences and fields in the Vargamäe museum form a part of the exhibition.

processes were marked by changes in technology and agricultural methods. Based on the idea that every socio-economic change affects the functions, meanings and understanding of landscape, the geographer Hannes Palang roughly divides the development of Estonian landscape into five periods: ancient, estate, farm, Soviet and postmodern. In general, ancient landscapes can be characterized by the unity between people and nature during the period before the 13th century. During the estate period (13th–19th centuries), the land was mainly owned by Baltic-German estates. The peasant landowner became more prominent in the mid-19th century, but the high point of the farm period, characterized by small private farmer landscapes, started with the Land Reform of 1918. The nationalization of private lands and resulting formation of collective farms after World War II created a new centrally dominated landscape with large state- or collective-owned buildings and fields that still haunt the postmodern landscapes with their abandoned presence.

The postmodern landscape, which has gradually developed since the regaining of independence in 1991, shows various types of land owning and land practices that display no ideological or economic continuity. (Palang et al. 2004: 160) Each of the periods has changed the visual appearance of landscapes. While Vargamäe visually seems to exist in the farm period, it is no longer an agricultural landscape. The appearance is not supported by active cultivation. Instead of the fields being lived off of, they are mowed to retain the look of typical tilled farm landscapes. Vargamäe's maintenance as a specific heritage site and tourism landscape can be seen as a practice characteristic to the new postmodern period. The impact of its visual appearance, which takes the perceiver back to an idealized period before Soviet collectivization, cannot be underestimated.

Studies of the understanding and appreciation of cultural and historical values of landscape in Estonia show a tendency to value objects that date back to earlier in history. Characteristically, the appreciation rests on the presence of distinct visual elements rather than the totality of the landscape (Palang et al. 2004: 164). This tendency, in turn, echoes in the choice of open-air performance sites, which shows the appeal of historical places with clear visual identity (see Unt 2008: 325). Therefore, the popularity of Vargamäe as a site of performance is not surprising. Within the past 15 years, there have been nine different professional productions based on Tammsaare's work, most of which were performed for multiple seasons: *Truth and Justice* (1997), *Judith* (*Juudit*, 1999), *The Master of Kõrboja Farm* (*Kõrboja peremees*, 2001), *Truth:NO:Justice* (*Tõde:EI:Õigus*, 2006), *Kingdom of Vargamäe* (*Vargamäe kuningriik*, 2006), *The Republic of Wargamäe* (*Wargamäe wabariik*, 2008), *The Master of Kõrboja Farm* (2009), *In the Shadow of Vargamäe* (*Vargamäe varjus*, 2010), and *The Lambs of Vargamäe* (*Vargamäe voonakesed*, 2011). The fact that the majority of these productions, apart from *The Master of Kõrboja Farm* and *Judith*, were based on the quintology illustrates the popularity of *Truth and Justice*. In 2008 in addition to *Kingdom of Vargamäe* and *Republic of Wargamäe*, two other existing stagings of *Truth and Justice* by the Tallinn City Theatre

were transported from indoor theatre stages to Vargamäe in order to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Estonian Republic and to honour Tammsaare's 130th anniversary: *Truth and Justice. Second part* based on the second novel, and *Karin and Indrek* based on the fourth novel. On Midsummer Night's Eve in 2008, all four mentioned productions were performed consecutively, resulting in a 22-hour marathon, where it was possible to see the entire quintology.

On the one hand, Vargamäe's appeal as a place of performance lies in its history as Tammsaare's birthplace and its identity as the fictional environment of *Truth and Justice*. On the other hand, there is its aesthetic appeal: well-preserved and rather typical farmhouses, and the richness of views that the location, on gentle slopes, affords.

4.2.2 Clearing the field

By taking the events to the author's home, the landscape serves an almost autobiographical function. It is hard to separate the life of the author from fictional events. His life serves as a lens through which to interpret the play and the landscape, which can lead to a double perception of the landscape in the performance. Previous information about Tammsaare, his relationship with the farm and the connections drawn between the farm and the autobiographical content may overshadow, complement or offer a parallel reading of the landscape presented in the performance. However, Vargamäe is appealing because it is commonly perceived as the original site of events and it is possible to close one's eyes to Tammsaare's life to see the life of his characters.

Most open-air productions in Vargamäe have chosen to employ the surviving buildings and landscape and thus to integrate the performance into the existing local landscape. Given the nature of the landscape, frozen in time, these performances can be described not only as a return in space, but also as a return in time to the original landscape of the events performed. The two works selected for

Kingdom of Vargamäe disregards the typical views and concentrates on an empty field.

discussion, *Kingdom of Vargamäe* and *Republic of Wargamäe*, provide interesting exceptions, because the scenographic solutions depend less on the original landscape elements. *Kingdom of Vargamäe* (2006, Endla Theatre and Rakvere Theatre), written by Urmas Lennuk, directed by Jaanus Rohumaa and designed by Aime Unt, focuses on the events of the fifth novel, where Indrek returns to his childhood home, combining it with pivotal scenes from the first novel. *Republic of Wargamäe*[22] (2008, Tallinn City Theatre), also written by Lennuk, but directed by Elmo Nüganen and designed by Pille Jänes, is based on the third part and tells the story of Indrek's attempts to find himself in the chaotic events of the 1905 revolution.

Both productions were performed in places that can be connected neither to familiar nor even visually prominent landmarks. Both employ neutral sites

22 The letter "W" is a reminder of the German-influenced spelling prominent at the beginning of the 20th century. The title itself is reminiscent of two other productions, Merle Karusoo's "*Complete Republic of Estonia*" (1992), based on part four, and "*Kingdom of Vargamäe*", which premiered two years earlier and was still running at the same site.

within a meaning-laden landscape, where no footprints of the characters can be identifiably seen. What is particularly interesting in the productions is that although the scenography is minimalistic and consciously disregards the density of the landscape it creates a number of different places with minimal visual indication. The aim of the following discussion is to observe the process of creating places in terms of their relationship with the landscape and the concept of play, to look at scenography as a playground, i.e. a place that makes play possible and comes to exist through play.

Scenography exposes the same problems as any play environment. Spatial limits form one of the criteria that help to identify play activities. Specially designed playing areas carry a metacommunicative function by signalling "this is play", by articulating the difference between everyday reality and the play world, which are governed by different rules. As observed in the previous chapter, the function can be deliberately suppressed. In the open air, where the natural environment may exceed the limits of the performance area, one of the functions of scenography is the articulation of these limits. At the same time, scenography participates in the creation of the fictional landscape: in adjusting the real physical landscape to meet the needs of fiction established in the text and in the conceptual framework of the production by guiding the audience's attention, shifting focus, providing new elements, disguising or hiding conflicting features etc. Thereby, scenography also functions as an area that can be actively played with, literally a playground. It is an environment that can be engaged with physically and fictionally. Landscape as a play element is subject to the same rules as all elements of play: it is fictional and parallel to real life, its meaning is tied to its process, and it is rule-bound. The function of scenography in play is therefore dual: the play environment is both general and particular, both limiting and limited. In comparison to other play environments that function on the particular (play environment) and general (rule-giving) levels, scenography as an art form operates on another level. The visual landscape helps to build an artistic context,

which makes it possible to perceive action in a certain spatial, temporal or stylistic framework (e.g. the use of such artificial materials as plastic in contrast with the "naturality" of the landscape).

Kingdom of Vargamäe is performed on a slope right in front of the museum. Although the territory belongs to the museum, it is easily overlooked as a prelude, an empty meadow next to a parking lot. To reach *Republic of Wargamäe*, viewers need to walk a few hundred metres past the museum to a meadow on the opposite side of road, a site that most visitors normally would not wander to. Thereby, both scenographies disregard association with the museum and also with typical visually pleasing inhabited farm landscape. While *Republic of Wargamäe* is situated far enough away to leave the familiar views out of sight, *Kingdom of Vargamäe* solves the problem by limiting the field and building a clear focus. The

Kingdom of Vargamäe's site of performance is usually regarded as a prelude to the real museum.

audience, approximately 800 people, is seated on two semicircular platforms that face each other. The placement creates a sense of intimacy, regardless of the number of people in the audience. The location of the platforms and their height help to cut off most of the possible familiar sights. The audience enters through a gate, which joins the two platforms together; another gate is placed down the hill, directly opposite the other one. The limits of the playground are clearly articulated and establish a focus on the area within the audience, so that the audience itself becomes the outermost limit of the place. Literally, the audience frames the place.

Environmental scenography is the practice of integrating the space(s) of the audience and the performers by placing the audience in the same frame with the performers (Aronson 1981: 1–5). Frame is one of the grounding concepts, based

A red furrow or path runs across the performance area framed by the audience platforms. The photo was taken in a rehearsal, the platform (on the left) is empty and young Andres (Üllar Saaremäe) is wearing sunglasses.

on Aronson's observation that theatre is framed space, i.e. a territory set spatially apart from everyday life. The frame can range from a circle of viewers that surrounds the performer to the proscenium arches and elevated stage platforms that frame the performance on multiple levels. Aronson's notion coincides with the demand of spatial limits in play, the "magic circle". Frame performs the same function of setting the activity outside the rules of everyday life. At the same time, it is a sign of participation, of willing entrance to another reality. Stepping into the frame leads to inclusion in the world of play, of participating in the agreements and understanding the course of play, which is steered by fiction. Therefore, the spatial organization of the audience and the performance space is vital, since it marks the limits of participation, and enhances inclusion in the play. The circular ground plan heightens the enclosing place-building effect of the scenography. The scenography is environmental, not only in the sense that the audience is included in the frame with the performers, but by the fact that the audience is indispensable to the scenography: it centres attention, and creates the place by its active presence.

Paradoxically, the area that the frame focuses on is an empty field. It is a recently mowed meadow featuring nothing but a narrow strip of dug-up earth in the middle. By pulling the focus to an empty place created in between and beside the audience in the overall visual and connotative richness of the Vargamäe landscape, the scenography successfully excludes some of the meanings of the site. It is an act of clearing, establishing a playground with new rules that will be written.

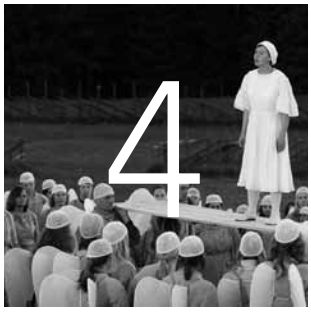
The field is also cleared in the fictional landscape. The gates, which recall the artist Kristjan Raud's renderings of mythical Estonia (1910), bear the inscriptions "Mäe" and "Oru", thus marking the territories of the two farms. In the first scene, when Indrek arrives at his childhood home, his sister, who

runs the farm, asks him to follow her through the gate and stay in the main house. Indrek prefers to stay on the outskirts, outside the farm. Thereby, the stage is also separated from the elements of the fictional landscape that are well known from the novel. This is not Mäe (Hill) or Oru (Valley), as the inscriptions on the gates indicate. The audience and the characters are together in "nowhereland", in a border territory between the two families and the two sets of lives in the landscape.

These solutions serve to eliminate a substantial number of the connotations embedded in the site and limit the place of action visually and associatively, defining it as a new playground. The outside-ness of the fictional landscape also makes it possible to make the site-specificity of the scenes from the novels, the connection between the scenes and locations, less demanding. The agreement that the scenography proposes can be summed up as "everything is here" in the environment: the play literally takes place in the audience's presence, in the interaction between the theatre makers and perceivers. Apart from limiting the territory, there are no long-lasting visual agreements. The scenography and performance suggest, spatially and temporally, that it is play. The spatial limits are strengthened

Sauna-Madis (Toomas Suuman)

by the clear articulation of the temporal ones; the performance starts when Sauna-Madis thrusts his spade into the ground, immediately followed by a long resounding chord from the choir, hidden from sight. The performance ends with Madis picking up his spade, and intermissions are announced by hanging a sign on the spade. Thus Madis opens and closes the play, as well as opening and closing the landscape. In the novel, Sauna-Madis dies, while in the performance his fate remains open to interpretation. There is no direct indication of his death, but he is portrayed as a character who does not age. While other characters, who are shown in their youth and in the relative present, are played by different actors, Sauna-Madis remains an unchanging constant. His long white hair and long coarse coat give him a somewhat biblical appearance, which is by no means accidental. His white, crocheted cap and long linen coat establish a clear visual connection to another group of characters that defy space and time – angels. Sturdy and serious male and female angels in their long greyish-brownish coats, darker at the hems as if they were literally growing out of earth, play many roles. On the practical level, they form a heavenly *perpetum mobile*, and bring the few necessary elements – carriage, ladders, wooden plank – on stage. Compositionally, the speaking angels are the most active and dynamic landscape element. They rush down the hill like water when the dam is broken; they come home when Krõõt calls her pigs; they quietly and solemnly form a procession to take away the dead; they pull the carriage in the last scene of the play, which shows the last scene of the fifth novel – Indrek leaving Vargamäe – and the opening scene of the first novel – Andres and Krõõt arriving at their farm. The group of 20–50 angels, the size of which varies in each individual performance, consists of theatre technicians and the members of local choirs, so the angels also provide live music and arrange all the changes.



Republic of Wargamäe uses a slightly different approach. The location of the performance is far enough from the museum to eliminate familiar sights. Similar to *Kingdom of Vargamäe*, it is a flat, mowed meadow, designed to be empty. The limits of the landscape, its borders, are clearly marked on three sides. The natural forest at the audience's right is complemented by a long row of haystacks on the left. The third border is the audience, a crowd of 600 people, on a rising platform. The relationship between the acting area and audience is frontal. The stage, located on a gentle slope, stretches far into the distance, so that the horizon literally becomes the fourth border. The borders, which cut the landscape into a rectangular field, accentuate the landscape's vastness and emptiness. Although a wall of hay is used to conceal the actors' movement on the left side, this is not much exploited, nor is it actively integrated into the fictional landscape during the performance. Therefore, the wall of hay's main effect is achieved at the audience's entrance. Hay stacks hide the field from the approaching audience's direct view and build up anticipation. The size of the play area and its emptiness are striking. Covering an area of approximately 8400 m^2, the play area seems to endlessly stretch towards the horizon. An empty field of that size is not surprising in an agricultural landscape. It is, however, surprising as a part of an Estonian theatrical landscape. Even though there have been large-scale professional productions (e.g. the Endla Theatre's productions on the banks of the Reiu River), scenographically the tendency to use picturesque sites with varied visual character is exceptional (see Unt 2003, 2008). The deliberate emptiness, which becomes amplified by the size of the field, can be compared to the revealing of the bare stage in a classical theatre hall, but not in its worn-out contemporary use. In the tradition of Estonian open-air scenographies, the well-arranged surprise comes close to the original exposition of the mechanics of theatre. The emptiness is complete: in addition to the wall of hay, the only

Republic of Wargamäe uses an empty field for its stage.

other specially erected element is a pair of rails laid down a few metres from the first row. While the haystacks (which look somewhat shabby, which suggests they were made for artistic, not agricultural purposes) can be easily connected to the farming landscape; growing grass hides the rails from sight. The field is cleared for a performance, and the emptiness is presented in its own right.

Both productions use scenography to articulate the limits of the performance area, visually and mentally. Thus the scenography becomes one of the rules governing the process of play. At the same time, the clearing of the field participates on the level of the particular play space; it is something to be played with. The clearing potentially creates an empty field, which allows for the dynamic creation of places, which is realized differently in the two productions.

A wall of hay hides the buildings in *Republic of Wargamäe*.

4.2.3 Playing within the field

In the scenography[23] of *Kingdom of Vargamäe*, nothing is fixed, apart from the stable visually marked directions of the farms, which form cardinal directions in terms of the relationships between people, as well as between the people and the landscape. All of the locations that emerge – the field, riverside, meadow, sauna, church and numerous others – are relative and do not reoccur, at least in the same physical place. They do not have a precise geographical relationship to one another. These fragments of landscape are born from action rather than being visually shown. The few visual indicators are directly required for action: the angels bring in a well for Pearu's drunken madness, hoist two ladders to create a church for Andres's

23 In this context, scenography is understood as a spatio-temporal composition that is affected by mise-en-scenes: the composition and movement of performers.

prayer, and wheel in a cart covered with a plank and tablecloth for Tiina to set the table. Indrek lies on a cart and the audience understands from the text and action that it is night-time in his father's house. It seems like we are dealing with a real open, empty field, where different places emerge and vanish. They have no physical relationship to each other, they can appear in each other's location and none leave a permanent mark. Yet, at the same time, it is not possible to say that attachment to places is irrelevant to the production. Indrek's return to his childhood home to seek comfort and redemption recalls Bachelard's notion of the childhood home as the first universe, the prime universe that echoes in all homes to come (Bachelard 1999). Especially as the farm is run by Indrek's sister and the landscape has changed, the only home he can return to is that of his childhood memories. Returning home to undertake voluntary hard labour expresses the controversial relationship between work, landscape and home, living on the land as a form of punishment and redemption. Indeed, landscape is a recurring subject in the text and action: the joys and sorrows of arable land and the divine beauty of the sky. In the play's infusion with work and worries, it speaks of deep attachment to landscape, to place. The topophilia of farmers is made up of physical intimacy with the landscape; the land enters them through their aching muscles and sore limbs (Tuan 1990: 97), which recalls work as a way of perceiving memories written into the landscape. Evoked locations are shown as meaningful centres of space. Firstly, Indrek moves in the familiar landscape of his childhood memories; a number of places are connected to previous experiences. Secondly, pivotal events and conversations are conducted in these places; recollections of events that changed lives and matters of love, death, goals and desires, and inheritance decided, all of which emphasizes the experiential dimension of the individual site of events. Landscape as a network of meaningful places is present in the recollections of the characters, in the structure of the play, which speaks of events in specific places, in the relationships between the characters (e.g. the controversy between the two farms) and in action, especially in work as a mode of engagement.

The places for memories among these scattered fragments are especially interesting. If human life is possible only in an embodied and implaced form, so are recollections of it. Casey (1989), Ingold (2000) and Karjalainen (1997) emphasize the spatial inevitability of remembering. Memories surface within a spatial context, bringing up a sensory fragment of the place they happened in, whether tactile, olfactory, auditory or visual, whether remote or vivid.

The text of *Kingdom of Vargamäe* is a complex structure that navigates between different times. Based on the first and last parts, it starts with the return of the protagonist Indrek to his childhood home, which is established as the here-and-now reality. Scenes from the first volume can be easily interpreted as Indrek's recollections, in which he sees his father as a young man and himself as a young boy, both roles played by different actors. However, there are scenes which he cannot have witnessed, scenes that happened before he was born. In some of these scenes, e.g. the death of his father's first wife, he is present on stage as a bystander. Sometimes the scenes surface independently of his immediate presence, e.g. a row in which young Andres blames Sauna-Madis for letting his wife spread rumours about Andres's emerging relationship with Indrek's mother-to-be. These memories are not Indrek's, but there is no indication in the production that these scenes differ from other recollections.

It seems like all memories emerge straight from the ground; the land is the source and storeroom of matters past. Landscape is the result of lives lived in it, a sum of human and non-human interaction that leaves a permanent mark on the environment, visible or invisible. In the prologue, Sauna-Madis thrusts his spade into the ground to start digging. By disturbing the land, he also digs up memories. Landscape is a structure of stories, which can be picked up upon engagement with it, through skilled perception (Ingold 2000: 55–56, 147–148). As a typical farm, Vargamäe's landscape is the embodiment of

agricultural tasks, practical operations carried out in the environment as part of everyday life. In *Kingdom of Vargamäe*, the primary mode of engagement is work; most scenes present people working or returning from/going to work: herding, making hay, ploughing, irrigating, cooking etc. Indrek learns to perceive only by returning to work and eventually is able to look further into the past, to see beyond himself.

In Ingold's (2000: 53–56) view, places afford landmarks, points of attachment for memories. Or as Casey suggests, "places provide situations in which remembered actions deploy themselves". For him, "place is a *mise en scène* for remembered events precisely to the extent that it guards and keeps the events within its self-delimiting perimeters" (Casey 1987: 189). Firstly, he recognizes the reciprocal relationship between memory and place: memory acts as a horizon for place, and place delimits memory and is its place-holder. Both provide focus, and define the inside and outside. Secondly, he stresses the active character of remembering. It is not a question of still images, but of going through the process itself, as it is done in the performance, which ultimately leads Casey to call places "*congealed scenes* for remembered contents" (ibid.: 189). A place is recalled and relived as an event. Landscape becomes a network of temporarily invisible frozen scenes, each defining a place. This comes surprisingly close to Ingold's (2000: 227) idea of way-finding and orientation in landscape as storytelling, in which one moves within the context of previous journeys. Performance is in fact way-finding in a common landscape created together in a performance.

In this context, the random or floating character of places that have no geographical or temporal relationship to one another stands out in *Kingdom of Vargamäe*. The memories, which are often connected to specific places (breaking a dam, tearing down a fence at a field, funeral processions etc.), emerge anywhere and unrelated to each other. There are no fixed meanings in the scenographic landscape, no repeated locations. Even the narrow strip of dug-up earth in the middle of the stage area remains constantly dynamic in its meanings. In the

prologue, Sauna-Madis establishes this strip as a furrow; it becomes a path when Indrek returns, a ditch when he digs it, a border that Pearu transgresses, and a river that rushes through the land. The paradox lies in the fact that places are shown to be meaningful to characters and can be experienced by the perceivers, but are not shown in the literal sense. These places, visually a part of the real landscape, are at the same time something else, something they are not. This transition is available only through participation in the play.

The scenography, which focuses on a bare piece of land and clears the field, proposes an agreement with the viewers that anything can surface from any place and nothing leaves a definite mark. The multitude of places, and their constant coming and going create a peculiar condensation of places in a limited territory. The multitude of places is in fact a multitude of events, which create short-term places, but instead of visual indication the places are formed mentally by showing the deep connection of thoughts and events to the land, by showing that they are important enough to create a place. This also refers to the fact that not all events leave a physical mark on a landscape. As observed in 1.2 Lived landscape, landscape consists of visible and invisible traces, both of which are valid constituents of a landscape. The character of event-ness articulates the temporal dimension of a place, its particular parallel existence in only being experienced and being available at all times. These place-events open landscape memory, unveil the frozen scenes that have taken place before Indrek's time, but which he learns to see. This results in an intense concentration, a gathering of all places into the same place. In *Kingdom of Vargamäe*, all of Vargamäe is composed together; the performance creates an independent landscape that can be perceived as Vargamäe, its condensed mindscape. It is primarily the full scenographic clearance that guarantees the dynamicity of places. Landscape, distilled from the richness of the Vargamäe landscape(s), offers the possibility of the creation of places, and knowledge of this disregarded richness, which is available literally round the corner, makes the projection of the mindscape on the performance

landscape possible. This is the clearest, but also a very complex, form of play, which operates with a multiplicity of meanings, where the fictional landscape cannot be understood in any other way than by being engaged in the process of play. To some extent, all viewers are participants, who need to confirm the agreements. Furthermore, it is necessary to establish the temporal dimension of the agreements: all places are ephemeral.

This type of ephemeral environment, constituted as play between the theatre makers and the audience, makes the question of aesthetic appreciation problematic. Firstly, aesthetic experience is embedded and implaced engagement, in which the perceiver's involvement in the environment is integral to the experience. Furthermore, aesthetic experience is fully possible only through engagement, because play creates fictional places, which do not require physical change and can only be understood by participating in play, by accepting the agreements.

In play, the fictional context determines the qualities that traditionally make up the aesthetic value, the aesthetic relevance of the object or environment. It is possible to perceive a piece of plastic as the most magnificent ship ever. An object or a place can be fictionally beautiful and can be perceived as beautiful regardless of its physical appearance. If the functioning of the world of play rests on "as if", then the aesthetic qualities are equally determined by perceiving them "as if". In play, one does not sail on a toy ship, but "as if" sails. As a result, this piece of wood is "as if" a boat and can possess any number of qualities. Therefore, the aesthetic value of play objects and places cannot be determined by looking at them, but only by experiencing them in multi-sensory processes. The aesthetic experience is that of aesthetic engagement, which not only incorporates all of the senses and takes place in the embodied and implaced contexts of environment and observer, but also makes room for free imagination. It is not a question of the aesthetic experience of the invisible, but of recognizing the invisible as an integral part of the appreciation. To some extent, it is possible to draw a parallel with the

contribution of knowledge to the aesthetic appreciation of landscapes. Knowledge of the rarity of a particular geocomplex or the history of a place can be decisive. However, play is set apart by its dynamicity and deliberate creation of fiction. In play, the knowledge is that of the fictional layer, the recognition of its primacy over actual visible reality. In scenography, the conscious suspension of disbelief takes the form of belief in the invisible.

Marketta Kyttä claims in her study of the appreciation of children's play environments that the value of a play thing is determined by the multitude of affordances it offers (Kyttä 2003: 108). Affordance is a perceived possible action. In play, one has to add fictional affordances to physical ones, possibilities for the object's or place's functioning in the fictional context. Therefore, it is hard to speak of stable and fixed values and aesthetic qualities. Every action, every realization, or perhaps even perception of an affordance, establishes the qualities differently. To experience a cart as a bed and a table, as in *Kingdom of Vargamäe*, heightens different qualities of the same object in each case. Thus aesthetic appreciation depends on the agreements that establish the fictional use of the object or place. The perception of affordances depends on the players' imagination and experience. Therefore, this perception can be seen to foster and develop creative thought.

The idea of multiple affordances draws attention to the innate dynamic quality of such aesthetic appreciation. Firstly, as Kyttä's study (2003) states, it is the scope of affordances that determines the value of the object or place in play. A good play thing is something that can be played with, i.e. it allows for various actions. Popular 19th century doll-houses and porcelain dolls are criticized for their lack of play qualities. Not only are they fragile and not suited for active physical play, but also permit only a certain kind of play. Fully equipped doll-houses are not merely collections of items, but also collections of activities that can be evoked through the use of these items. The doll-houses and porcelain dolls lack the ambiguity that free play requires. In the study of play environments, they can be compared to glasshouse-type playgrounds (such as theme parks), which allow for fully guided

safe play. The scope of actions that can be performed, including imaginary ones, is limited. Their play value is also limited. However, the value of play in Kyttä's dissertation lies in the versatility of actions that can be performed or that provide the strongest and most lasting play experiences. (Kyttä 2003: 86–89, 108) Here it should be remembered that play does not require physical action.

Play value lies in the possibility of performing certain functions in play. One of the functions, especially in a performance, is aesthetic. However, in play the aesthetic value depends less on the object and can only be determined in play. Aesthetic appreciation, aesthetic experience, may not be visual and is constructed in co-operation with the perceiver.

The question of aesthetic experience becomes paradoxical in scenography as a form of art. Even though contemporary scenography has come a long way from providing visually pleasing backgrounds, its aesthetic quality is not secondary. Scenography as an element of play is important for including the audience in the fictional environment, for heightening engagement. It also demarcates the limits of play. However, scenography exists not only in clearly perceivable visible elements, but also in fictional places that are not visually shown, but are still understood by the audience. The unique perception of the play environment also means that the aesthetic experience of scenography is possible only in the context of the temporal performance and can be described as a form of aesthetic engagement. To some extent, this idea seems to deny the aesthetic independence of scenography as a work of art. If performance as a work of art is a structure *sensu* Gadamer, then scenography is one component. However, not only does the experience of performance depend on scenography, the understanding and appreciation of the scenography depends on all elements and factors of the play process (text, action, composition of mise-en-scene, work of the actors, music etc.), as well as on the creative contribution of the audience. Indeed, when we look at scenography as a play environment which creates a fictional layer, then it can only be appreciated in the performance as a part of it. On the one hand, this

perception draws critical attention to the representations of scenography, whether in renderings and models or photographs and video recordings of the production that offer a different aesthetic experience, which does not necessarily correspond to the aesthetic experience acquired in play. On the other hand, it accentuates the interconnectedness between scenography and action, but also between scenography and audience. Scenography creates affordances not only for actors, but also for the audience, affordances for appreciating fiction, including fictional beauty. The processual quality of a scenography ultimately leads to regarding it also as a spatio-temporal structure that takes place in compound engagement between performers and the audience. In being experienced, scenography can be characterized as an event, a process of constant becoming, rather than a location, and can be experienced in aesthetic engagement.

4.2.4 Placescapes

Republic of Wargamäe uses an analogous structure of dynamic places. Apart from the framing forest, haystacks and rails, there are no fixed spatial indicators; all places of action are temporary and ephemeral. Compared to *Kingdom of Vargamäe*, where the fluidity of places is in contrast with the clear directions to the Mäe and Oru farms, here the mentioned stable elements are not clearly integrated into the fictional landscape and thus mainly serve as limiting devices for the playing field. Haystacks and a forest line the gently sloping field and accentuate the sense of perspective, which makes the stage, which is approximately 700 metres wide and 1200 metres long, look even vaster. The set of tracks or rails parallel to the first row, which are used for running two platforms, also come to serve a limiting function in the course of the performance. To compensate for the immense scale of the stage area, the majority of scenes are brought as close to the audience as possible; they are placed either on the tracks or immediately in front of them. The scale is further accentuated by movement. The size of the field, and the spatio-temporal

The erection of the crosses in *Republic of Wargamäe*.

length of each movement within the scene, especially the exit and entrance, make it an event, a movement that changes the space dynamics and creates new meanings, since the vast open space leaves no room for quick exits and entrances. The line of the tracks is the most heavily used direction for exits and entrances, but also for movement within the scenes. As a result, the actors constantly mark (and re-mark) the line between the audience and the stage area. The tracks become a border between the audience and performance area, which in turn takes us back to the concept of panoramic landscape, which places perceiver and work of art in different frames.

Within this clearly lined field, a number of places appear, which can roughly be divided into two sets: farm and city. The performance starts and ends with the farm landscape, Indrek's familiar Vargamäe, which is also the present location of the audience. In a sense, this creates a smooth transition from and into the

real everyday Vargamäe museum. In the artificially maintained Vargamäe farm landscape, there is a clearly identifiable correspondence between the fictional and real landscapes, which is supported by such props as rakes and buckets, which indicate immediate involvement with the physical landscape, the continuance between landscape and body, landscape and dwelling. The city rolls in on the platforms, accompanied by the sounds of factory whistles and trains. In a comparison between the use of the performance area as Vargamäe and the cityscape, the meanings and connotations of the rural landscape can be read into the production in complexes, without the necessity of eliminating some factors. The experience of a scene where the characters sit on the grass, while the action and text indicate that it is located in an urban cafeteria, calls for different acts of elimination based on context. The number of affordances of a landscape is potentially larger and more easily perceived when used for a similar type of environment. In a context where visual indication is minimal, the perception of a variety of changing urban locations in a multi-sensory rural landscape calls for the dismissal of many sensory factors. It should be remembered that smell, sound and touch are present to a greater degree than in a controlled interior environment and can be less modified. The city opens a multitude of places, interior and exterior, which are not visually indicated. They come and go, leaving no mark: the cafeteria, Kristi's home, and various street and squares. To understand the production, on which street corner or in which room the revolutionaries met is not constitutive knowledge; the spatial context also remains ambiguous in the text and action. The use of platforms is limited to the urban landscape, but they have no placing function. Rather, they are used to convey movement, the rush of revolution. Concrete elements of the scenography, such as crosses that are erected to commemorate the victims of the militia's attack or furniture that is scattered on the field after

the raid on the homes of the Baltic-German nobility, do not mark places. They are independent symbols that prolong the effect of fictional events, but do not inscribe them into landscape, as they have no specific relationship to the physical or the fictional landscape. Apart from composition, their particular location is not particularly important.

Similar to the urban scenes, the rural ones do not establish a clearly identifiable location apart from the general frame – Vargamäe. Similarly to *Kingdom of Vargamäe*, work is shown as the primary mode of engagement with the environment, which tightens the clear visual coherence between the characters and the surrounding agricultural landscape. Although the sense of topophilia is not clearly articulated, tools mark the type of interaction with the environment at a minimal level, and convey the idea of physical intimacy with the landscape, the attachment resulting in aching muscles and sore limbs (Tuan 1990: 97). Typically, everyone seems to be on the move: Indrek's sister carries water, Pearu casually stops by, Andres and his son head home from work, and the youngsters take a break from work

Andres (Tõnu Kark) returns from work. *Republic of Wargamäe.*

to play when Andres comes to command them to return to their duties. The movement suggests the sense of unimportance or neutrality of the given landscape as people are passing through, stopping only for a moment, with the clear intention of being somewhere else. The neutrality indicates that the concrete place of action is not relevant for understanding the scene. Place specificity is demanded only on the largest scale – identification with Vargamäe.

One factor that supports the concentration of places is the geometry of *Kingdom of Vargamäe*. The play area defined by the audience and gates forms an oval. The comparison to Huizinga's magic circle of play is obvious. However, the oval serves the important function Huizinga argues for, enclosing the audience in the field of play. A red line is dug into the cleared field, and the audience focuses on it. The line and oval (circle) belong to the realm of existential geometry, as Karjalainen (2000: 24) calls it, "(a) line is an expression of motion and hence

Eternal wanderers Indrek (Märt Avandi) and Tiina (Karin Tammaru) in *Kingdom of Vargamäe*.

of space, whereas a circle is an expression of shelter, and hence of place. Space is motion, place is rest". Place is the starting point or destination, which also determines the character of the path: whether it takes the wanderer to her goal, leads away from a place(s) or draws a line around a place. It is not surprising that the path of life is represented in many cultures as a circle. A path, a line of movement left on the ground, is a way of governing and controlling space. The growing density of paths creates new places, as a place is a stopping point on the line. (Norberg-Schulz 1971: 20–27, Lehari 2000: 53) Within the closed circle of home, the realm of dwelling, Vargamäe portrays the homelessness of Indrek, his inability or unwillingness to settle down. He is shown as the eternal wanderer, even at home. There is a constant interaction between line and circle since "(h)uman life takes place in a dialogue between circles and lines" (Karjalainen 2000: 25). The red line of dug-up earth – a path, ditch or furrow – bears a strong visual resemblance to the landscape artist Richard Long's work. A substantial part of his work consists of walking and stopping (conducted all over the world, e.g. in England, Lapland, the Sahara, Tierra del Fuego and numerous other places). The walk is often accompanied by another repetitive movement, which helps him to document the work by leaving marks on his trail. He shows a clear preference for simple forms, especially circles and lines: "(a) circle is more contemplative, more focused, like a stopping place, and a line is more like the walk itself," Long argues (in Karjalainen 2000: 23). These sculptures are made from materials found in the landscape, for example the walk in Lapland was created by turning one stone around at regular intervals. His works in the Sahara are stone circles and stone lines. Especially these works, including his first, "A Line Made by Walking", which as the title indicates was a line walked into the grass, are markings of a certain activity in a landscape, a concrete interaction with the environment. At the core of Long's art is bodily involvement with the landscape. Karjalainen (2000: 21) stresses the sensory dimension of Long's work, "Long takes us back to a landscape as a concrete terrain to be charted with the hands and feet, and ultimately with

the whole body." At the same time, the movement refers to a pattern of activity, a repetitive interaction with the landscape, the importance of which can surpass that of the physical product. Thus it promotes sensory bodily involvement as a way of being in the world on multiple levels: a concrete act (and related sensations of turning a stone, feeling the wind, looking for direction) and a pattern of activities, a habit of involvement. Ploughing creates fields: first the long lines of over-turned soil, and later seas of green and yellow crops. The line in *Kingdom of Vargamäe* is not merely a symbol with a number of connotations, but can also be seen as a mark of bodily involvement. Walking to work, herding cattle and digging ditches for irrigation all leave marks that are normally connected with long-term involvement with a landscape. Ingold refers to these landscapes as taskscapes, patterns of activity adjusted to and born from a concrete physical environment. Landscape is the physical and visible result of a taskscape (Ingold 2000: 198). To some extent, Long's work makes it possible to perceive this type of involvement on a short-term scale. The Vargamäe red line works on both levels: it is a mark of concrete bodily involvement and a result of a taskscape, an embodied pattern of repeating activities that are performed because of the particular landscape. At the same time, it is an artist's intervention, a line made from natural materials to mark the process of being in the landscape.

Vargamäe coincides with Vargamäe. This identification is present, and the place can easily be perceived as Vargamäe since there is no conflict between the physically available everyday landscape and the fictional one. It is easy to interpret all unspecified rural locations as integral parts of Vargamäe. The information needed to fill in the gaps, to imagine a path, a meadow with a well and a village street is available on site; it can be taken from the available landscape outside the performance. Especially as the fictional landscape does not call for the elaboration of specific places, the physical landscape – an empty field – exposes a degree of neutrality emphasized in play. Thus it can be concluded that the landscape is not shown as a placescape, a network of meaningful experienced centres of the

human world, but as locations within the general frame – Vargamäe. Vargamäe itself can be called a place as it is recalled in the text and shown as a source of topophilia. In contrast with the small intimate places of personal memories in *Kingdom of Vargamäe*, here place is established on a large scale. As Lehari (1997: 47–48) observes, the scope of place experience can range from intimate to regional, or even global. It is quite possible to see an entire city as one's home, to see it as having a distinct character, smell and sound that sets it apart from all other places in the world. However, this means that the place is somewhat abstracted. Vargamäe is a complex of fields, meadows, bogs and forests, which is too large to grasp at a glance. The size of Vargamäe's prototype, the North-Tammsaare farm in Vetepere, which is the site of the fictional events, as well as the performance, is about 138.9 hectares (Tammsaare muuseum 2011), which does not exclude the experience of the farm as a place, especially a home place. However, as a home place it usually contains smaller places of personal involvement. On such a large scale, the experience of place inevitably differs from the intimate bodily knowledge of one's porch by its degree of generalization and abstraction. It is quite possible that Vargamäe itself, as a museum and tourist destination, has become generalized, a fictional place that only borrows the body of the real physical landscape. In the case of Vargamäe, the birth-place and museum of a very well-known author, the knowledge of the visitors and the information available on site may overshadow the appreciation of the landscape itself. This interpretation is further supported by the fact that the landscape is frozen in time, kept in the form it was in Tammsaare's lifetime. The staging is connected to a particular place and emphasizes its meanings and presence as a place, but conveys it in an abstract manner.

The two meaningful places, Vargamäe and the city (Tallinn in the novel, but in the performance the name is not important, and is not provided), form the large scale. Within them, a number of locations appear which do not form geographically, fictionally or visually continuous networks. In the city, this serves

the aim of conveying chaotic and displaced city life, where Indrek does not seem to find his place. The displacement is revealing in regard to the characters' relationship to their environment, not only Indrek's, but also Kristi's and the other revolutionaries'. In Vargamäe, the case is somewhat different. Although a variety of locations are shown, on the level of meaningful places physical Vargamäe coincides with the fictional landscape. And, on a smaller scale, the empty physical field in its emptiness coincides with the act of passing through. Neutral ground finds its equivalent in the neutral ground.

Republic of Wargamäe constructs a system of two independent environments, one of which is visually supported by the availability of the physical landscape, which, to a certain degree, coincides with the fictional landscape. The other one is to be entirely imagined. The same artistic means are used: places of action are not visually indicated, but available by participating in the play; they are temporary agreements that do not leave any mark on the environment and do not establish any continuance or unity; no concrete attachment to places as meaningful centres is shown. Despite the idea of treating the two environments the same way and using the same means to convey them, Vargamäe becomes dominant. This readdresses the question of landscape as a structure of visible and invisible elements that *Kingdom of Vargamäe* employs. The principle of play is employed to the same degree, but the availability of the landscape starts to support one environment, which establishes it as a constant. The city becomes ephemeral and can be interpreted as a mirage.

One way to address the problem is to discuss the environments in terms of the difference between urban and rural landscapes. However, I would argue that the problem lies elsewhere. The phenomenological approach adopted in this study suggests that both types of environment are cultural environments that are created in the interaction of natural and human factors. The narrative dimension, which is present in both cases, makes both lived environments. Although the emphases are different, there are points of similarity that can be enhanced

through a fictional landscape.

The question can be traced on two levels. Looking at the form and composition of the scenography, it is possible to employ the concept of environmental scenography proposed by Aronson. Depending on the context of the theatre project, the placement of the audience can be a scenographic decision, but in any case it builds a world seen from a specific point in the environment. In the cases of *Kingdom of Vargamäe* and *Republic of Wargamäe*, the relationship between the audience and stage was made a part of the scenographic composition, thus literally giving the audience a point of view, i.e. by deciding on matters of inclusion and exclusion, it provides a context for looking at the performance, clues of what to expect and how to perceive it. The frontal seating arrangement used in *Republic of Wargamäe* is often criticized for promoting the clear perception of two frames and thereby two separate worlds. However, inclusion and exclusion are not entirely spatial matters. Environmental scenography offers tools for discussing the engagement of viewers in the world of performance by using spatial composition.

To some extent, open-air productions fulfil the ideals of environmental scenography without much physical effort, because the viewers share the environment with the actors; they are surrounded by the same horizon, and walk on the same ground in the same rain, wind and sunshine. The environmental effect of the totality of the landscape is automatically present only on the largest scale. Viewers can acknowledge being in the same landscape and, at the same time, be fully aware of being located in different distinct places as they watch the events unfold. While sharing the same landscape, the audience and performers can be located in smaller separate frames, which coincides with the idea of a landscape as a placescape. Place is a bound concept, as Jagomägi (2001: 115) indicates; it exists within spatial limits that permit a sufficiently similar perception. The frontal seating arrangement fosters the perception of the landscape as a larger uniting frame, which gives limited access to a smaller place. It re-articulates the focus

Republic of Wargamäe.

on larger frames: Vargamäe as a more or less abstract place. Furthermore, the limits of the larger landscape can be hard to define, which makes it an almost incomprehensible unit. *Republic of Wargamäe* successfully limits its landscape. In this sense, the audience is included in the landscape although, as pointed out earlier, continuous movement along the horizontal tracks in front of the audience establishes the line of tracks as a border between the audience and the stage world, which cannot be transgressed. In its composition, the stage uses the principles of classic painted scenery, which relies on linear perspective. Depth is accentuated by the slightly reclining lines of trees and haystacks that confine the rectangle stage on the sides. During the performance, the depth is scenographically divided into three planes. The first division line is laid down by the tracks, the second is constructed with elements of furniture that are carried in to convey the raid

Republic of Wargamäe.

on the Baltic-German mansions, and the third is the group of oversized crosses commemorating the victims of the massacre. The symmetric placement of the furniture on the right and crosses on the left stresses the limiting function of the sides and concentrates the audience's attention on the centre, as is typical in classic Renaissance stage design, where the parallel perspective originated. The field is dominated by vision, and its characteristic openness suggests that nothing remains hidden. Consequently, it is communicated as Cartesian space, a field of universal and uniform co-ordinates, which does not demand multi-sensory engagement and, as Berleant suggests in the concept of panoramic landscape, it promotes the perception of two different places, that of the viewers and that of the work of art (see Berleant 1991: 63), in which the here-and-now of the perceiver is predominant. Critics (Allik 2008, Laasik 2008, Kaus 2008) have noted the visual nature of the performance, which borders on turning it into a

grand spectacle at the expense of telling the stories of the small people that are at the heart of the text. However, engagement at the landscape level remains. Thus Vargamäe's presence in the otherwise neutral location is heightened by coinciding scales. Vargamäe is established as the large unifying frame by the scenography and heightened in the text and mis-en-scenes as a meaningful place of a large scale.

4.2.5 Places that take place

Place has become prominent in giving landscape a structure and enhancing its perception, in relating the perceiver to physical and fictional landscapes in play. Therefore, place is an integral element in a play environment, a part of its structure.

In *Republic of Wargamäe*, the fictional Vargamäe is in a particular position, as it is conveyed as a meaningful place that most characters relate to. Yet the relationship remains on a general level, which is not really shown; in the scenography it is located somewhere, but not on stage, which is a place of passing through. Vargamäe is evoked as a number of locations that are conveyed as insignificant places of passing by. The matter of passing by is interesting, because important events that one is not personally connected to also eventually pass by; history passes by.

Thus *Kingdom of Vargamäe* and *Republic of Wargamäe* expose different understandings of landscape. In *Kingdom of Vargamäe*, the placescape consists of events that affect the landscape and lives but do not leave a visual mark. The landscape is a sum of events and processes. *Republic of Wargamäe* portrays the landscape as an idealized place that is the sum of topophilic attitudes and ideas of belonging, rather than events and concrete actions, an unattainable mindscape that cannot be seen. In a sense, Vargamäe is a contextual background that guides action: farming, forming a republic, Mari's illness, loneliness and tiredness. The background does not actively participate in the play to the fullest degree. Rather, it is a conditioning factor that provides impulses. It can inspire the setting up of a

mock republic, but when the president becomes more concerned with getting his hands on state money to buy sweets, Vargamäe no longer participates in the play.

The aesthetician and play researcher Pauline von Bonsdorff observes that playing tends to be context-based. This context can either be the immediate physical surroundings or a remembered situation, where the events are integrally connected to the place they happened in. (Bonsdorff 2005: 267–268) Playing school leads to certain kinds of spatial behaviour, e.g. sitting in rows and facing a teacher. Action and environment can take turns in leading the game, since action can also call for a different type of environmental context. Sitting in a row and facing in one direction can easily turn into a bus ride. Environment, whether real or fictional, is hence always a context-building factor. However, the contextual level operates in the background, and is a suggestion that guides action. In playing a bus ride, there are three levels of environment, the focus of which can shift depending on the engagement: the immediate location of the player in the bus (seated or standing), the bus as an interior environment, and finally the set of locations the imaginary bus drives through. Attention can shift from one aspect to another, as occurs in everyday life. It is possible to perceive different levels of environment at the same time, but characteristically some are pushed into the background, while some emerge in the foreground as attention and engagement change. The experience of a place is a matter of bringing the environment into the foreground, of attending to it in an unmediated way.

Although the singularity of an object cannot be compared to the multi-sensory surrounding character of an environment, the places of active involvement can be compared to play objects, toys that are being played with. It is the particular stone that is turned into a seat in the imaginary bus drive, and the very concrete segment of fence guarding a pasture that is evoked in *Kingdom of Vargamäe*. These places of transformation are known intimately, are being attended to and exist only by virtue of engagement.

Therefore, it is possible to speak of the structure of a play environment

that consists of different spatial levels, which range from general to specific. The first holds the general rules of action, since different behaviours call for different spatial needs (and vice versa); the other one is integrally woven into action. *Republic of Wargamäe* is a particular and interesting example, because it presents place on the large scale; context and place-experience coincide, but do not provide smaller places of engagement. Smaller units of space are shown as locations, the array of sites in the city: unspecified streets, squares and corners, the character and location of which are irrelevant to the understanding of the performance. The same applies to rural landscape: smaller units of environment are presented as spots on characters' way to places of involvement: work or home, which both remain out of sight. Fictionally, Vargamäe in *Republic of Wargamäe* suggests a unifying frame (environment) that can, but does not necessarily, contain other frames. The same holds true for the real environment, where the field can act as a unifying frame (environment) that contains smaller places (a path, stone or patch of grass). As *Republic of Wargamäe* shows, not all aspects of environment are realized in a game in the same way. Some places that are actualized become central, while others remain in the background. Their relationship, however, is dynamic and potentially subject to constant change. In a play situation, the centre is primarily concerned with the experience of place. Places are foci that the player is actively involved with, emotionally and/or physically. The rest of the environment is a context-builder and a network of potential places, fictional and physical-real.

In play, the fictional environment may become partly realized in the real environment – for instance through the introduction of real objects, or oral or gestural references. Real places and objects can induce imaginings that can be incorporated into the game and influence it. The philosopher Kendall L. Walton calls this process prompting. The word "prompt" in this context suggests an interesting connection to theatre, where "prompt" is a technical term for assisting performers who have forgotten their lines or movements. Leaving the direct

Once upon a time in my childhood boys played war using this stump. Although I or most of the local people have never seen the game, the stump is commonly known as The Cannon. An invisible act of play has turned it a distinct place, a landmark.

theatrical meaning of the word aside, Walton regards prompters as provokers for play. They can be natural and artificial, ranging from strange-shaped clouds, tree stumps and stones to lifelike dolls, all of which act as objects of imagining. (Walton 1990: 21–24) Toys are a specific type of prompters, since they are designed to provoke imaginings and play. On the one hand, toys guide the imaginative mind in a certain way (e.g. dolls tend to provoke a game with people in it) but, on the other hand, they provide an opportunity to share imaginings or even share and reproduce the personal experience of prompting. The guiding effect is, of course, limited. One cannot control something as personal as imagining and, therefore, can not limit the way a toy is used. In terms of children's play, Bo Lönnqvist (1991: 20, 23) argues that a toy is a thing (*any* thing) that receives its meaning in the act of playing. I have proposed that objects in play can be viewed as agreements that are valid for the time of the play. The opportunity

to share one's imaginings or the past personal experiences of prompting is just as intricate. Playing is not the transmitting of messages, but a creative dialogue with unexpected turns. The most important factor is what the players bring to the play. (Bonsdorff 2005: 270, 278)

Although Walton uses the term "imagining", essentially it refers to the fictional layer, which exists in parallel with the everyday function of the object without posing any requirements for changing its appearance. Imagining is a form of play, whether imagining about something or imagining something to be something else. As a creative element that makes possible the comprehension of fictional and everyday realities, it is present in every act of play. Places are foci that the player is actively involved with, and the rest of the environment is a context-builder and a network of potential places that can equally induce imaginings and participate in play. Imaginings can focus on the original object or lead away from it. A dark cloud can make one think of a shipwreck in a thunderstorm, where the cloud no longer participates in the play. Its function was limited to being a stimulus. As an alternative, however, prompters that coincide with the actual object of imagination give substance to the imagining. (Walton 1990: 25–26) It is possible to play that a tree stump is a bear. Not only does the stump evoke an image, it gives fiction physical (re)presentation and eventually lends its body to imagination. As a result, the bear can be seen and touched, perhaps even smelled and heard. Places too lend their bodies to imaginings so they can become physically manifest. A patch of grass can become a bed, a front lawn can become enemy territory on the Moon, a red strip in a field can induce imaginings of a long walked path. The façade of a farmhouse in *Bogship* evokes images of a small village or peaceful summer at Grandma's place. A stage can magically transform into a field and a field into a stage. Characteristically, these places acquire substance; they take place. Constituted only by agreements and imagination, fictional places appear in the same space with the perceiver, in the same environment that centres around the perceiver's body, the zero-point of the world. As a result, they can be perceived

from the same perspective of inhabitation as other elements of the physical world; they become familiar to us through the experience of the lived body. An embodied and implaced fictional place is a physical unit that can be attended to in play, experienced in a multi-sensory and immediate fashion, and can be a process at the same time. In addition, the initial spot of occurrence is marked. For instance, in imagining a stump to be a bear, the bear appears as occupying space. It emerges in a particular spatial context as a part of it. It is bodily and spatial, embodied and implaced, and may be experienced in an immediate multi-sensory way. The bear takes place, both as an imagined event, an ongoing process of transformation in which the stump becomes a bear without changing the stump, and as a physical presence in a particular location. A strip of dug-up earth can be experienced as a river in a particular location, and as a part of the physical multi-sensory environment, in the process of becoming. Furthermore, the fictional place can be experienced through the emotions, thoughts and actions that are projected on the bear or the river. The act of imagining constitutes and defines a place. Since the metamorphosis is not permanent and places are viewed as temporal agreements, they can be seen as appearing in a constant process of becoming. In a play situation scenography, places are constituted as events rather than incorporated as locations.

The idea that places are processes is not novel. The chapter 1. Landscape introduced landscapes as processes. While landscapes are the results of lives lived there, they are still in an ongoing process of change, which our everyday actions, including performing, affect. Landscapes are not only temporal in the sense of their past, they also have present and future. Describing places via their measurable attributes or habitual experiences puts place at risk of becoming a "frozen scene for human activity" (Pred 1984: 279). Several authors point out the risks involved in focusing on the spatial qualities of place and landscape at the expense of temporal ones. The social scientist Doreen Massey (2005: 49–54) draws attention to the danger of inhibiting the perception of places as

dynamic and heterogeneous. Excessive emphasis on spatial aspects can lead to a situation where place is primarily described or recognised according to its visible and measurable attributes. As a result, it is in danger of becoming a fixed entity, because visual changes in the environment may be slower than the changes in social and cultural meanings. It is easy to understand Massey's critique in the case of a home place. A home region, whether a neighbourhood, town or country, is often a source of fixed identity and, by concentrating on its spatial qualities, it is easy to overlook, for example, the fact that new people, perhaps representing other cultures, have moved into the same place. Not only does fixed perception of a place lead to social problems, such as segregation, but also creates a double perception of the same place, conditioned mainly by habitual experience. Places are, in fact, always changing in a constant negotiation between present and past, between social and cultural relationships and contexts. Therefore, the geographer and social thinker Allan Pred proposes that places should be treated as processes that are in a state of constant becoming. For Pred, places are not merely processes, but interactive processes in specific spatio-temporal locations. (Pred 1984: 279) In such a view, places can be discussed as spatialized events rather than as fixed units of space.

In an attempt to adopt the idea of places as processes to *Kingdom of Vargamäe* and *Republic of Wargamäe*, it is easy to observe that productions exemplify places as sources of constant becoming. The process of becoming can be stopped if the agreement is renounced, which is one of the main artistic means in the discussed scenographies. Metaphorically speaking, *Kingdom of Vargamäe* exemplifies the process of making a place by employing the group of characters called angels to provide necessary details (a multifunctional cart, a wooden plank and ladders) for enacting certain events in places. The process of creating a place is thus made visible, especially as the angels are treated as an invisible force that no one on stage sees; as a result, they metaphorically visualize the process of becoming in their contractual invisibility. Again, the experience of such a scenography is a matter of

aesthetic engagement.

I argue that the capacity to create places is integral to play, including theatre. Scenography as a play environment serves the important function of placing the perceiver into the landscape as a part of it, making a place for her and creating meaningful centres through the guided activity of perceiving. Even outside its importance in the experience of scenography, any form of play can create places and be a powerful tool for implacing the perceiver in the landscape. The act of transformation is an act of experiencing place. The experience can range in intensity and quality, which in theatre is supported by the temporal process of showing, which can take the form of a concrete storyline and/or the presentation and reception of emotions. The capacity to create places is realized differently in different games. Hide-and-seek, for example, demands involvement with the immediate environment, but it is not aimed at creating fiction. Engagement is oriented and realized differently based on the goal of the game. This dissertation deals with the context of play that is very conscious of its environment, the fictional and physical-real.

Changes in physical environment generally tend to be slower than changes in meanings and values (Palang et al 2004). Play can create places without modifying the environment and, more importantly, in a shorter time span. But the experiences created are lasting and real, and contribute to the understanding of the world. Playing expands the limits of the aesthetic experience of place and makes it possible to perceive places in time, as dynamic processes, such perception is otherwise complicated or impossible because of the time span. Scenography can serve as a testing ground and amplify the perception, understanding and interpretation of the everyday surrounding environments.

On an existential scale, the capacity to create places can be one of the most important functions of play. *Republic of Wargamäe* exposes the mechanics of creating place on the largest scale, which is also portrayed in the scenography as an abstraction, an empty field that coincides with the real landscape chosen for

the performance, and thereby creates problems of perceiving the other large scale environment – the city – as Vargamäe does not vanish from sight. *Kingdom of Vargamäe* seemingly employs the same strategy of clearing the field. In *Republic of Wargamäe*, the clearing starts to serve the neutrality of the environment (re)presented rather than helping to prevent unnecessary meanings embedded in the landscape of the Tammsaare Museum from infiltrating into play. *Kingdom of Vargamäe* clears the physical landscape by concentrating attention on a circle framed by the audience and thereby blocking familiar views. It also clears the fictional landscape familiar from the novel by placing the landscape outside the limits of the two rivalling farms. *Kingdom of Vargamäe* creates a multitude of places available only by engagement. Places are perceived as meaningful centres of subjective environments, which supports the idea that play constitutes places, opens a structure of a landscape to the audience and develops the skill of perceiving and creating places. Scenography is perceived as a relationship between players and environment. The landscape is literally played out, experienced in the constant process of taking place.

5 Conclusion

THE AIM OF this study is to investigate the capacity to use landscape in open-air productions in a fictional scenography with minimal physical interference, and to consider the impact on the aesthetic experience. Performance, including scenography, is a form of play, a work of art that exists in a dialogue between perceivers and theatre makers and requires intentional participation on both parts. The audience is a part of the structure of the work of art and the perceiver has no access to play outside of participation. In this framework, the change from viewer to player is inevitable: a work of art exists in being played, and the player completes the process of self-presentation. Scenography is a part of the larger play process and is partly created in advance, e.g. the decisions regarding spatial composition, placement of the audience, and the appearance of the props and costumes. The scenography can be regarded as a proposition, an open agreement that has to be verified by the players during the play process.

Some of these agreements may be presented visually, through the construction of specific elements. Characteristically of play, meanings can be freely assigned to already existent elements without transforming the object visually. A gesture, a word, a sound, or the use of an object can indicate change. The peculiarity of this type of scenography is that fictional places and objects can be experienced with all of the senses in a four-dimensional environment. Instead of a visual field, the

audience is surrounded by a multi-sensory environment. Naturally, there are limitations; the discussion of *Republic of Wargamäe* shows that the evoking of an urban environment in a rural landscape, for instance, asks the perceiver to block out significant sensory information. However, the successful creation of fictional places with minimal physical interference can create impressions, emotions and experiences that last beyond the temporal performance.

In the context of landscape, which is a physically and mentally filled environment, the question of accepting an agreement is crucial. If it is not actualized in the process of play, the fictional environment may remain incomprehensible and is literally not perceived. The real physical environment, which is present in any case, may start to participate in the performance in ways not intended by theatre makers, or may even be incompatible with the performance.

As a found environment, landscape is not a *tabula rasa* that accommodates a performance. It can, rather, be compared to an actor, who lends her body to a character. By borrowing the physical body of a landscape, scenography potentially inherits the "fictional body" of the landscape: the connotations, meanings and narratives that form an integral part of the landscape, but are not physically available. Landscapes consist of cumulative visible and invisible layers that exist together in a reciprocally supportive relationship. As lived environments, landscapes can have a strong narrative dimension, which is internally connected to the perception of landscapes as temporal processes, the sums of lives lived there. Narratives, often related to the identity of a social group, serve as maps of the landscape on a temporal scale. In a performance, it is an important artistic decision to include or disregard these meanings. *Bogship*, performed in remote Soontagana, concentrates on the legends associated with a particular village. As a result, it demonstrates the importance of having a coherent relationship between the fictional events shown in the text and the particular contemporary landscape, which is easily interpreted as the outcome of these fictional events.

Metaphorically speaking, landscape exposes its process of creation, performance opens the environment up for the audience. In this context, scenography has to fill in the gaps between physical reality and fictional reality, provide missing details, and guarantee the coherence between the events, landscape, space and time. The undeniable presence of the contemporary landscape in its physical reality makes the performance the (re)presentation of the landscape itself, its portrait in time. *Bogship* presents characters from different periods of time, who still inhabit the same landscape and relive moments of their past, although they are aware of their deaths. The text, scenography and landscape create a condensation of time and literally show the landscape as a "congealed scene for remembered contents" (Casey 1987: 189). The scenography here suggests that landscape is more than the spatial context in which memories surface. Landscape is a source of hidden scenes, a stage that lets past events surface if one knows how to look. The fact that not all of the characters can see each other, or their respective pasts, reflects the idea of perception as a specific skill that is developed in a certain environment and which makes the experience of different layers of landscape possible.

Landscape is a rewarding and enriching environment for theatre productions. A theatre performance can, in turn, activate and strengthen different narratives in the landscape, which makes the relationship between performance and landscape reciprocally supportive. In many ways, *Bogship* demonstrates the potential that landscape has in performance as a site of performance and as a potential body of/for scenography: the narrative and temporal dimension, and the capability of storing (and re-exposing) memories. Spatially speaking, landscape, like theatre, is a framed space, which can heighten the effect of being in the (fictional) landscape. If not visually, then landscape is framed by the knowledge and perception of the perceiver. The perceiver is placed in a simultaneously fictional and real, multi-sensory environment. The fact that the limits of the landscape are defined by the perceiver makes the frame dynamic. A performance can establish its own limits, and expand or contract the environment. In *Kingdom of Vargamäe*, the

environment is physically limited by the arrangement of the audience platforms, which hide familiar sights. Their oval shape draws attention to the area between the two audience platforms. On the fictional level, a new landscape is established by the characters, who clearly indicate that the household remains outside the gates that metaphorically close the audience in and the rest of the landscape out. This dynamicity and subjectivity of the landscape borders make the frame fragile and may call for scenographic support.

By definition, play is spatially and temporally limited. Thus, in a landscape, one of the functions of scenography as a play environment is the conscious communication or suppression of the metamessage "this is play". Theoretically, scenography as an indicator of a play environment functions as a governing rule, which makes the beginning and end of play visible and signals the primacy of play rules over everyday reality. It follows that a play environment can signal that objects in the environment are to be perceived as something else. In a performance, the articulation of a special play space is easily achieved by indicating the audience and performance areas. Scenography can also consciously hide the limits of fiction, which can ultimately fictionalize the entire world. The idea of fictionalizing is similar to the concept of pervasive play, which can create safe play-free zones in an all-encompassing play environment.

At the same time, scenography creates the environment that can be played with; it is the object of transformation itself. Play frames the particular place, object or environment with temporal agreements that are valid for the time of the performance. The play environment as an object of transformation is available through the intentional participation in agreements and through engagement in the process of play which can vary in degree. The scenographies of *Kingdom of Vargamäe* and *Republic of Wargamäe* take place as processes of engagement with the landscape in the co-operation between the audience and theatre makers (the performers, director, scenographer, sound and light designers, technical staff). The perceiver becomes a participant through attending to the work and has no

access to play outside participation. Proceeding from Gadamer, the minimum requirement is the identification of an artwork and the possibility of appreciating it according to its unique being. A performance becomes meaningful only if it reaches the audience; events, environments, characters and their relationships gain their meaning and have an impact only if they are experienced by the audience. Yet play is not manifested in the players; it is a relationship between the subject and object, which is different each time.

The participatory character of the play environment re-addresses the question of appreciating the aesthetic value of scenography, because it is not fully available outside the process of engagement, which is different on every occasion, and in every performance. This refers back to Gadamer's concept of the work of art which retains its identity while available only in play (and being played), and stresses the uniqueness of the work of art in its hermeneutic dimension. Every new experience defines the work of art differently. The features of scenography which are not visually shown, for example the network of places in *Kingdom of Vargamäe* that are evoked through action and change functions rapidly (e.g. the strip of dug-up earth, the connotations and meanings of which range from a river to a field), have an aesthetic quality, which can only be determined by being involved in play, being aesthetically engaged.

Internally, engagement has become one of the concepts which permeate all areas of this dissertation: landscape, place, play and scenography. Engagement is prominent in the perception of landscape from within, as an interactive process, in which the perceiver herself participates. In the concept of participatory landscape, Arnold Berleant regards landscape as a continuation of the perceiver; space ceases to be a distance that separates subject and object, which (especially in theatre) would lead to the perception of double spaces (the object's and subject's) and the subordination of those spaces. Place, the meaningful subjective centre of space, emerges from intimate involvement with the environment. Engagement is crucial in play, where the understanding of the entire realm of play, from interpreting

play acts and planning adequate responses to perceiving playthings (e.g. toys and props) and play-places, and deciding on matters of their aesthetic appeal, is available through engagement, being involved in play. Having adopted Gadamer's notion of intentional participation in an artwork, the aesthetic experience of play can only be discussed from within.

I propose that the aesthetic engagement originally proposed by Berleant for the experience of a (landscape) environment captures the essence of the aesthetic experience of the play environment. Aesthetic engagement regards the perceiver as an integral part of the environment, which makes it possible to discuss aesthetic experience as an immediate, engaging and implaced process. Engagement emphasises the priority of process over object, which is amplified by the uniqueness of each individual experience. Thus it responds to the temporal nature of play, where agreements that transform one object into another can change rapidly and can be experienced only by participation. The aesthetic value and aesthetic experience of play are only available by accepting and creating the fictional level, which makes the perception of a place as another fictional place possible. Aesthetic engagement stresses the multi-sensory and synaesthetic nature of aesthetic experience, as well as its active character. The surrounding environment surpasses the aesthetic experience of a traditional work of art by its innate feeling of immersion and the multiplicity of factors that the viewer can perceive. A scenography that denies visual showing, but is still capable of creating various place experiences (e.g. in *Kingdom of Vargamäe* and *Republic of Wargamäe*), demonstrates that the experience of the fictional environment is multi-sensory and immediate. Within the established use of the concept, play sets limits on an otherwise ambiguous concept that is criticized for blurring the borders between subject and object, imagination and reality. Play is a specific mode of engagement which combines fiction and reality, and in which the clear boundary between subject and object disappears, in the sense that the fictional object is a relationship between the player and a real object. Gadamer stresses that the player does not

construct the meaning independently of the work (Gadamer 1998: 128). An artwork establishes a language of its own and challenges the perceiver to make contact with it. Therefore, play creates a niche in which imagination is essential to having an aesthetic experience, and fiction is controlled by the players and does not replace reality. Art as play forms an autonomous circle of meaning.

The articulation of places as a source of memories, emotions and sites of pivotal events in *Kingdom of Vargamäe* demonstrates that the invisible fictional landscape can be communicated to the audience by emphasizing the experience of place. Places are used as primary structural elements of landscape through which characters relate to their environment. *Kingdom of Vargamäe* and *Republic of Wargamäe* prove that the structure of a play environment is dynamic. Some places provide necessary background information and establish, for example, a social, aesthetic and temporal context, and initiate play acts. With some places, the player is actively involved; she plays with them. The relationship is open, and places can be pushed into the background, where they no longer actively participate in the play, or are transformed into active elements of immediate engagement. *Kingdom of Vargamäe* invites the viewer to perceive small locations as fictional ones: one spot of land as a path where Indrek and Tiina have the most important discussion of their lives, another point as the site where Indrek's father passes away, and a third as the segment of a fence where Pearu falls in love with his neighbour's wife. Playing that a site is something else requires the audience's attention, imagination and engagement with the place and, in the context of the performance, often also requires emotional attachment. Thus the transformation is an act of creating a new place, a personal meaningful centre for the perceivers. Based on the different approaches to place employed in *Kingdom of Vargamäe* and *Republic of Wargamäe*, immediate engagement with the environment in play creates places. Active play with places, the transformation of locations to fictional places, in fact creates places as they become meaningful centres of experience. Play with places helps to structure the surrounding phenomenal world into a network of personal points of

attachments, of memories, sensations and emotions. Thus the importance of the play environment exceeds the limits of the performance.

These places are perceived as events, as processes. A fictional place is a temporal process, an ongoing transformation, which is never fully physically realized. The length of the transformational process may vary, but fictional places are nonetheless temporal agreements verified at each moment of play. In the relationship between players and environment, landscape is played out in places. Fictional places take on body and space and become embodied in real, tangible places. In a play situation, places are constituted as events in an ongoing process of taking place. As such, they can be experienced in a multi-sensory and immediate fashion without changing the environment. Constituted only by agreements and imagination, fictional places appear in the same space as the perceiver, in the same environment, which centres on the perceiver's body, the zero-point of the world. As a result, they can be perceived from the same multi-sensory and multidimensional perspective as other elements of the physical world; they become familiar to us through the experience of the lived body. The place takes place as an imagined event, as an ongoing process of transformation, and as a physical presence in a particular location. A strip of dug-up earth can be as a river in a particular location and as a part of the physical context, in the process of becoming. Play constitutes and defines places. As a result, theatre performances make it possible to experience the processual nature of landscapes and places on a shorter time span, to reconstruct and represent the effect of certain events on a landscape, and to experience it in a multi-sensory way.

It is evident that, on a primary level, a performance in a landscape makes it possible to tell the story of the landscape and draw attention to its values or problems. In the Estonian context, performing in remote places has contributed to the interest in the Estonian countryside. It can help to attract an increasing number of urban dwellers to natural environments, which in a philosophical tradition relates to the dichotomy between nature and culture.

The valuable concept that Ingold proposes, perception as a skill that can be developed and practised in an environment, accommodates practical and conceptual skills. The ability to notice certain phenomena in an environment and build ties can lead to the perception of landscape as a network of centripetal clues. Perception leads to the cumulative ability to recognize and perceive more clues. In the context of performance, the internal interest is vested in conceptual and mental skills. Performance is an intense form of guided perception which contributes to the perception of environment. While the process of guiding mainly focuses on the fictional world of the performance, the simultaneous existence of fictional and real environments and the importance of building connections between the two enhance the understanding of the landscape. This requires more active participation in perceiving and even creating the environment. Therefore, performance, especially the scenographic use of landscape, can extend beyond the perception of the particular performance and develop perception as a skill on a larger scale.

Play creates places. The degree of participation needed in *Kingdom of Vargamäe* and *Republic of Wargamäe* makes it possible to refer to the experience as a process of joint creation between players, in which places are not created by theatre makers and perceived by the audience, but actively created by the audience. To perceive a place in play is a process of engagement in the environment that can create a subjective meaningful centre of the environment. Within the context of aesthetic engagement, every experience holds an element of the aesthetic. As a result, play can help to re-articulate the ontological ties between human beings and their environment, a process of making and finding one's place in the world. This idea re-articulates Gadamer's idea that aesthetic experience constituted as play not only puts one in touch with a particular artwork, but also with the world as a whole. Play provides an ontological understanding of the world, which addresses the entire being. By stressing the process of engagement, in which the participant is integral and irreplaceable, the experience of the aesthetic is a mode

of self-understanding. Although fictional in its nature, the experience of place can be real and become a part of the perceiver's mindscape. Scenography as a play environment broadens the scope of experience.

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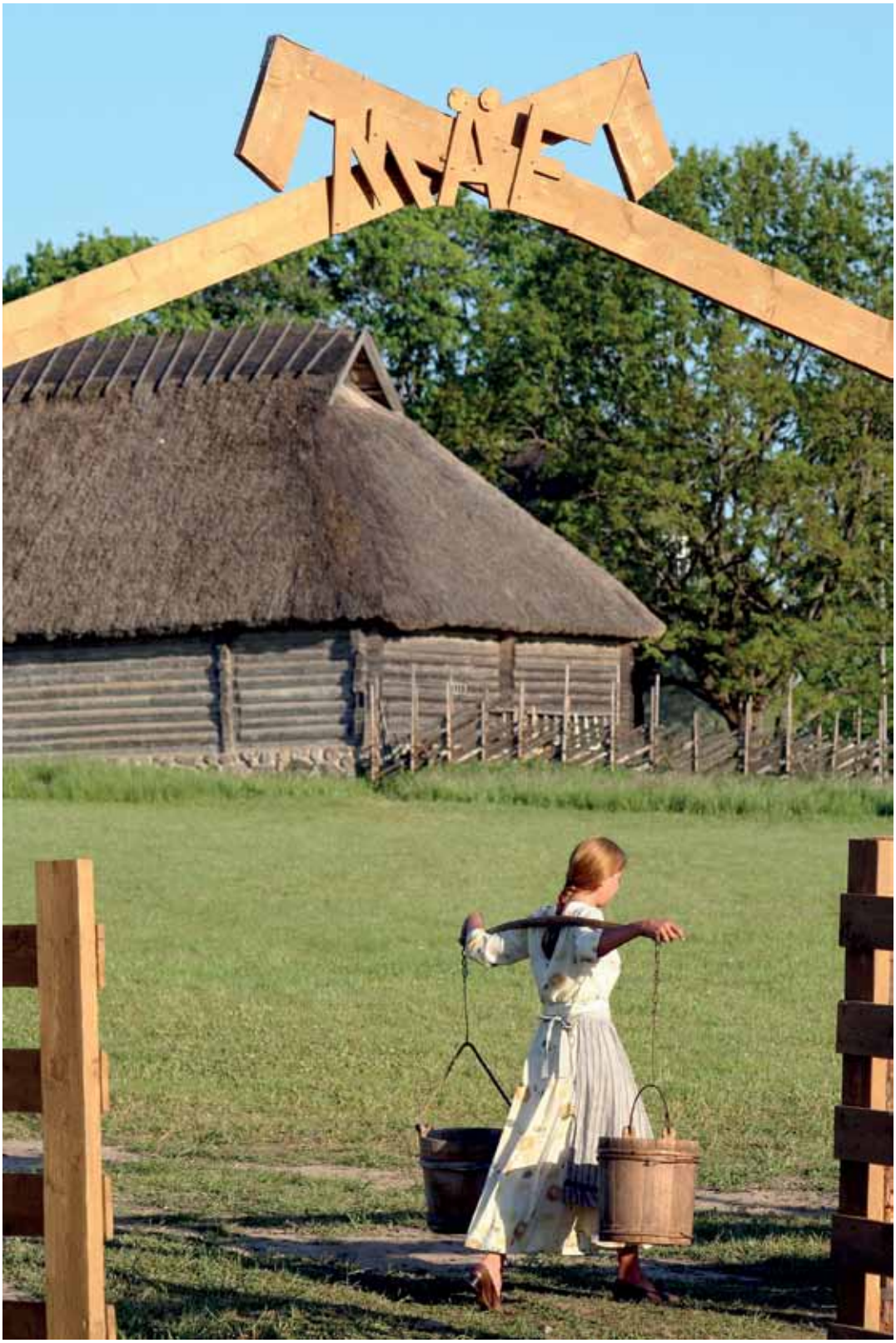
Appendix

1 *Bogship*. Elo (Hele Kõre) and the singers.

2 *Bogship*. Grete (Katariina Lauk), grandma Salme (Helene Vannari) and Grete's daughter Liisu (Kadi-Hebo Kukumägi).

3 *Kingdom of Vargamäe.* Young Pearu (Sepo Seeman) and the angels.

4 *Kingdom of Vargamäe.* Tiina (Karin Tammaru).

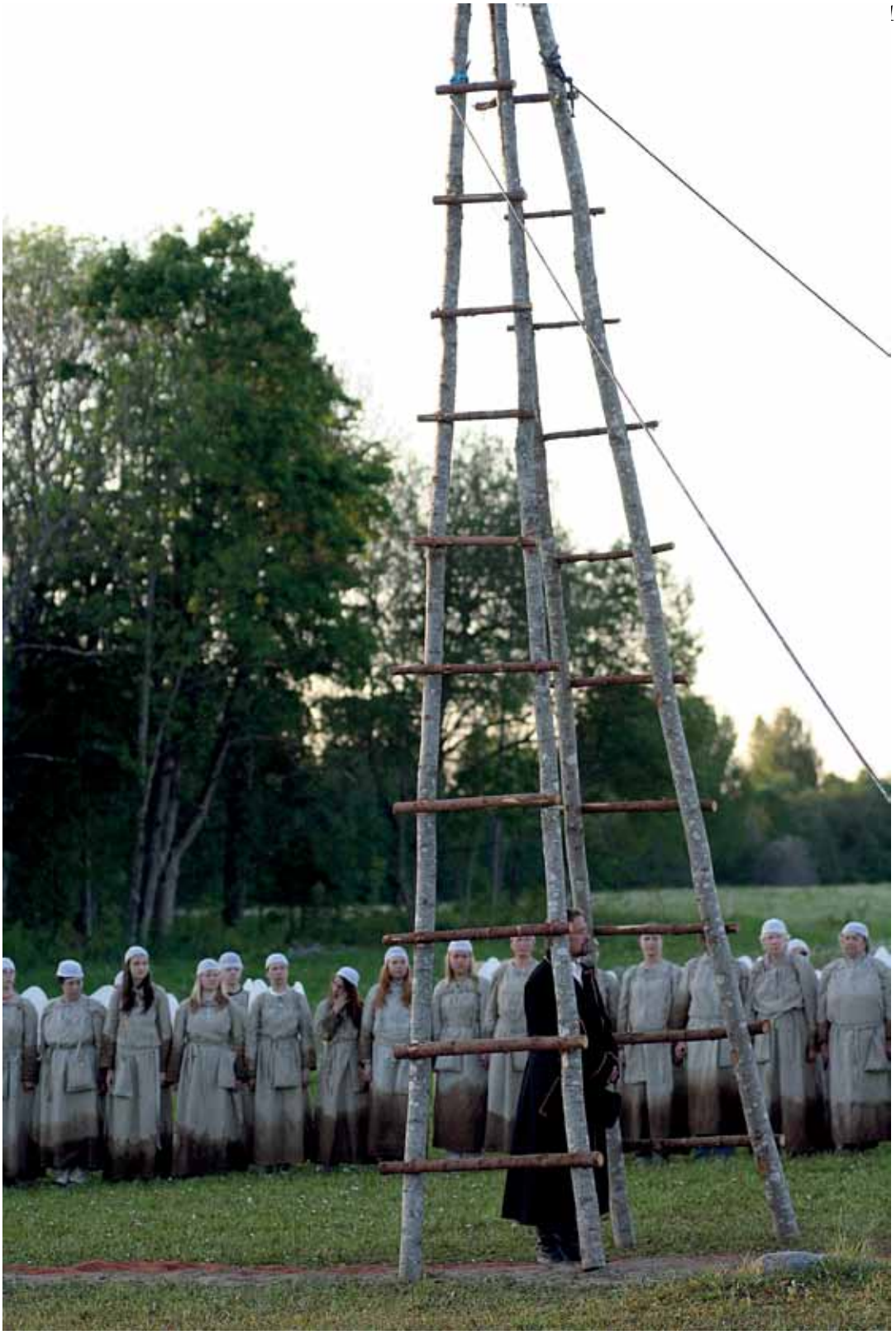


5 *Kingdom of Vargamäe*. Maret, mistress of the farm (Ülle Lichtfeldt).

6 *Kingdom of Vargamäe*. Ida, Pearu's daughter in law (Tiina Mälberg).

7 *Kingdom of Vargamäe*. Old Andres (Madis Kalmet) and his deceased wife Krõõt (Carmen Mikiver).

8 *Kingdom of Vargamäe*. Young Andres (Üllar Saaremäe) in church.



9 *Republic of Wargamäe.*

10 *Republic of Wargamäe*. Kristi (Ursula Ratassepp), Viljasoo (Erik Ruus) and Käba (Indrek Ojari).

11 *Republic of Wargamäe*. Käba (Indrek Ojari).

12 *Republic of Wargamäe*. Andres (Tõnu Kark), Pearu (Aarne Üksküla) and Indrek (Alo Kõrve).

13 *Republic of Wargamäe.*