

memory of something that has merely been related to us (by another person, in a book, play, film, or on television) into something that we believe (remember) we have experienced. There is even a name for this phenomenon: cryptomnesia, which means remembering what someone has told you but forgetting that you have been told.

Many things about memory make it a frustrating part of our mental apparatus, particularly when we are trying to write clear answers to specific questions, or recall a telephone number only a moment after closing the directory. However, many of the frustrations with memory we experience in daily life are due to the very aspects of memory that contribute to our work as designers.

Earlier, I pointed out that theatre designers have a highly developed propensity for sensing, and for noticing, a vast assortment of things in the world around them. Theatre designers also have prodigiously acquisitive memories, strongly predisposed toward storing visual images and those miscellaneous facts that incite images. In her discussion of visual memory in *The World of the Imagination*, Eva Brann suggests that images may be stored in memory like slides loaded randomly in a carousel. Once recalled, the images themselves are clear and distinct. However, it is seldom possible to put a mental finger on a specific image at will. The best we can hope for is a mental meandering through random images, which, for theatre designers, is precisely how the unexpected, often exciting juxtaposition of images happens.

Design is often described as the combining of disparate elements into a coherent whole. In this endeavor, nothing is more useful to a designer than the capriciously selective memory, with its tendency to elaborate on reality and to engage in creative groupings.

## Using Imagination

The Welsh poet Dylan Thomas once remarked that, as a young man, he wished his work to be "colossally original, like eggs laid by tigers." In his last work, *Under Milk Wood*, a verse drama for voices, Thomas drew on his own memory fragments to create a touching, humorous, memorable, and brilliantly original portrait of one day in the life of a Welsh village. Young theatre designers often waste a great deal of time searching for original visions, while ignoring the raw material for design that is already present within their own knowledge and experience. Designing for the theatre demands an active imagination, a